



**IRFU Return To Rugby Guidelines:
COVID-19 Match Management Guidelines**

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| Summary Of Changes | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Revision Number | Date | Updates To: |
| 2.0 | September 9th | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RugbyConnect</i>• <i>Team Sheets</i>• <i>Replacement Cards</i>• <i>Medical Facilities</i>• <i>Technical Zones</i>• <i>Stud check/Front Row talk/Coin Toss</i>• <i>Water Breaks</i>• <i>Energia Community Series & AIL Guidelines</i> |

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1. Background

IRFU Return To Rugby Guidelines were issued on June 5th to map out a safe resumption of activity ahead of the 2020/21 season.

Included were guidelines for events covering the following areas:

- Appointment of an event specific COVID-19 Safety Officer
- Travel to/from club event
- Check-in (registration) Process/Pre-Event
- Facilities
- Pitch
- Post-event
- Social distancing behaviours

[Click here for IRFU Guidelines For Events \(Adult Based\)](#)

[Click here for IRFU Guidelines For Events \(Children & Youth Based\)](#)

In addition to the above guidelines, the COVID-19 Match Management Guidelines outlined in this document apply to club, schools and third-level rugby at all levels and age-grades.

Where a club is in any doubt, government and public health authority guidelines supersede IRFU guidelines at all times.

2. Current Government Guidelines

As of August 20th 2020, the latest government guidelines in relation to outdoor gatherings are as follows:

Government of Ireland: Sporting events and matches can continue to take place behind closed doors with:

Strict avoidance of gatherings, including social gatherings, before or after events;

Strict adherence to 2 metre physical distancing before and after events, during breaks in play, on the sidelines and avoidance of team huddles.

Competitions, events and tournaments planned up to September 13th 2020 should go ahead as planned with strict public health measures and protocols in place.

Northern Ireland Executive: Sporting events are exempt from Coronavirus Health Regulations which currently limit outdoor gatherings to 15 people.

This is only permissible where a risk assessment is carried out and necessary measures are put in place including adherence to social distancing and hygiene regimes.

All clubs are expected to meet these conditions in implementing their COVID-19 Club Health & Safety Plan (inc. Risk Assessment).

3. Pre-Match Operating Procedures

3.1 RugbyConnect:

All players must register individually to participate in the 2020/21 season.

- More information: <https://www.irishrugby.ie/running-your-club/rugbyconnect/>
- RugbyConnect platform: <https://rugbyconnect.irfu.ie/>

3.2 Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration:

3.2.1 Participating Teams:

Before attending, all home team and away team personnel must fill out a Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration to be verified by their attending COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer.

The away team officer should confirm to the home team officer that all away team personnel are compliant.

3.2.2 Match Officials:

Match officials will have completed their Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration in advance and are expected to present confirmation to the home team's COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer.

3.2.2 Match Day Personnel:

All match day personnel must also complete a Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration Form prior to arriving on site as per the [COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan Template \(inc. Risk Assessment\)](#).

[Click here for Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration](#)

3.3 Team Sheets

Team sheets must be produced as normal with full details of subs, replacements, and front row cover identified.

The referee will take a photo of the team sheet only and will not be taking any team sheets from the manager.

Teams must ensure by the Monday following a match that the electronic team sheet on RugbyConnect exactly matches that which the referee was given match day.

3.4 Replacement Cards

There will not be a requirement for managers to provide a replacement card to the referee. Instead, the referee will note the player leaving and coming onto the pitch.

4. Permitted Attendees/Participants

As per current guidelines, a behind closed doors event can include: 'Any individual involved in the participation, running, delivery, and broadcasting (if relevant) of the event'.

For the purposes of rugby matches this can include:

- Team personnel to a maximum of 40 people per team including: Players as per team sheet, Head Coach, Director of Rugby, Assistant Coach(es), Team Manager, Strength & Conditioning Coach, Video Analyst, Medical Personnel, Baggage Master, Water Carrier
- Match officials can include referee, touch judges, 4th official and referee assessor
- Match management officer
- COVID-19 Club Safety Officer & Compliance Officer(s)
- COVID-19 Health & Safety Committee members
- Pre-approved media personnel

Club members, committee members and officers not deemed necessary for the safe running of the event should not attend.

As per current government guidelines, no spectators should attend these events.

Parents/Guardians attending in a safeguarding /supervisory capacity are not classified as a spectator however strict social distancing and public health guidelines should be adhered to at all times.

In that context, one parent/guardian per child is permitted to attend at a sporting event, including a game or training session, should they consider it necessary.

All Parents/Guardians attending must complete a Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration Form prior to arriving on site.

5. Match Management Procedures

5.1 Match Management:

All events, including matches, must adhere to government and IRFU guidelines.

The home team should appoint an officer to oversee compliance and ensure the following measures are in place on match day:

- The latest government guidelines are being adhered to
- The away team and match officials are given a short briefing outlining the specific COVID-19 health & safety measures in place in the club
- The away team's COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer is assisted in implementing their own health & safety measures
- Match officials present a completed Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration (screen shot)

The home team's officer may be their COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer, the COVID-19 Club Safety Officer or another appointed member of the club's COVID-19 Health & Safety Committee.

A list of additional duties are available in the COVID-19 Safety Officer section of the [IRFU's Guidelines For Events](#).

5.2 Travel To/Arrival At The Venue

Players should travel alone to rugby or with members of the same household.

¹Where a vehicle must be shared, you should open the windows to create ventilation. Do not use the ventilation recirculation setting.

Keep seating as far apart as possible to maintain social distancing of 2 metres.

Attendees should arrive at the club no more than 5 minutes before the beginning of warm up.

All attendees (players/coaches etc.) must arrive in kit and only change footwear/jersey at the club.

All attendees must sanitise their hands prior to going on pitch at the club.

¹ [HSE Safety In The Workplace](#)

Clubs should enforce one-way systems around the club both in the car park, and common walking areas, with regular visuals of a 2metre social distance.

5.3 Match Facilities

Hand sanitiser should be available to all.

Changing rooms and shower facilities should remain closed.

Any necessary team meetings/briefings should be conducted on-pitch with physical distancing in place.

Home team, away team and match officials should be zoned on pitch for warm up.

Due to the need for “strict avoidance of gatherings...after events,” clubs under the jurisdiction of the Government of Ireland should not convene for post-match meals at present.

Clubs under the jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Executive must abide by Coronavirus Health Regulations

Technical Zones should be large enough to cater for social distancing between all those in the TZ, including subs and the Technical Zone attendees permitted in the zone. Jerseys/jackets etc should not be exchanged between players and subs.

5.4 Medical Facilities

An isolation room should be available to separate any child or other person displaying or complaining of COVID-19 related symptoms.²

A medical room should be available for use in line with public health measures.

Players who require pre-match treatment from a medical professional, including strapping, may arrive prior to five minutes before the warm-up.

All other strapping should be applied at home.

5.5 Match protocols

5.5.1 Stud check/Front Row talk/Coin Toss

These will all take place on the field of play at a time agreed with the referee.

² [Guiding Principles in Assessing Contact Risk of Rugby during The COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

5.5.2 Behaviours

Team members must refrain from:

- Handshakes
- High Fives
- Spitting or clearing of nostrils on pitch or grounds
- Post-match 'tunnel'
- Sharing water bottles

5.5.3 Water Breaks

A water break of one minute will be introduced after approximately 20 minutes in each half to allow players access their own personal water bottles.

The exact time will be determined by the referee and will fall at an appropriate time and break in play after a score or close to the half-way line.

5.6 Departure From The Club

In accordance with government guidelines, both teams are asked to depart the club immediately after the warm down at full-time. No meetings or gatherings should take place.

Until such time as changing rooms can reopen, team personnel are advised to bring an extra change of clothing to allow for weather conditions.

5.7 Concurrent Matches:

Clubs are asked to minimise the amount of matches taking place in the club at the same time and to stagger kick-off times.

The IRFU is asking Clubs to refrain from the staging of blitz events for mini rugby before September 13th.

This to minimise the need for a high volume of coaches/parent/guardians/officials to be present.

Further guidelines will be issued along with mini rugby guidelines for the 2020/21 season.

Appendix 1 – Energia Community Series & All-Ireland League Guidelines

Please note the below only applies to teams competing in the Energia Men’s Community Series and Energia Men’s All-Ireland League.

Where variances for the Energia Women’s Community Series and Energia Women’s All-Ireland League apply, they are **marked in green**.

Replacements:

Technical Zones should be large enough to cater for social distancing between all those in the TZ, including subs and the 3 Technical Zone attendees permitted in the zone. Jerseys/jackets etc should not be exchanged between players and subs.

In AIL matches between Division 1 clubs, up to six replacements may be used.

In ECS matches, this also applies to matches involving a Division 1 and a Division 2 team, although this may be amended to suit provincial requirements.

Women’s ECS follows provincial regulations. The Energia Women’s AIL sees up to 7 replacements permitted.

Contracted players:

Up to 6 provincially contracted players per team may play in matches between Division 1 clubs. This also applies to the ECS. This does not apply to Academy, Sub Academy, National Talent Squad or Development contracted players, where an unlimited number are permitted.

Rolling subs:

These are permitted in the ECS and AIL. The usual limit of 12 applies.

Dual Status:

Normal AIL regulations apply in that a club may use 3 players a maximum of 6 times each. This is spread over the whole season to include both ECS and AIL.

The Energia Women’s AIL permits 5 players to be used an unlimited number of times.

Women’s ECS Dual Status falls under provincial regulations.

4th Official:

It is a requirement in both ECS and AIL matches that the home club provide a 4th Official as per the AIL regulations and their duties will be that which they normally

carry out. The 4th Official must complete the 4th Official sheet noting replacements on and off and produce this after the game so the referee can take a photo of it.

Not applicable to the Women's game.

Bibs:

Orange ibs supplied to clubs for the 3 permitted Technical Zone personnel are to be worn as in last season.

Not applicable to the Women's game.