

AGE GRADE RUGBY COMPETITION PLAYING CALENDAR GUIDE 2016-17

Role of Competition and Representative Rugby Organisers

The structure of the Calendar will be governed by RFU regulations. Organisers will be expected to operate their competitions and representative rugby activities within the parameters of Regulation 15 - Age Grade Rugby. This entails organising competitions and representative rugby programmes within the defined weeks and windows - please read the following section for further guidance. Regulation 15 supports this and includes the requirement for CBs to submit their programme to the RFU for approval by 1 July annually

Competition Playing Calendar 2016-17

The introduction of a more defined and consistent playing calendar was a key outcome of the Age Grade Competition Review and endorsed by the RFU Council for implementation from September 2016. This replaces the former Youth Structured Season. The calendar for 2016-17 has been shaped with input from Organisers across the country and the wider game

Key Calendar Ingredients - Essential Reading

There are **nationally consistent windows** when competitions will be arranged. The alternate 3 or 4 week window model ensures **season-long involvement and fair/equal impact** of poorer weather and representative rugby on clubs and education. The windows have been implemented **to reduce competition clashes and to balance the quantity of higher intensity rugby** during the season. They will help to limit the amount of selection/deselection and resulting overplaying/underplaying in Age Grade Rugby as well as reduce the intensity of matches that has started to negatively affect player welfare management and player and particularly, adult behaviour in the game

The windows concept will be rolled out across **all ages in the female Age Grade game** in 2016-17 and **up to and including Under 16 in male Age Grade Rugby**. This will be reviewed to establish the best approach for 2017-18 across all age groups

CLUBS, SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES CAN STILL PLAY IN ALL THE WEEKS OF THE SEASON

What it does not mean, for example, is clubs can't play rugby in schools windows. However they will know that their club players who also play school rugby will have potentially their more intensive school matches that matter most to them in particular weeks. They can adjust their selections to fit with the priority in conversation with the school. This same principle exists of course for schools during the clubs windows

There are three sets of windows – for clubs competitions, for school/colleges competitions and for representative rugby

It is in these windows and specific weeks of the season that competition and rep rugby organisers will need to plan for their activities

The windows will help players and those who support their development **to prioritise and plan their season with less conflicts and duplications**

The windows also mean that competitions themselves will need to be more focussed/shorter and the number of high intensity matches where the competitive outcome becomes the focus will reduce. This will drive **greater inclusivity of all players getting on the pitch and a return to more block fixtures by clubs and schools** rather than fragmented club fixture lists

Male rep rugby is planned at specific times to provide opportunity for the talented player. This is **balanced to limit impact** on both the talented player himself and those team-mates left in the core club, school and college playing programme

Female rep rugby (U15/18) remains season-long for now, due to the role it plays in providing **quality participation opportunities** (particularly 15 a side) that the girls game is as yet unable to offer widely and consistently enough in clubs, schools and colleges

Under 18 Male is the most challenging jigsaw to build due to the different "streams" of the game at grass roots level and in the player/talent pathway as well as the cross-overs between them

While some changes have been made to the Under 17/18 playing calendar, after consultation it will remain **fairly consistent with 2015-16**. The planned changes move towards less conflict, more defined periods for some competitions and representative rugby and clearer priority **for all levels of player**. Some major challenges still remain to be addressed and agreed through consultation during 2016. **A longer rollout period has been implemented to bring these ages into line with the rest of the game**