



FAQ'S – RUGBY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

INTRODUCTION

The IRFU's Disability sub-committee was formed in January 2015. The purpose of the Disability sub-committee is to establish a standardised, inclusive framework with associated resources for the playing, coaching and promotion of rugby for individuals with disabilities – intellectual, physical and sensory.

The work of the group is currently focused on the development of tag rugby for those with intellectual disabilities as this was a format of the game that was practised within clubs since 2006. However, the Disability sub-committee recognise that their work needs to address other disabilities to make the game as inclusive for as many people as possible, irrespective of their disability. In-order to do so the IRFU are actively working with a number of professional sports organisations who are involved with disability sports. The IRFU are committed to make the game as inclusive as possible. It is also imperative that our sport is enjoyed in an environment that is safe for everybody involved.

Below is some information on the current IRFU Disability Programme to inform players, parents and clubs of current work programme and highlight future areas of work for the Union. The FAQ's are set out in 4 sections: Tag Rugby / Wheelchair rugby / Players with other Disabilities / Club development



TAG FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

WHAT IS TAG RUGBY?

Tag rugby is a fast and exciting non-contact sport that encourages the positive development of running, balance and handling skills. It is also an enjoyable, fun and active way to keep both healthy and fit. Tag rugby can be played by men, women and children of all ages and abilities. The sport caters for those aged 6 years with no upper age limit (This may vary between clubs - please check age groups with your local club).

HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF THERE IS A CLUB NEAR ME?

For details of a club here you with a disability tag rugby section please visit <http://www.irfu.ie/disability/contacts>

MY SON/DAUGHTER WEARS GLASSES CAN THEY PLAY?

Yes. As tag rugby is non-contact players who require glasses can wear prescription sports goggles that can be purchased from most opticians.

MY SON/DAUGHTER HAS A LEARNING DISABILITY AND IS A WHEELCHAIR USER. CAN THEY PLAY?

Yes. Disability tag rugby is fully inclusive and caters for wheelchair users with additional needs. That said, tag rugby is largely played on grass and as the typical disability tag rugby season runs between September – December and March –



June; unless indoor facilities are available the use of a wheelchair on grass will be dependent upon weather/pitch conditions.

MY SON/DAUGHTER HAS OTHER MEDICAL NEEDS IS IT SAFE FOR THEM TO PLAY?

Player safety is paramount and communication between coaches and parents/carers is vital to the management of player safety. All players should be registered with the club through the IRFU Player Registration Form (speak to the club registration secretary for further details). Players/carers/parents must also complete an IRFU disability medical form. This provides the opportunity to outline/explain any medical/health/behavioural issues that you feel may influence/affect the player's experience/ability to participate. Coaches will discuss any issues raised in the registration form with parents/carers and this information will be used to ensure the club/coaches can meet the needs of the player.

For a copy of the medial form visit <http://www.irishrugby.ie/disability>

PHYSICAL DISABILITY – WHEELCHAIR RUGBY

WHAT IS AND WHO CAN PLAY?

Wheelchair Rugby is a mixed team sport created by athletes with a disability, it combines elements of rugby, basketball and handball. Players compete in teams of four to carry the ball across the opposing team's goal line. Contact between wheelchairs is permitted, and is in fact an integral part of the sport as players use their chairs to block and hold opponents.

The world governing body, International Wheelchair Rugby Federation (<http://www.iwrf.com>) state that in order to be eligible to play wheelchair rugby, individuals must have a disability which affects the arms and legs. Most players have spinal cord injuries with full or partial paralysis of the legs and partial



paralysis of the arms. Other disability groups who play include cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, amputations, polio and other neurological conditions. Men and women compete on the same teams and in the same competitions. In Ireland there is a more relaxed approach around eligibility.

The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA), which is based in Clontarf, Dublin, is the national governing body (www.iwa.ie). They wish to make the sport as inclusive as possible and welcome all wheelchair users to come and participate at a local level. For details of your local wheelchair rugby club visit: www.irishwheelchairrugby.com

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE IRFU AND IWA?

The IRFU is putting in place a memorandum of understanding between IRFU and IWA which will outline a partnership and areas of cooperation between both organisations; specifically in promotion and marketing, providing opportunities for training and development for volunteers and reviewing activities on a regular basis for both parties.

PLAYERS WITH SENSORY DISABILITIES

MY SON/DAUGHTER IS DEAF CAN HE/SHE PLAY RUGBY?

Yes. There are quite a few people who have a hearing loss playing tag and full contact rugby. However it may in certain circumstances be best to seek medical advice e.g. those players who cannot fully remove their hearing aids.

For further information visit the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS): A Guide to Deaf Friendly Rugby Union: www.ndcs.org.uk/document.rm?id=8876



ARE THERE ANY CLUBS FOR THE DEAF?

No. IRFU coaches have delivered tag rugby coaching sessions to a number of groups such as Action Deaf Youth (formerly Northern Ireland Deaf Youth Association); NDCS and Deaf Sports Ireland.

The IRFU is investigating the possibility of working with a number of organisations to develop rugby for the deaf community in 2016. The vision is that players who have a hearing loss would be a part of existing rugby teams as per the IRFU Long Term Player Development model, i.e. participate in minis; age grade and senior rugby.

WHAT RUGBY IS THERE FOR BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED PLAYERS?

IRFU coaches have delivered sample sessions to blind and partially sighted players, however more research is required to be in a position to fully engage with players. The IRFU will explore working with expert organisations in this area in order to investigate how best to create opportunities and develop rugby for blind or partially sighted players. An update will be provided when more information becomes available



CLUB DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IF MY CLUB IS INTERESTED?

- If your club has no disability team but would like to open your rugby activities to schools or services in the community who have young people with a learning disability then you can contact your nominated Branch contact, see below.
- If your club already has begun work in this area but would like to link up with other clubs you could discuss with your nominated Branch staff about making contact with a CRO in another region to organise a blitz or to bring coaches together for a coaching seminar or information meeting.
- Sport Inclusion Development Officers (SIDOs) exist within most Local Sports Partnerships in Ireland and they can assist you with making links with local schools and disability services, [http://www.irishsports council.ie/Participation/Sports Inclusion/SIDO Contacts/](http://www.irishsports council.ie/Participation/Sports%20Inclusion/SIDO_Contacts/)

WHAT ABOUT TRAINING FOR COACHES?

- The Leprechaun coaching course is suitable for those introducing the game; a course can be arranged at the local rugby club once you have 15 people who wish to complete the course. Contact your coach development officer who will assist you with this.
- Cara also run a Disability Inclusion Course which IRFU Branch staff have completed; Branch staff can assist you with sessions.
- The IRFU is designing a rugby specific 'disability inclusion' course that will give coaches the necessary skills to make the game more inclusive and accessible to a number of players with a disability. Contact safeguarding@irfu.ie in February 2016 for further details.



WHAT OTHER RESOURCES/SUPPORT IS THERE FOR RUGBY CLUBS?

The IRFU provide a number of web based resources for clubs and their coaches/volunteers for setting up and developing a disability section – <http://www.irishrugby.ie/disability>

- Club guidelines – to be used to investigate the possibility of setting up a disability section
- Coaching guidelines – to be used by coaches/volunteers to make their coaching more inclusive for players with a disability
- Rules Handout – outlines rules and regulations for Tag Disability Rugby
- Case Studies – information for clubs based on clubs who are running successful disability sections in their clubs

WHAT SHOULD A CLUB TELL A PARENT THAT HAS A SON/DAUGHTER WHO WISHES TO GET INVOLVED IN RUGBY??

At the moment the game is focusing on young people with an intellectual disability but over the coming months the IRFU Disability Sub-Committee will investigate other areas of disability for both adults and young people. It should be made clear to parents what your club offers and in some cases you may be signposting players and parents to other clubs in your region.

HOW CAN I SOURCE MORE INFORMATION OR GET INVOLVED?

Each Branch has staff in place that can answer your questions and some Branches have a Disability Advisory Group that represents the interests of rugby clubs who have established dedicated sections for young people and adults who have players with a disability. The members will use the group as a means of sharing knowledge and experience to create sustainable disability sections within existing rugby clubs. You can make contact with your DAG committee by contacting the Branch contact listed below or you can contact the National Disability committee by emailing safeguarding@irfu.ie



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