



Regulation 15.5.5. (female playing adult rugby from their seventeenth birthday)

Frequently Asked Questions

Why have you changed this regulation?

This has been introduced to bring the female game in line with the male game which currently has this regulation. This is supported by scientific data which demonstrates earlier physical maturation of females and thus smaller physiological differences between a seventeen year old female player and an adult female, compared to male counterparts.

Has this been brought in to increase and support adult women's teams?

No, nor should it be viewed as an opportunity to use seventeen year olds to 'prop up' an adult team or to merely bring the perceived 'better player' into a team. The underlying principle of RFU Regulation is that players should play in their own age grade.

When could a player play up?

The new Codes of Practice explain this thought process in more detail; however the key considerations are these:

1. Players of all ages tell us the most important thing when playing rugby is to play with their friends – taking a player away from their peer group automatically takes them away from their prime motivation for playing.
2. Playing in age bands means players experience the 'stepping stones' of skill development that are essential for progress and safety. Is advancing and jumping a step appropriate?
3. Is it developmentally right for the player to play up? Are they physically, mentally and emotionally ready to do so?
4. Have you tried to differentiate and set players different targets or goals for the activity depending on the players' needs or changed the rules of a match or game?
5. Have you consulted with their parents or guardians?

Remember, this decision should not be made to fill an adult team or to try and move "better players" up to win matches.

What is the process we need to follow for a player to play adult rugby?

The following process must be followed:

a) the player must be assessed as capable of playing with adults. This should be conducted by a Level 2 coach (minimum) who will consider if playing up is player-centred and appropriate for their physical, psychological and emotional development.

(b) the RFU's Playing Adult Rugby Form has been duly completed and signed (http://www.englandrugby.com/mm/Document/General/General/01/32/65/73/PlayingAdultRugbyFormamendedOctober2017_English.pdf)

(c) the player does not train or play in the front row of the contested scrum. Once a player has reached the age of 18, the player may play in any position.





What are the safeguarding implications of this?

Those responsible for the management of adult teams which include 17 year olds, must at all times be mindful of their safety and wellbeing and ensure that a suitable adult from within the team and management acts as a mentor or buddy.

A common sense approach must be applied with players being able to use changing and shower facilities with other team members – without the need for each team member to have completed a DBS. Alcohol may not be consumed by or purchased for a 17 year old.

Full detail and further advice can be obtained from your club safeguarding officer and within the RFU Safeguarding policy (www.englandrugby.com/safeguarding).

Will this deplete existing U18 teams?

If decisions are made correctly on the suitability of a player to play up, then this should have minimal impact on existing U18 teams. Indeed, individual players playing up, do also provide opportunity for other squad members to develop within the team. This regulation is not about moving whole groups of players to meet the needs of existing adult teams.

Can a player play both ladies and U18 on the same weekend?

This topic is covered fully within the RFU Codes of Practice. Due to the time taking to recover, in most circumstances it would not be advisable or appropriate for a player to play twice within a 72-hour window. However there may be exceptions, due to playing position, playing duration, match intensity, or other activities they have within the week, where this might be considered. The overriding factor is if it is in the best developmental interests of the player – NOT to boost playing numbers in a team.

If a player plays in the Women's Premier 15s or the Women's Senior Cup can they then play U18 rugby?

If a player plays in the Women's Premier 15s then she can play any U18 rugby, including the Girls Cup

If a 17 year old player moves to Women's rugby within a season, and participates in the Women's Cup, that player is cup-tied to that competition and cannot also play in the Girls Cup. They can take part in U18 friendlies, or local competition (if permitted within these local competition regulations). They must also be added on GMS as an adult player, not a youth player.

If a player takes part in the Girls Cup they are permitted to play in the Women's Cup (but will then be 'cup-tied' as above).

Can a seventeen year old play in the front row of an adult team?

No.

