

# **Rules of Rugby Fives**

(as approved by the Rugby Fives Association)

## **DEFINITIONS**

The game is played in a court enclosed by four walls. The 'front' wall has a board of wood running across it at an even height from the floor.

The game may be played between two or four players, i.e. as Singles or Doubles.

**SERVER** and **RECEIVER**. The player first hitting the ball is the 'server' (who is said to be 'out' or 'down'), his opponent being known as the 'receiver' (who is said to be 'in' or 'up').

**'UP'**. The ball is said to be 'up' when it is hit before the second bounce, strikes the front wall above the board, and does not leave the confines of the playing surface. Painted lines marking the upper limit of any wall are not part of the playing surface.

## **RULES OF THE SINGLES GAME**

### **1. PRELIMINARY RALLY.**

Before the start of a game, a preliminary rally shall be played. The 'winner' of this becomes the receiver.

### **2. SERVICE.**

- (a) At the start of a rally the server throws the ball up so that it first strikes the front wall above the board and then one of the side walls, before bouncing. There is no penalty for doing this incorrectly, but the service cannot be completed unless the ball has been thrown up in this way.
- (b) After throwing the ball up correctly and allowing it to bounce, the server shall hit it before the second bounce, so that it strikes first the side wall against which it has been thrown and then the front wall above the board.
- (c) The serve may take place on either side of the court. The server must notify the receiver if he wishes to change the side on which he is serving.

3. **BLACKGUARD**. A service which hits the front wall above the board without having first touched the side wall is called a 'blackguard'. The receiver may return a blackguard provided he calls out his intention to do so before striking the ball. This call shall be irrevocable as shall any call indicating intention not to take a blackguard. When the receiver requires one point to win the game, he may not take a blackguard.

4. **RALLIES**. After the service, the opponents shall alternately hit the ball before the second bounce onto the front wall above the board, either directly or after it has hit the side and/or back walls. No second attempt may be made to hit a ball after it has once been touched.

A rally is won by a player, unless a 'let' is allowed under Rule 6:

- (a) if his opponent fails to hit the ball 'up', as defined.
- (b) if his opponent, being server, serves three consecutive untaken blackguards, or stops a blackguard before it has bounced, or intentionally stops a blackguard after it has bounced.
- (c) if his opponent causes the ball, after it has hit the front wall, to strike himself before it has bounced.
- (d) if his opponent hits the ball otherwise than with the hand or forearm.

5. **SCORING**. Only the receiver can score points. When the receiver wins a rally he scores a point. When the server wins a rally he becomes receiver for the next rally. The player who first scores 15 points (except as provided when the score reaches 14-14) wins the game. Should each player score 14 points, the first player to reach 16 wins the game.

At the discretion of the Tournament Referee, games in a championship, tournament or match (with the exception of the National Singles and Doubles Championships) may be played up to 11 points. In this case, if the score reaches 10 all, the first player to reach 12 wins the game.

When the receiver requires one point to win the game, the server is allowed two consecutive incorrect serves (including blackguards) without penalty. The third service must be right or the server loses the point and game.

6. **LETS**. A let is allowed and the rally shall not count:

- (a) if a player strikes his opponent with a ball which would have gone up.
- (b) if a player causes the ball, after it has hit the front wall, to strike himself after it has bounced.
- (c) if a player is prevented by his opponent from correctly returning the ball (e.g. through physical or visual obstruction). Should a player, though impeded, hit the ball so that it goes up, he may claim a let at once; otherwise the rally shall continue.
- (d) if the server, when about to serve, fails to hit the ball, or changes his mind and calls out 'no' before hitting the ball, even if it accidentally goes up.
- (e) if the ball is hit 'up' in such a way that it bounces and then goes out of the playing area.
- (f) if a Referee determines that an occurrence on or off the court distracts either player.
- (g) if a player fails to call a warning before turning and striking the ball.

7. **TOURNAMENT REFEREE**. The Referee's decision is final.

**Note:** It is the duty of a player to move to avoid obstructing a player in making his shot, and not to obstruct the flight of the ball.

## **RULES OF THE DOUBLES GAME**

The Rules of the Singles Game shall apply to the Doubles Game, and wherever the words 'server', 'receiver', 'opponent' or 'player' are used in the Rules of the Singles Game, such words shall, whenever possible, be taken to include his partner in the Doubles Game. Thus, if the duration of the preliminary rally requires their participation, all four players shall take part.

1. The receiver (normally called 'first hand') remains 'in' until his side loses a rally, whereupon his partner (normally called 'second hand') receives.  
When his side loses another rally, his partner will serve to the opponent who has just been the server.
2. At the beginning of a game, the side winning the preliminary rally may choose whether to serve or receive, and the side receiving starts at 'second hand'.
3. The side that is 'down' must change server after every point scored by their opponents.
4. If the wrong player serves or receives, the rally counts unless the mistake is pointed out before the start of the next rally.
5. Only the receiver may return the service; either he or his partner may elect to take a blackguard. If either of them says 'yes' to a blackguard, the rally commences.

## **RULES OF MATCH PLAY**

- (a) For the preliminary rally (see Rule 1 of the Rules of the Singles Game) the receiver and server shall be decided by drawing lots - the winner to make his choice.
- (b) A preliminary rally shall not be played at the beginning of any subsequent game of a match, and the winner of the previous game shall continue to receive. In Doubles the winners shall have only one 'hand'.
- (c) A true and consistent ball (new or used), agreed by all players, should be taken to start a match. A defective ball may be replaced at any time if, in the opinion of the players, a change is desirable. In the event of any dispute the Referee shall arbitrate.
- (d) A let shall be allowed as in Rule 6 (a), (b) and (c) only on a player's successful appeal to the Referee.
- (e) A receiver shall not unreasonably delay the server inbetween rallies. The server may instigate a 30 second break for both players to towel down or take on fluid. Each player will be permitted two such breaks per game.
- (f) If, by reason of injury or ill-health, a player is, in the opinion of the Referee, unfit to continue a game, the Referee shall stop the game and award it to the player's opponent or opponents.
- (g) In a match consisting of more than one game, not more than five minutes interval shall be allowed between games.

*Rules drawn up Nov 1930; revised Oct 1949; May 1951; June 1955, Oct 1959; May 1972; Dec 1995; Dec 2010.*

INFORMATION is available from the General Secretary of the Rugby Fives Association concerning the Building of courts; court measurements; ball specifications.

Please contact the General Secretary, Philip Atkinson, through this website.