



I am delighted to present an ***“A Beginners Understanding to Rugby Document”*** it is a composition of information accessed through the internet, books, visual aids and experience by Jim Flynn an RFU Level III Coach – residing in and coaching Toronto, Ontario.

On behalf of Jim - Rugby Canada would like to ***acknowledge*** the reading resources of the RFU, iRB, NZRFU, IRFU, 365RUGBY and many other web sites that are many to note in drawing this document together. ***Thank you!***

For those fairly new to rugby it will give you a reasonable insight to how the game is played – ENJOY!

Good coaching, better rugby, better players.

*Martin.*

Martin Gallagher - Director of Development



## ***A Beginners Understanding to Rugby***

Rugby is a game in which the prime objective is to ground the ball across the goal line to score a try. In order to do this, a team's players must have possession of the ball. Their opponent's objective is to prevent them from scoring a try.

There are contests during the game for possession of the ball. These are:

- Scrums
- Lineouts
- Play after a tackle
- Rucks
- Mauls
- Fielding the kicked or "loose" ball
- Picking up the ball when it is on the ground after a tackle

During the game, contests for possession occupy a large amount of time. Scrum and lineout contests involve the forwards only, while rucks, mauls, fielding kicks and play after a tackle may involve the whole team. Once possession of the ball has been gained the team with it may use it to score a try in the following ways.

- Run with the ball towards the goal line avoiding defenders
- Pass the ball amongst team mates in a better position than themselves to assist in avoiding defenders
- Kick the ball towards the goal line, regain it and carry it over the goal line
- Kick the ball over the goal line and ground it

The aim of these actions is to score points by:

- A "try" - grounding the ball over the goal line - 5 points
- A "conversion" - converting the try to a goal by kicking the ball over the goalposts - 2 points
- A "field goal" - drop kicking the ball over the goalposts from the field of play - 3 points
- A "penalty" - place kicking or drop kicking the ball over the goalposts when a penalty has been awarded following an infringement by the opposing team - 3 points

## **Defending**

The team that is without possession of the ball has the task of:

- Preventing the team in possession from moving the ball down the field
- Preventing the opposing team from scoring
- Regaining possession of the ball

This is achieved by:

- Tackling the ball carrier
- "Snaffling" the loose ball away from the ball carrier



- Forcing the ball carrier over the touchline or forcing the ball carrier to kick the ball over the touchline.

This gives the team the chance to regain the ball at the lineout that follows

- "Pressuring" the ball carrier and supporting team mates into errors and minor infringements that result in a scrum from which the ball may be regained or "fielding" the ball kicked by opponents - to either catch it or pick it up if it is on the ground
- Picking up the ball that is on the ground

## **Set Plays**

Set plays are used to start and restart the game when stoppages occur. These are:

### **Kick-offs**

Kick-offs are taken from the centre of the halfway line:

- To start the game and to restart play after half-time - a place kick
- To restart play after a team has been scored - a drop kick

When the ball is kicked off it must travel beyond the 10-meter line unless an opponent first plays it.

No player of the kicking team may be in front of the ball when the kick is being taken.

The ball must not be kicked over the touchline on the full

### **Dropouts**

Dropouts are always drop kicks

They are taken from behind the 22-meter line and the ball must reach the 22-meter line or pass beyond it after the attacking team has:

- Kicked the ball over the goal line where it is grounded by a defending player
- Kicked the ball over the dead ball line or into touch in goal

No player of the kicking team may be in front of the ball when the kick is being taken

### **Scrum**

Scrums are formed in the field of play to restart play after minor Law infringements e.g. the ball is passed or knocked forward.

### **Lineouts**



Lineouts are formed to restart play after the ball has gone over the touchline or has been carried over it.

## **Penalty Kicks / Free Kicks**

Penalty kicks and free kicks are taken to restart play when one team has infringed the Law.

Free kicks are taken to restart play after a "fair catch" has been claimed. A fair catch or "mark" occurs when an opponent has kicked the ball and it is caught within the 22-meter line, the catcher calling "mark".

### **Temporary stoppages in Play**

After play has restarted at a set piece it is often halted and the contest for the ball takes place without any direction from the referee. These are called second phase plays and include rucks and mauls.

In addition, action that is temporarily stopped may continue after a player has been tackled, allowing others to gain possession of the ball and to run, pass or kick it.

All players may be involved in these contests although generally it is the forwards who are.

### **The use of the ball**

Forwards win the ball for the backs to initiate an attack in which both backs and forwards may be involved.

The aim of an attack is to carry the ball down the field to score points or to create a points scoring opportunity.

To do this effectively ball carriers must at all times be supported by team mates ready to receive a pass or assist the ball carrier in some other way.

### **Positioning**

Attacking and defending players must place themselves in the correct positions on the field.

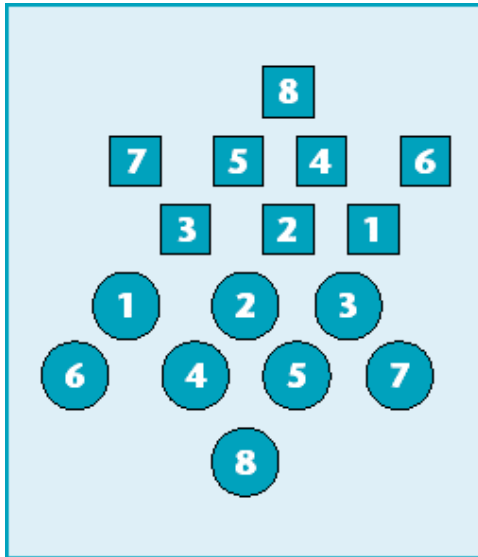
Position simply means players being where they are best able to perform their positional roles or there are two kinds of positioning:

- Static positioning - where to be before the action starts
- Dynamic positioning - where to go and what to do when the action starts

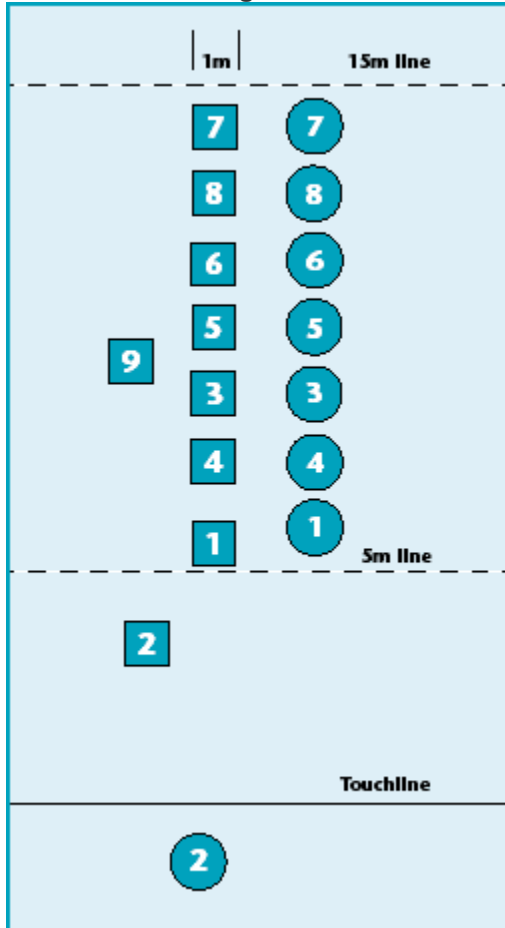
## **Static Positioning**

Note: In all diagrams the number corresponds to the positional numbers used in all rugby teams as directed by the IRB.

Diagram 1  
Scrum Positioning



**Diagram 2**  
**Lineout Positioning**



Usually No 2 - the hooker - will be the thrower and the other players will line up between the 5 meter and 15 meter lines:

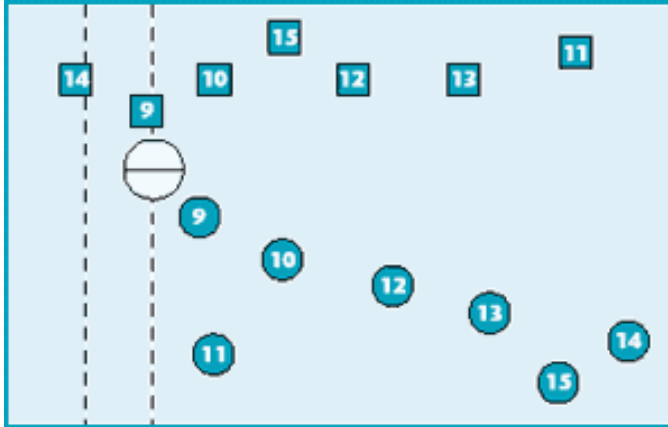
No. 1 prop/support No. 4 lock/jumper No. 3 prop/support No. 5 lock/jumper No. 6 flanker/support No. 8 No. 8/jumper No. 7 flanker/support No. 9 scrum half / half back

## **Backline Positioning**

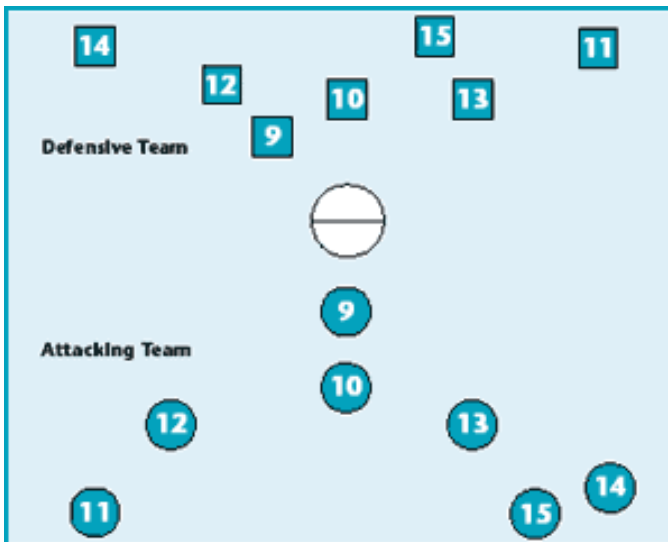
The key to backline formations for the following diagrams is:

No. 9 halfback No. 10 first five eighth / fly half / out half No. 11 left wing No. 12 second five eighth / inside centre No. 13 centre / outside centre No. 14 right wing No. 15 fullback

**Diagram 3**  
Backline Positioning from Scrums - from one side of the field



**Diagram 4**  
Backline Positioning from Scrums - from centre of the field



**Diagram 5**  
Backline Positioning from Lineouts

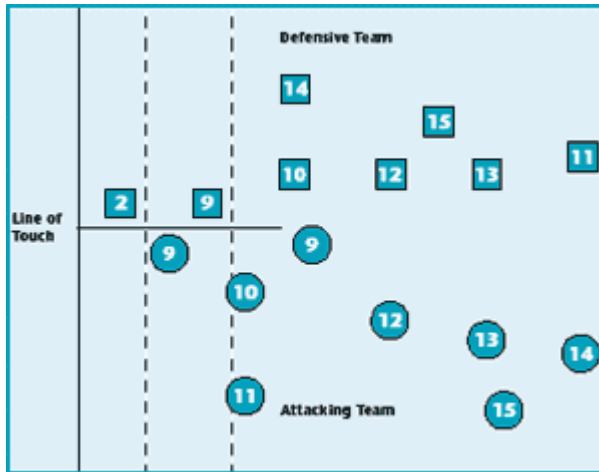
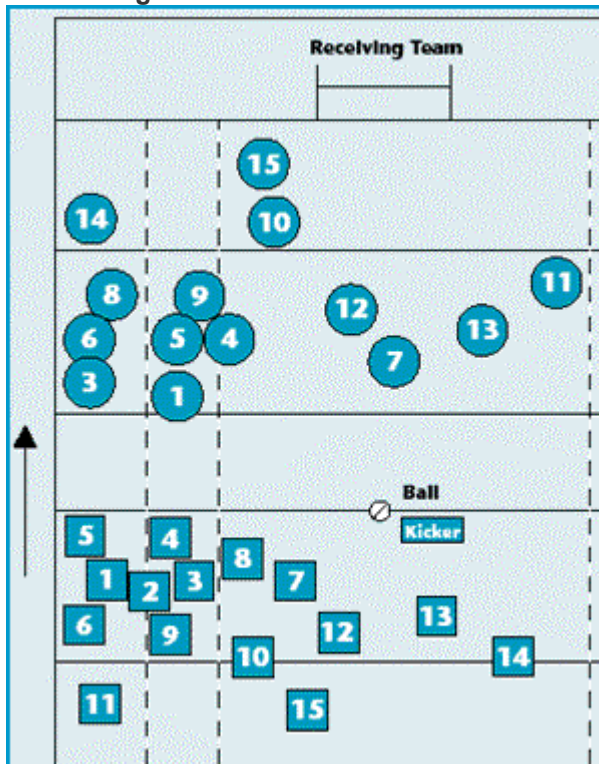


Diagram 6  
Positioning for the Kickoff





## Dynamic Positioning

For players to usefully contribute to the team's attacking or defensive efforts once the action commences the following guidelines will be helpful:

### Attacking Players

The ball carrier should:

- Go forward
- Run straight
- Run in balance to make a tackle more difficult and to withstand impact
- Pass to supporting players in a better position i.e. those with more room and further from opposing players
- If there are no supporting players in a better position either kick ahead or retain the ball and set up a ruck or maul

The supporting player should run closely enough to the ball carrier:

- For the ball to be passed no "heaved"
- To be able to support on either side - left or right
- Not run ahead of the ball carrier, as the ball cannot be passed forward

### Defending Players

Defending Players should:

- Run towards the ball carrier
- Run in line from inside the ball carrier so that the ball carrier is driven outwards
- Run in balance, ready to crouch - in a crouched position the defender can tackle, bind or recover the ball on the ground with minimal adjustment
- Not move away from a ball carrier until the play has passed or kicked the ball
- Support a team mate by completing the tackle on a partially tackled opponent
- Endeavor to be in a position to move towards the ball whether it is being carried or kicked

## Positional Responsibilities

### Forwards

There are two types of forwards - tight forwards and loose forwards. Their roles are different but complementary.

#### The tight forwards - The hooker, props and locks

- These players are called "the front five"
- They apply themselves to the job of winning possession of the ball at scrums, lineouts, rucks, mauls, kick-offs and drop-outs



- They also take part in general play

## **The Hooker**

As well as being a member of the front five the hooker has the additional tasks of:

- Hooking the ball in the scrum
- Usually throwing the ball into the lineouts

## **The Loose forwards - The flankers and No. 8**

These players are called "the loose forwards" or the back row.

They apply themselves to the job of winning possession at set pieces but often they may be less committed to this task than the front five.

Although they have an important role in winning possession at set pieces their key role is in ensuring the ball is retained at phase play and general play.

They have the additional task of moving quickly about the field in support of their backs on attack and applying pressure to their opponents in defense.

## **Backs**

There are three types of backs - the inside backs, the midfield backs and the back three. Again their roles are different, but complementary.

### **The inside backs - the halfback / scrum half; and first five eighth / fly half**

These players are the link between the forwards and the other backs.

By passing the ball quickly to the outside backs the opportunities to gain territory and to score points are increased.

These players need to be fast runners and passers and sound decision makers in choosing the best option to attack.

In defense they must be able to tackle their opposite player within the team's defense pattern

### **The midfield backs - second five eighth and center**

With more space, these players are able to accelerate and maneuver to provide the thrust and power of the attack. They should have sound passing skills for the attack to develop.

When defending, these players have to be strong tacklers to stop hard running opponents.



In both attack and defense, midfield backs run in balance to withstand impact and to apply themselves strongly yet safely to their tasks. In contact these players must be able to retain possession so that their team can continue to attack

### **The back three - the wings and fullback**

These players should be fast runners so that they can complete the attack initiated by the other backs to score tries.

They must be able to evade opponents.

In defense they must be able to tackle their opponent within the team pattern.

In defense they must also be able to field any balls that are kicked to them behind the remainder of their team.

When they field the ball by catching or picking up they may then counter attack by passing, running or kicking.

***Rugby is a game that balances the contest for the ball with continuing play. As a result it is a game in which players of a variety of abilities assist each other to stop the opposition from scoring points, to get the ball back and to score points themselves.***