

Name:



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What It Is Like to Play Rugby

In the eyes of the untrained, a rugby game is just a bunch of huge individuals senselessly fighting one another, struggling to move an oval ball inch by inch down a field full of mud towards the goal line of the opposing team. Players don't put on pads or get timeout in case of injuries. Yet rugby is a totally different thing, a gentleman's sport to those who understand it. While rugby appears rough, its players maintain good respect toward both teammates and their opponents.

To a player, rugby is a relatively cool game, and safer than American football—which is perhaps the reason why players don't wear pads or helmets. Yet it is a normal thing to suffer minor injuries like a bloody nose, cuts, or bruises. Players believe that the reason for the relative low risk of harm in rugby (compared to other games), is the lack of protective gear. Actually, the presence of protective gear like pads and helmets used in other games subconsciously create a false feeling of safety in the minds of players. It gives them the temptation to play with a disregard for safety precautions. It might seem paradoxical, but this general assumption is likely the reason that, in rugby, we avoid tackling at the head, shoulders, and neck.

Unlike football, a rugby player has no businesses blocking or hitting anyone without a ball. That means that you can never be hit unexpectedly—perhaps pushed away from an opposing player though. Since there is no blindsiding, you only get ready to be hit as soon as you get the ball. Although we play with absolute confidence – as if injuries never existed – no one is sure who will be affected the most by a wrong move

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in a tackle attempt, or when trying to break loose from a scrum.

One of the most interesting activities in a rugby match is the start of the match. Scrums are just fun. It feels good to come together and bind with the opponent team, at the shoulders as you jostle for a position while shoving the other team back at the same time. This, for me at least, is a time to take a break from the rapid rugby running and tackling activities which involve very fast movement, especially during seven's, which has more space for movement.

When the ball goes out of play and things need to get restarting with a lineout, I love to be hoisted up in the air, being held by my legs. In the first days, this was not an easy experience because it is difficult to steadily pursue and hold the ball in the mid-air just with support at the legs. In this kind of restart, the ball is passed to you by a team member from outside of the bounds of the field. However, it truly becomes difficult to save your team if the opponents also raise other players. In fact, it is normally a sign to get ready for chaos, because chaos will be very likely to follow.

Nothing feels more fulfilling in rugby than making a try for your team. It is just like scoring a goal in football. A try gives your team an opportunity to score a few more points with a conversion kick. This is more like a free penalty in soccer and it feels like an overwhelming assignment as everybody stops to watch if you can manage it. It is so easy to get tensed from the thought that all of your teammates and/or fans are looking up to you to hit the ball between the posts. This is also the feeling one gets when taking a penalty kick after an opponent commits a penalty. Nobody ever wants to waste the chance during a penalty kick to increase the score for their team, but sometimes even the best conversion kickers get disappointed by obstructions like distance and deflection of the ball by the wind. Even so, losing a free kick never feels like a mistake as bad as giving your opponent the opportunity to have one by inducing a significant infraction like tackling from the neck.

Lastly, rugby has plenty of fans whose commitment to cheering on teams makes

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the game feel like the greatest thing a person can partake in. Apart from the excitement, it gives the players, rugby is extremely popular because of the companionship it builds. Rugby's camaraderie is unmatched and it is impossible to forget anyone who has ever been on your team.

Lastly, rugby is a game that never turns anybody away. On a normal team, you will find a few very good athletes and others who might not be very fast, but everyone matters in a game of rugby. To me, there is never a feeling of intimidation in rugby because it never has exclusive talents that can carry a team; the entire team is important.

Dominance in a rugby game is in ball possession. It is not about yardage as in soccer and American football. As such, we don't drive through the opponents to tackle the way footballers tactfully do with their hands and elbows; instead, we wrap the leg of a player with an arm and let them be brought to the ground by their own momentum. Knowing the existence of such a rule can perhaps remove all of the fearful perception about the game. However, rules don't absolutely rule out the possibility of mistakes, but they make players feel protected.

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