



Rugby football

Rugby football is the collective name for the team sports of rugby union and rugby league.

Rugby football started at Rugby School in Rugby, Warwickshire, England,^[1] where the rules were first codified in 1845.^[2] Forms of football in which the ball was carried and tossed date to the Middle Ages (see medieval football).^[3] Rugby football spread to other English public schools in the 19th century and across the British Empire as former pupils continued to play it.

Rugby football split into two codes in 1895, when twenty-one clubs from the North of England left the Rugby Football Union to form the Northern Rugby Football Union (renamed the Rugby Football League in 1922) at the George Hotel, Huddersfield, over payments to players who took time off work to play ("broken-time payments"), thus making rugby league the first code to turn professional and pay players.^[4] Rugby union turned professional one hundred years later, following the 1995 Rugby World Cup in South Africa.^{[5][6]} The respective world governing bodies are World Rugby (rugby union) and the Rugby League International Federation (rugby league).^[7]

Canadian football and, to a lesser extent, American football were once considered forms of rugby football, but are seldom now referred to as such. The governing body of Canadian football, Football Canada, was known as the Canadian Rugby Union as late as 1967, more than fifty years after the sport parted ways with rugby rules.^{[8][9][10]}

Forms

Following the 1895 split in rugby football, the two forms rugby league and rugby union differed in administration only. Soon the rules of rugby league were modified making limited tackle counts (6) and allowing for both teams shared possession of the football, resulting in two distinctly different forms of rugby.

The Olympic form of rugby is known as Rugby Sevens (based on rugby union format). In this form of the game, each team has seven players on the field at one time playing seven-minute halves. The rules and pitch size are the same as rugby union.^[11]

History

Antecedents of rugby

Although rugby football was codified at Rugby School, many rugby playing countries had pre-existing football games similar to rugby.

Forms of traditional football similar to rugby have been played throughout Europe and beyond. Many of these involved handling of the ball, and scrummaging formations. For example, New Zealand had Ki-o-rahi, Australia marn grook, Japan kemari, Georgia lelo burti, the Scottish Borders Jeddart Ba'



Football match on the 1846 Shrove Tuesday in Kingston upon Thames, England



Griffins RFC Kotka, the rugby union team from Kotka, Finland, playing in the Rugby-7 Tournament in 2013



Calcio Fiorentino match in Piazza Santa Maria Novella in Florence, Italy, painted by Jan Van der Straet

and Cornwall Cornish hurling, Central Italy Calcio Fiorentino, South Wales cnapan, East Anglia Campball, Ireland caid, an ancestor of Gaelic football, and France had La Soule.

Establishment of modern rugby

In 1871, English clubs met to form the Rugby Football Union (RFU). In 1892, after charges of professionalism (compensation of team members) were made against some clubs for paying players for missing work, the Northern Rugby Football Union, usually called the Northern Union (NU), was formed.^[12] The existing rugby union authorities responded by issuing sanctions against the clubs, players, and officials involved in the new organization. After the schism, the separate clubs were named "rugby league" and "rugby union".^[13]

Date	Event
1100–1800	Many different types of football are played throughout Britain (see medieval football).
1830	Running with the ball in hands became common in 1830s at Rugby School and Rugby School football became popular throughout the UK in the 1850s, and 1860s.
1845	First written code of rules adopted at Rugby School by William Delafield Arnold , W. W. Shirley and Frederick Hutchins. ^{[14][15][16]}
1857	The first ever match in Scotland was in December 1857, Edinburgh University v. Edinburgh Academicals
1861	The Montevideo Cricket Club is founded in Montevideo, Uruguay. This was first club to play rugby outside the British Islands.
1863	The Football Association (FA) is formed, formalising the schism (banned carrying ball in hands, holding other players in place - akin to blocking -, tackling, and hacking - kicking an opponent in the shins) between association football and rugby football.
1864	The first rugby clubs are formed, followed by hundreds more in Cumberland, Lancashire and Yorkshire in the 1870s, and 1880s.
1865	The British Army plays a game of rugby against civilians in Montreal, introducing rugby to the country. This movement would later evolve into Canadian football.
1871	The Rugby Football Union is founded, following a meeting of 25 clubs at the Pall Mall restaurant.
1871	First recognised international rugby match, played between England and Scotland.
1876	Matthew Bloxam's letter is published in <i>The Meteor</i> . It claims William Webb Ellis, a pupil at Rugby School, picked up the ball and invented rugby. Although a Rugby Football Union inquiry in 1895 found no actual proof, it decided to perpetuate the myth.
1877	The number of players is reduced from 20 to 15 a side.
1880	English Rugby rules required for a tackled player, when the ball was "fairly held", to put the ball down immediately for scrummage . Walter Camp proposed at the US College Football 1880 rules convention that the contested scrummage be replaced with a "line of scrimmage" where the team with the ball started with uncontested possession. This change effectively started the evolution of the modern game of American football away from its rugby origins.
1883	First Home Nations Championship between England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
1886	Concerned at the growing dominance of the largely working-class northern clubs, the Rugby Football Union introduces strict amateur rules: no one was allowed to seek or receive payment or other material reward for taking part in the game.
1888	New Zealand Native football team tours Britain, Australia and New Zealand in 1888 and 1889.
1890	Modern points scoring is uniformly accepted by the Home Nations for the 1890–91 season.
1892	Charges of professionalism are laid against rugby football clubs in Bradford and Leeds, after they compensated players for missing work. This was despite the fact that the Rugby Football Union (RFU) was allowing other players to be paid, such as the 1888 British Isles team that toured Australasia, and the account of Harry Hamill of his payments to represent New South Wales (NSW) against England in 1904.
1893	Yorkshire clubs propose allowing players to be paid six shillings 'broken-time' payments when they miss work due to matches. RFU votes down proposal. Widespread suspensions of northern clubs and players begin.
1895	The Schism in rugby football results in the formation of the Northern Rugby Football Union (NRFU). Many factors played a part in the split, including the success of working class northern teams, a decree by the RFU banning the playing of rugby at grounds where entrance fees were charged, threat of expulsion from the RFU if clubs cannot prove their amateurism, and the banning of "broken time payments" to players who had taken time off work to play rugby. Twenty-two clubs met at the George Hotel, Huddersfield and formed the "Northern Rugby Football Union". Within fifteen years of that first meeting in Huddersfield, more than 200 RFU clubs had left to join the Northern Union.
1897	To make the game more exciting, the Northern Union abolishes the line-out and reduces value of all goals to two points. Line outs were replaced with punting the ball back into play from the touch-line. Tries worth three points.
1897	The Challenge Cup is established and proves a success from the start. Batley became the first winners, beating Saint Helens 10–3.
1898	Professionalism is introduced in the Northern Union. The professionalism is strictly part-time, with players obliged to have other "proper" jobs.
1900	Rugby union features at the 1900 Olympics . It finishes in the 1924 Olympics .
1901	The experiment in the Northern Union with the punt-out ends after only four years. In future, play will be restarted with a scrum after the ball goes out of play
1903	In Canada, the Ontario Rugby Football Union instituted the Burnside rules, which, like Walter Camp's rules for American football, would start the evolution of the modern sport of Canadian football away from its rugby roots.

1904	First rugby league international match. England lose to <u>Other Nationalities</u> 3–9, at Wigan.
1905	Wales narrowly beat <u>The Original All Blacks</u> , in what was dubbed as "The Game of the Century".
1906	England play South Africa (known as the <u>Springboks</u>) in rugby union for the first time. <u>James Peters</u> is withdrawn from the England squad after the South Africans objected to playing against a black player.
1906	<u>James Peters</u> becomes the first black person to play rugby union for England, against Scotland.
1906	In the Northern Union the number of players is reduced from fifteen to thirteen a side, in order to allow more room for creative play. The early form of play-the-ball is introduced as the game's way of restarting play after a tackle.
1907	A New Zealand professional rugby team tours Britain. Albert Henry Baskerville, a Post Office clerk in New Zealand, organises a touring side branded the 'All Golds' in Sydney due to the players receiving a share of any profits from the tour. They play under rugby union rules in Sydney. On their way to Britain, Australia's greatest player, <u>Dally Messenger</u> , joins them on tour. They win the game's first test series 2–1, but Baskerville dies of pneumonia on the way home at the age of 25.
1907	Rugby league spreads to Australia and New Zealand. The New South Wales Rugby Football League is founded at Bateman's Hotel in Sydney. The New South Wales Rugby League sets up an eight-team competition after a row with the <u>New South Wales Rugby Union</u> over compensation for injured players. The first Premiership is won by <u>South Sydney</u> . Rugby league goes on to displace rugby union as the primary football code in New South Wales and Queensland.
1908	The first Australian Kangaroo tourists visit Britain. <u>Hunslet</u> become the first club to win all four trophies available to them; the Championship, the Challenge Cup, the Yorkshire Cup and the Yorkshire League. Hunslet were led by <u>Albert Goldthorpe</u> , a dominant figure in the early years of the code.
1910	The Rugby Union Home Nations Championship becomes the <u>Five Nations Championship</u> when France joins.
1910	The first Northern Union British Lions tour Australia and New Zealand, winning the test matches in Sydney, Brisbane and Auckland.
1912	South African rugby union tour of the British Isles and France. The tourists achieved a " <u>Grand Slam</u> " of victories over all five major European teams, England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and France.
1914	British tourists defeat Australia 14–6 to win Ashes in final test, finishing with only ten men in what becomes known as 'Rorke's Drift' Test match. Proposals are made and preliminary steps taken in Australia to amalgamate the rules of rugby league with <u>Australian rules football</u> – Australia's dominant football code outside New South Wales and Queensland – to form a <u>universal football</u> code for the country, ^[17] but efforts to that end subside as <u>World War I</u> escalates, ^[18] and are never seriously revived.
1922	Northern Union changes its name to the <u>Rugby Football League</u> , the name used for the sport in Australia.
1925	<u>All Blacks Rugby Union</u> tour of Britain, France, and Canada. The New Zealanders remained undefeated throughout the tour, earning the title "The Invincibles".
1929	First rugby league Challenge Cup Final is played at Wembley. Wigan defeat Dewsbury 13–2 in front of 41,500.
1930	Rugby union's European Cup starts, outside the Five Nations. It is interrupted by WWII.
1930	Unprecedented fourth rugby league test match played between Britain and Australia at Rochdale after third test is drawn 0–0. Britain win the test 3–0 to take the Ashes.
1932	First rugby league match under floodlights.
1933	On New Year's Eve, England and Australia play in Paris – the first game of rugby league in France. The French had been excluded from the rugby union Five Nations competition amid allegations of professionalism, so the country was receptive to the new game.
1934	Rugby league is established in France by <u>Jean Galia</u> , a former rugby union international and champion boxer. By 1939, the French league has 225 clubs.
1941	The French Vichy government bans rugby league, because of its links with the Allies and a desire to ban all professional sports. The code's funds and property are all confiscated or passed to rugby union clubs. Rugby union is allowed to carry on unscathed and regains much of the ground it had lost to rugby league. To this day, the rugby league clubs' assets have never been returned to them.
1943	A Northern Command army rugby league side defeats a Northern Command rugby union side 18–11 at Headingley playing rugby union rules. The following year a Combined Services rugby league side beats a Combined Services rugby union side 15–10. These are the only league v. union matches played until 1996.
1944	With the fall of the Vichy Government, the French ban on rugby league is lifted.
1945	<u>Brian Bevan</u> makes his rugby league debut for Warrington. Over the next 16 seasons he scored 740 tries for the club in 620 games. His career total was 796, more than 200 ahead of his nearest rival.
1946	The <u>Lance Todd Trophy</u> first presented to Challenge Cup final Man of the match. Wakefield's Billy Stott is first winner. <u>Lance Todd</u> , killed in a car accident in 1942, was a 1907 New Zealand tourist who managed Salford from 1928 to 1940.
1946	The most famous rugby league tour of all, as the Lions sail to Australia on HMS <i>Indomitable</i> , stoking the boilers to keep fit. After a five-day train journey across Australia, <u>Gus Risman's</u> team retain the Ashes, drawing one and winning two Tests.
1949	The <u>French Rugby League</u> is banned from using 'rugby' in its name. Changes its name to Jeu à Treize (Game of Thirteen).

1951	The <u>South American Rugby Championship</u> commences.
1951	The <u>South African Rugby Union</u> tour the British Isles and France. South Africa achieved a second five-nation Grand Slam.
1951	Just a decade after being wound up, France win their first rugby league series in Australia. They repeat the feat by winning again in 1955.
1951	Rugby league's <u>Cec Thompson</u> becomes the first black player to represent Great Britain in any sport.
1952	Rugby union's European Cup restarts.
1954	102,569 spectators watch the 1953–54 rugby league Challenge Cup final at Bradford, setting a new record for attendance at a rugby football match of either code.
1954	First <u>Rugby League World Cup</u> , the first for either code of rugby, staged in France. Great Britain beat France 16–12 in final at Parc des Princes, Paris.
1956	Springboks' rugby union tour of New Zealand. South Africa suffer their first ever test series loss against New Zealand.
1957	Australia wins the Rugby League World Cup.
1958	Rugby league's Cec Thompson becomes the first black manager of any sport in Britain.
1958	Great Britain defeat Australia 25–18 in the second rugby league test match with only eight fit players on the pitch. <u>Alan Prescott</u> plays for 77 minutes with a broken arm.
1960	Great Britain wins the Rugby League World Cup. The tournament is decided on a league system.
1964	Substitutes allowed in rugby league for the first time, but only for players injured before half-time.
1966	The Rugby League International Board introduces a rule that a team in possession is allowed three play-the-balls and on the fourth tackle a scrum is to be formed. The Southern hemisphere adopts the rule the following year, but it becomes six-tackle rugby in 1972, and in 1983 the scrum was replaced by a handover.
1967	Professional rugby league adopts Sunday as its main match day, in a bid to reverse declining attendances.
1968	Substitutes allowed in rugby union for the first time, but only for injured players.
1969	Springbok rugby union tour to Britain and Ireland. The tour is marked by protests against <u>apartheid</u> ; South Africa would not tour the Home Nations again until after the end of apartheid.
1969	Rugby league finally gains recognition as a sport in British universities and colleges.
1970	Great Britain wins rugby league's Ashes in Australia, after winning the final two test matches.
1970	Rugby league's World Cup attracts poor crowds in England. Australia win.
1971	New Zealand wins a rugby league series in Britain for the first time since the original 1907–08 tour.
1971	Lions rugby union tour of Australia and New Zealand. This is the only Lions team to have won a test series in New Zealand.
1971	Springbok rugby union tour of Australia is marked by protests.
1972	Timekeepers and sirens were introduced into rugby league for first time.
1972	Great Britain regains the Rugby League World Cup in France.
1973	Rugby union's <u>Barbarians</u> defeat the All Blacks at <u>Cardiff Arms Park</u> .
1973	The <u>British Amateur Rugby League Association</u> sets itself up to run the sport at grassroots level after complaining of neglect by the RFL. Formal re-unification takes 30 years.
1974	Rugby union's Lions tour of South Africa. The notorious '99' call.
1975	Wales and England field separate teams in the Rugby League World Cup, played over several months in both hemispheres. Australia takes the trophy by finishing one point ahead of England in the final league table.
1976	New Zealand rugby union tour of South Africa. Twenty-eight nations boycott the 1976 Summer Olympics in protest against the <u>International Olympic Committee's</u> refusal to ban New Zealand from the games for defying the IOC's ban on sporting contact with South Africa.
1978	New Zealand rugby union tour of Britain and Ireland – New Zealand completes <u>Grand Slam</u> of victories over England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales for the first time.
1980	Australia establishes rugby league's State of Origin series, where Queensland and New South Wales born players face each other. From 1982 onwards, it is played as a three match series and is recognised as the fiercest, toughest rugby in the world.
1981	The 'Sin Bin' is introduced into rugby league, in Australia.
1981	Springbok rugby union tour of New Zealand.
1981	South Africa is banned by the <u>International Rugby Board</u> from international competition until such time as apartheid ended.

1982	Rugby union's <u>Pacific Tri-Nations</u> between Tonga, Fiji and Samoa.
1982	Australian rugby league tourists win all tour games for first time and become known as 'The Invincibles'.
1983	A rugby league try is increased to four points. The character of the game changes further with the introduction of the turn-over possession on the sixth tackle, drastically reducing the number of scrums. The Sin Bin is introduced for offences that do not merit a sending off.
1983	The Rugby League international transfer ban is lifted.
1984	Australia rugby union tour of Britain and Ireland – Australia completes the Grand Slam of victories over England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales for the first time.
1987	<u>New Zealand Rugby Union</u> defeats France 29–9 in the first <u>Rugby Union World Cup</u> , held in New Zealand and Australia.
1987	A "free gangway" between the two codes of rugby at amateur level is introduced, but individual cases of discrimination continue.
1987	The RFU introduces the Courage Leagues into Rugby Union – a league pyramid with roughly 1000 clubs playing in 108 leagues each with promotion and relegation.
1988	Rugby league's Wigan start their run of eight Challenge Cup final victories. The modern version of the Team of All the Talents, featuring players like <u>Ellery Hanley</u> , <u>Andy Gregory</u> , <u>Jason Robinson</u> and <u>Shaun Edwards</u> dominate for a decade, winning three World Cup titles in the process.
1989	Widnes beat Canberra 30–18 in first official <u>World Club Challenge</u> .
1990	Russia takes up rugby league. Russia goes on to appear in the 2000 World Cup and to enter club sides in the Challenge Cup.
1990	Blood-bin introduced into rugby league.
1990	The ban on French Rugby League using 'rugby' in its name is lifted. It changes its name back to Rugby à Treize.
1991	Australia defeat England 12–6 at Twickenham, London, in the second Rugby Union World Cup, held in the British Isles and France.
1992	The Springboks are readmitted to international rugby union.
1992	73,631 at Wembley see Australia defeat Great Britain 10–6 in the Rugby League World Cup final.
1994	<u>David Hinchliffe</u> MP introduces the Sports (Discrimination) Bill, to ban discrimination of amateur players of rugby league and other sports.
1994	The three British Armed Services recognises rugby league as a sport. Rugby league would be on the same footing as other sports in the Services.
1995	The International Rugby Board declares Rugby Union an 'open' professional game. It removes all restrictions on payments or benefits to those connected with the game.
1995	South Africa defeats New Zealand 15–12 (after extra time) at Ellis Park, Johannesburg in the third Rugby Union World Cup, held in South Africa.
1995	Rugby League centenary is celebrated by reviving the World Cup in Britain. Australia beat England 16–8 in the final at Wembley. Fiji, Tonga, South Africa and Western Samoa join the established nations in a successful tournament, whilst Ireland, Scotland, the US, Russia, the Cook Islands, Moldova and Morocco all compete in an <u>Emerging Nations Tournament</u> .
1995	The <u>Heineken Cup</u> is formed as a competition for 12 Rugby Union European clubs.
1995	As part of the struggle for television rights in Australia, the RFL in Britain is offered £87 million by News Corporation to set up rugby league's <u>Super League</u> . The game agrees to switch to a summer season, with Paris St Germain joining leading British clubs in a 14 team competition.
1996	The RFL introduces video referees into rugby league's Super League.
1996	Rugby union's <u>Tri Nations Series</u> begins between Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.
1996	Bath Rugby and Wigan, England's top union and league sides respectively, made history by playing against each other at both codes of rugby. The first match was at Maine Road, Manchester under league rules, Wigan beating Bath 82–6; then two weeks later the return match was held at Twickenham under union rules, Bath 44 beating Wigan 19.
1996	Inaugural season of <u>Super Rugby</u> , a professional rugby union competition fielding teams from Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.
1997	In Australia, the Super League war came to an end, with News International and the Australian Rugby League agreeing to merge their competitions to create the <u>National Rugby League</u> .
1998	<u>Rugby sevens</u> at the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games commences.
1999	IRB Sevens World Series commences.
1999	Australia defeat France 35–12 at the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff in the fourth rugby union World Cup, held in Wales with matches also being played in England, Scotland, Ireland and France.

2000	The IRB introduces the 'Sin Bin' into international rugby union, after being trialled on the domestic stage within the southern hemisphere's Super 12 competition.
2000	The IRB introduces the "Television Match Official" (TMO) into international rugby union, after being trialled on the domestic stage within the southern hemisphere's Super 12 competition.
2000	Rugby union's Courage League is replaced by the <u>Zurich Premiership</u> .
2000	Rugby union's Five Nations becomes the Six Nations Championship, when Italy joins.
2000	New Zealand narrowly defeats Australia at Stadium Australia (Sydney) in rugby union, in front of 109,874 spectators, a world-record crowd for either code.
2001	Lions rugby union tour of Australia. The <u>Wallabies</u> defeat the Lions in a series for the first time ever.
2001	Inaugural season of <u>Pro14</u> , a professional rugby union competition fielding teams from Ireland, Italy, Scotland, South Africa and Wales.
2003	Rugby union's Churchill Cup commences with Canada, the US, and England Saxons (England "A") as permanent participants and one invited team (later three).
2003	England defeat Australia 20–17 (after extra time) at Stadium Australia, Sydney in the fifth Rugby Union World Cup, held in Australia.
2003	The <u>Rugby League European Federation</u> (RLEF) is created to promote the sport across Europe.
2003	Inaugural season of <u>Top League</u> , a professional rugby union competition in <u>Japan</u> .
2004	Inaugural season of <u>Top Challenge League</u> , a professional second tier rugby union competition in <u>Japan</u> .
2006	French team <u>Catalans Dragons</u> are granted a rugby league Super League licence.
2007	South Africa defeat England 15–6 at <u>Stade de France</u> , in the sixth rugby union World Cup, held in France with matches also being played in Scotland and Wales.
2008	Rugby league holds its first World Cup since 2000, with New Zealand defeating Australia in Brisbane by a score of 34–20 in the final to take their first Rugby League World Cup.
2011	New Zealand defeat France 8–7 at <u>Eden Park</u> , Auckland, in the seventh rugby union World Cup, held in New Zealand.
2011	14 teams qualify for the 2013 Rugby League World Cup: Australia, England, New Zealand, Samoa, Wales, Fiji, France, Papua New Guinea, Ireland, Scotland, Tonga, Cook Islands, Italy and United States of America.
2012	The Tri-Nations series is expanded to include Argentina, and is renamed <u>The Rugby Championship</u> .
2015	New Zealand defeat Australia 34–17 at <u>Twickenham Stadium</u> , England, in the eighth rugby union World Cup, held in the United Kingdom. In doing so, New Zealand becomes the first team to win consecutive titles.
2016	Inaugural season of <u>PRO Rugby</u> in the United States. The competition folded after just one season.
2016	<u>Rugby sevens</u> at the <u>Olympic Games</u> commences.
2017	<u>Toronto Wolfpack</u> become the first fully professional rugby team in <u>Canada</u> , joining the British/French professional rugby league system in the third tier <u>League 1</u> .
2018	Inaugural season of <u>Major League Rugby</u> , a professional rugby union competition fielding teams in the <u>United States</u> and <u>Canada</u> .
2019	Inaugural season of <u>Global Rapid Rugby</u> , a professional rugby union competition fielding teams from the <u>Asia-Pacific</u> region.
2020	Inaugural season of <u>Súper Liga Americana de Rugby</u> , a professional rugby union competition in <u>Latin America</u> . Inaugural seasons of <u>Super Rugby Aotearoa</u> , <u>Super Rugby AU</u> , and <u>Super Rugby Unlocked</u> .
2021	Inaugural seasons of <u>Continental Club Rugby League</u> , a third-tier competition for European clubs, and <u>Super Rugby Trans-Tasman</u> , a professional rugby union competition in Australia and <u>New Zealand</u> .
2023	Inaugural season of <u>Super Rugby Americas</u> , a professional rugby union competition in <u>Americas</u> .

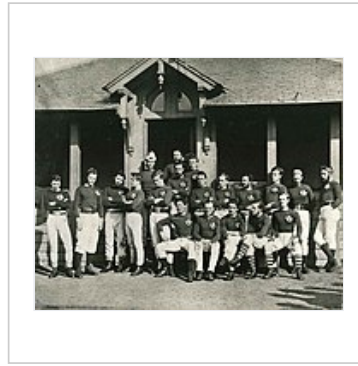
Early forms of rugby



A scrum in a La soule game in Basse Normandie, France, 1852



Depiction of a "football" game in London, 1868. Illustration by Godefroy Durand.



Scotland first rugby team (wearing brown^[19]) for the 1st international, v. England in Edinburgh, 1871



The England team in the 1st international, v. Scotland in Edinburgh, 1871



Global status of rugby codes

Rugby Union

Rugby union is both a professional and amateur game, and is dominated by the first tier unions: New Zealand, Ireland, Wales, England, South Africa, Australia, Argentina, Scotland, Italy, France and Japan. Second and third tier unions include Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Fiji, Georgia, Germany, Hong Kong, Kenya, Namibia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Samoa, Spain, Tonga, the United States and Uruguay. Rugby Union is administered by World Rugby (WR), whose headquarters are located in Dublin, Ireland. It is the national sport in New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Georgia, Wales and Madagascar, and is the most popular form of rugby globally.^[20] The Olympic Games have admitted the seven-a-side version of the game, known as Rugby sevens, into the programme from Rio de Janeiro in 2016 onwards.^[21] There was a possibility sevens would be a demonstration sport at the 2012 London Olympics but many sports including sevens were dropped.^[22]



Rugby field in Tapa Parish, Estonia

The premier international competition is the Rugby World Cup. Currently there are four major domestic professional leagues globally:

- Premiership Rugby:
 -  England (10 teams)

- Super Rugby:
 -  Australia (5 teams)
 -  Fiji (1 team)
 -  New Zealand (5 teams)
 - Pacific Islands (1 team)
- Top 14:
 -  France (14 teams)
- United Rugby Championship:
 -  Ireland (4 teams)
 -  Italy (2 teams)
 -  Scotland (2 teams)
 -  South Africa (4 teams)
 -  Wales (4 teams)

Rugby League

Rugby league is also both a professional and amateur game, administered on a global level by the Rugby League International Federation. In addition to amateur and semi-professional competitions in the United States, Russia, Lebanon, Serbia, Europe and Australasia, there are two major professional competitions—the Australasian National Rugby League and the Super League. International Rugby League is dominated by Australia, England and New Zealand, though Tonga and Samoa have threatened this hegemony regularly since 2017. In Papua New Guinea, it is the national sport.^{[23][24][25]} Other nations from the South Pacific and Europe also play in the Pacific Cup and European Cup respectively.

The premier international competition is the Rugby League World Cup, which is contested quadrennially. The premier international club competition is the World Club Challenge, which is contested annually in February. Currently there are two major domestic professional leagues globally:

- National Rugby League:
 -  Australia (16 teams)
 -  New Zealand (1 team)
- Super League:
 -  England (11 teams)
 -  France (1 team)
 -  Wales (currently no teams, part of system)

Gridiron Football

In Canada and the United States, rugby developed into gridiron football. During the late 1800s (and even the early 1900s), the two forms of the game were very similar (to the point where the United States was able to win the gold medal for rugby union at the 1920 and 1924 Summer Olympics), but numerous rule changes have differentiated the gridiron-based game from its rugby counterpart, introduced by Walter Camp in the United States and John Thrift Meldrum Burnside in Canada. Among unique features of the North American game are

- the separation of play into downs instead of releasing the ball immediately upon tackling
- the requirement that the team with the ball set into a set formation for at least one second before resuming play after a tackle (and the allowance of up to 40 seconds to do so)
- the allowance for one forward pass from behind the site of the last tackle on each down
- the evolution of hard plastic equipment (particularly the football helmet and shoulder pads)
- a smaller and pointier ball that is favorable to being passed but makes drop kicks impractical
- a generally smaller and narrower field measured in customary units instead of metric (in some variants of the American game a field can be as short as 50 yards between end zones)

- a distinctive field (shaped like a gridiron, from which the code's nickname is derived) with lines marked in five-yard intervals

Worldwide, there are two major professional leagues of gridiron football, both domestic:

- National Football League:
 -  United States (32 teams)
- Canadian Football League:
 -  Canada (9 teams)

Rules

Distinctive features common to both rugby codes include the use of an oval ball and the prohibition of the forward pass. Due to the prohibition, players can gain ground only by running with the ball or by kicking it. Furthermore, unlike American and Canadian football, neither league nor union players wear any sort of protection or armour.

The two rugby codes differ as the result of changes made to the rules of rugby league. League implemented these changes with the aim of making a faster-paced and more try-oriented game than rugby union.

The main differences between the two games, besides league having teams of 13 players and union of 15, involve the tackle and its aftermath:

- Union players contest possession following the tackle: depending on the situation, either a ruck or a maul can occur. League players may not contest possession after making a tackle: play is continued with a *play-the-ball*.
- In league, if the team in possession fails to score before a set of six tackles, it surrenders possession. Union has no six-tackle rule; a team can keep the ball for an unlimited number of tackles before scoring as long as it maintains possession and does not commit an offence.

Set pieces of the union code include the scrum and the line-out. The scrum occurs after a minor infringement of the rules (most often a knock-on, when a player knocks the ball forward). After an infringement, packs of opposing players "scrum" or push against each other for possession. In a line-out, parallel lines of players from each team, arranged perpendicular to the touch-line, attempt to catch the ball thrown from touch. A rule has been added to line-outs which allows the jumper to be pulled down once a players' feet are on the ground.

In the league code, the scrum still exists albeit with greatly reduced importance. In league, the scrum involves fewer players and is rarely contested. Set pieces are generally started from the play-the-ball situation.

Many of the rugby league positions have names and requirements similar to rugby union positions. Notably, however, there are no flankers in rugby league.

Culture

Home countries

In England, rugby union is widely regarded as an "establishment" sport, played mostly by members of the upper and middle classes. For example, many pupils at public schools and grammar schools play rugby union, although the game (which had a long history of being played at state schools until the 1980s) is becoming increasingly popular in comprehensive schools.^[26] Despite this stereotype, the game, particularly in the West Country is popular amongst all classes. In contrast, rugby league has traditionally been seen as a working-class pursuit. Another exception to rugby union's upper-class stereotype is in Wales, where it has been traditionally associated with small village teams made up of



A rugby lineout being conducted. A group from either team lifts a player to fight and catch the ball for their team. (OSUWRC 2014)



Rugby union: A scrum between the Crusaders and the Brumbies (May 2006)

coal miners and other industrial workers who played on their days off.^[27] On Ireland, both rugby union and rugby league are unifying forces across the national and sectarian divide, with the Ireland international teams representing both political entities.

In Australia, support for both codes is concentrated in New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory (55% of the population), though rugby league is far more popular. The same perceived class barrier as exists between the two games in England also occurs in these states, fostered by rugby union's prominence and support at private schools.^[28]

Exceptions to the above include New Zealand (although rugby league is still considered to be a lower class game by many or a game for 'westies' referring to lower class western suburbs of Auckland and more recently, southern Auckland where the game is also dominant), Wales, France (except Paris), Cornwall, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Scottish Borders, County Limerick (see Munster Rugby) and the Pacific Islands, where rugby union is popular in working class communities. Nevertheless, rugby league is perceived as the game of the working-class people in northern England^[29] and in the Australian states of New South Wales and Queensland.^[28]

In the United Kingdom, rugby union fans sometimes used the term "rugger" as an alternative name for the sport (see Oxford '-er'), although this archaic expression has not had currency since the 1950s or earlier.^[30] New Zealanders refer to rugby union simply as either "rugby" or "union", or even simply "football", and to rugby league as "rugby league" or "league".^[31] In the U.S., people who play rugby are sometimes called "ruggers", a term little used elsewhere except facetiously.

Internationally

There is a strong tradition of rugby union in France, particularly in the Basque, Occitan and Catalan areas along the border with Spain. The game is very popular in South Africa, having been introduced by English-speaking settlers in the 19th century. British colonists also brought the game with them to Australia and New Zealand, where the game is widely played. It has spread since to much of Polynesia, having particularly strong followings in Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga. Rugby union continues to grow in the Americas and parts of Asia as well. French influence, and the influence of ex-pat students studying in France, expanded rugby's reach to Romania and Georgia which are the preeminent European nations behind the Six Nations Championship. British influence spread the game to Argentina, where the game took root, and the game developed in Italy thanks to influence from both France and Argentina; both Argentina and Italy have become Tier 1 nations in the sport, while Georgia, officially a Tier 2 nation, regularly ranks up with the Tier 1 countries.

Injuries

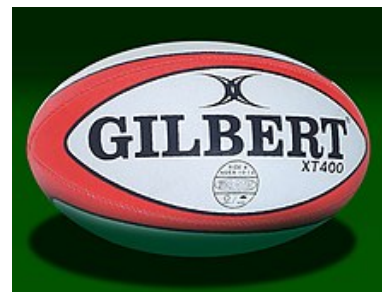
About a quarter of rugby players are injured in each season.^[32]

Being a high contact sport, rugby union has the highest announced rates of concussions^[33] and outside England also has the highest number of catastrophic injuries^[34] out of any team sport.^{[35][36]} Research finding that during match play, concussion was reported at a higher level, and during training at a lower level, but still at a higher level than most players of another sport to receive.^[36]

Rugby ball

A rugby ball is a diamond shape ball used for easier passing. Richard Lindon and Bernardo Solano started making balls for Rugby school out of hand stitched, four-panel, leather casings and pigs' bladders. The rugby ball's distinctive shape is supposedly due to the pig's bladder, although early balls were more plum-shaped than oval. The balls varied in size in the beginning depending upon how large the pig's bladder was.

In rugby union, World Rugby regulates the size and shape of the ball under Law 2 (also known as Law E.R.B); an official rugby union ball is oval and made of four panels, has a length in-line of 280–300 millimetres, a circumference (end to end) of 740–770 millimetres, and a circumference (in width) of 580–620 millimetres. It is made of leather or suitable synthetic material and may be treated to make it water resistant and easier to grip. The rugby ball may not weigh more than 460 grams or



A Gilbert rugby football as used in rugby union

less than 410 and has an air pressure of 65.71–68.75 kilopascals, or 0.67–0.70 kilograms per square centimetre, or 9.5–10.0 lbs per square inch.^[37] Spare balls are allowed under the condition that players or teams do not seek an advantage by changing the ball. Smaller sized balls may also be used in games between younger players. Much larger versions of traditional balls are also available for purchase, but these are mainly for their novelty attraction.

World Cups

The Rugby League World Cup was the first World Cup of either of the Rugby codes and was first held in France in 1954, and as of 2013 occurs on a 4-year cycle. It is an international tournament that is organized by the Rugby League International Federation. The event is played in the league format and features the top 16 teams from around the world. Australia won the 2017 Rugby League World Cup, played in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. The Kangaroos backed this up by winning the 2021 tournament also.

The Rugby World Cup, which was first held in New Zealand and Australia in 1987, occurs every four years. It is an international tournament organized by World Rugby. The event is played in the union format and features the top 20 teams from around the world. South Africa won the 2019 Rugby World Cup, which was played in Japan. Since 2013, the two World Cups alternate every two years during the four-year period.

Rugby shirt

Rugby shirts were formerly entirely made of cotton but are now made of synthetic fabric. This material has the advantage of not absorbing as much water or mud as cotton.^[38] Owing to the more aggressive nature of the game, rugby clothing, in general, is designed to be much more robust and hardwearing than that worn for association football.

The rugby jerseys are slightly different depending on the type of rugby game played. The shirts worn by rugby league footballers commonly have a large "V" around the neck. The players in rugby union wear jerseys with a more traditional design, sometimes completely white (Cahors Rugby in France). The number of the player and his or her surname are placed on the upper back of the jersey (often name above number, with the number being significantly larger and more central), and the logo of the team on the upper left chest.

Rugby betting

With the popularity of rugby over the years, many betting establishments have made it possible for viewers of the game to place wagers on games. The various types of wagers that can be placed on games vary, however, the main types of bets that can be placed are as follows:

- Fixed-odds betting
- Futures/Outright Bets
- Prop Bets / Specials
- Over/Under Bets

Like most team sports, both forms of rugby are vulnerable to match-fixing, particularly bets involving easily manipulated outcomes such as conceding penalties and first point scorer. A recent example is a deliberate infringement by Ryan Tandy in order for the first points scored to be a penalty goal in a 2010 NRL match; the attempt backfired when instead of taking a shot at goal, a try was scored.

See also

- College rugby

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