



Player Development Sub-Committee Player Pathway Consultation Report (Abridged)

Purpose of Report – To support the recommended changes to the Developing Player Programme (DPP) and Under 15 and 16 CB rugby.

Background

The RFU strategic plan sets out the need to improve the player pathway, improve player transition and to protect players.

Player Development Sub Committee (PDSC) objective is to make recommendations on the policies and strategies that will develop and promote programmes to identify, develop and retain talented male and female players within all sections of the community game, and lead to the establishment of single integrated player pathways in the male and female age grade game.

Summary Findings

Whilst there were many positive areas identified through the consultation, the summary findings are concentrated on the important areas and recommendation for the future.

- The majority of deliverers of CB and DPP programmes were unable to define the purpose or principles of their programme
- Nearly all described their area as development focused and helping players reach their potential
- Players and parents had little or no understanding of transition, between DPP, Regional Academy and CB (County) rugby, and ambiguity about when each area begins and ends
- This has led to confusion of what is the pathway, what is not and disparity and mixed messages where players were involved in two or three environments with different coaches
- Players, parents and guardians felt that balancing their commitments alongside other factors (schoolwork, employment, and other sports) and the pressure from competing programmes placed undue stress on them
- Parents and guardians are helping their sons make choices often without the knowledge to understand the impact of those choices, frequently, leading to players choosing to do everything rather than let anyone down and/or not informing their parents or guardians
- The current system at U16 creates conflict for player availability, and sees DPP ending in December, which for the majority of players signals the end of their involvement and does little to support the retention and transition of these players into CB programmes at U17 / U18
- Quality coaching is seen as the most important aspect of the player's experience

Summary Recommendations

The RFU has an ethical duty of care to ensure its programmes mitigate against the perceived and actual risks associated to Player Welfare, and directly over training and playing, conflicting and competing demands as well as the social wellbeing of participants.

Integrating programmes will help alleviate concerns raised by parents and players, support retention and transition into next stages and provide greater connection for players disenfranchised by early deselection to the CB for future programmes.

There is a need to identify an appropriately skilled workforce that understands the interconnected components, who can create enjoyable experiences and learning environments.

Executive Summary

To create a model, which meets Age Grade Rugby principles of Player Centred, Development Driven and Competition Supported.

- Player Centred means meeting the needs of that individual player and the emphasis is on them with a focus on potential rather than current ability and the importance is on enjoyment and encouraging a life-long love of rugby
- Development Driven means recognising the various stages in a players journey and providing the opportunities to develop physical literacy, skills and self-confidence to enjoy the sport
- Competition Supported means providing appropriate meaningful playing opportunities that enable further development and exploration of resilience, leadership and rugby's core values, Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline, Sportsmanship

To provide clarity of purpose

The Purpose is to provide an early experience of a talent nomination, identification and development programme with a focus on skill development and acquisition, game understanding and the physical components that help a player achieve their potential.

To underpin the Pathway with the following key principles

- To create a platform, on which all players can reach their potential
- To deliver an integrated playing and training programme
- To consider the impact and (playing/training) load on the individual
- To reduce the consequences of early selection, de-selection and specialisation
- To provide clarity on nomination and selection processes and deliver consistent feedback
- To develop an appropriately skilled workforce
- To establish a greater connection between all key stakeholders

Outputs

- Developing Player Programme (DPP) confirmed as the single community development programme for players in age grade rugby at U14-U16
- U14, U15 and U16 DPP will include a number of playing opportunities designed to provide all players with a platform to put their skills into practice against and alongside their peers. There will be 2 at U14, 3 at U15 and 4 at U16
- Taking an inclusive, all play approach, at U15 would see all DPP players retained and engaged in playing and training across the season but within a CB focus
- To reinforce DPP as the 'core' development programme U16 CB squads be drawn from DPP only, thus removing the need for additional trials, assessment and selection activities that place additional physical, mental and emotional burden on players and take players away from their club/school
- The DPP 'playing opportunities' are specifically CB designated, but delivered with support from the Regional Academy. The funding held by the CB and overseen by the person responsible for the playing and development opportunities in the CB
- CB's are encouraged to play CB's within other DPP's to enhance the programme
- U15 sees the introduction of one additional programme called Player Development Group (PDG).
- Transition between DPP and PDG can take place at any time post January of the Under 15 season and will continue until DPP concludes at Under 16