



ARE YOU READY TO PLAY RUGBY? PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

RUGBY FITNESS

Rugby is a multi-faceted, physically demanding sport which requires a high degree of all-round fitness. The fitness demands and training requirements for any player will depend on the position he/she plays and the level and age of the team that he/she plays for. All players should engage in fitness or conditioning programmes encompassing all [components of Rugby Fitness](#) before playing in a competitive game.

COMPONENTS OF RUGBY FITNESS

As well as having all the core skills of the game, players should also aim to improve & develop the following components of Rugby Fitness:

- ✿ **POWERFUL** – To compete for the ball at the breakdown and burst through tackles
- ✿ **STRONG** – To Maul for the ball and/or generate a scrummage drive
- ✿ **QUICK OF THE MARK** – in attack and defence
- ✿ **AGILE** – To evade and change direction and avoid contact
- ✿ **LAST THE GAME** – To play at a high intensity for up to 80 minutes.

To make the most of a player's natural abilities, the process of getting fit to play should start young. (*See SRU "Long Term Player Development Strategy" – A guide for Clubs & Schools) – Physical Factors.*) The younger the player, the more emphasis should be on having fun through general physical activity. As a player gets older, then the need to develop more specific Rugby Fitness is required, particularly if the player aspires to play at a higher level.

GETTING FIT TO PLAY

Rugby is a collision sport in which injuries occur, and it should be the personal responsibility of players to ensure that they are in the best possible physical condition before returning to play after a break from the game, and in particular when returning from injury. If unsure as to how to go about improving fitness levels to play again, players should consult their Coaches, Teachers, Fitness Coaches, and Physiotherapists if returning after injury. All players should follow a general programme of simple exercise routines which can help to minimise the chances of certain types of injuries. Areas of the body commonly injured in Rugby players include ankles, knees and shoulders.

REMEMBER: "GET FIT TO PLAY - DON'T PLAY TO GET FIT"!

WHY IS INJURY PREVENTION IMPORTANT?

- ✿ To improve performance as a player by maximising training and playing time
- ✿ To Minimise loss of Rugby training and playing time due to injury
- ✿ To reduce the risk of long-term physical damage

WHAT CAN PLAYERS DO TO PREVENT INJURY?

- ✿ There are various strategies to prevent injury, one of which is performing **Specific Multi-joint, Multi-planar exercises**

HOW DO SPECIFIC EXERCISES PREVENT INJURY?

- ✿ Strength, Flexibility and coordination of muscles, tendons and ligaments are required to allow a player's body to move in the correct way
- ✿ Moving correctly minimises the stress and strain put on a player's body, and therefore helps to prevent injury
- ✿ Players can improve the movement patterns in their body by performing specific exercises
- ✿ Building strength and mobility around certain joints can help to protect them against injury

WHAT TYPE OF EXERCISES HELP TO PREVENT INJURY?

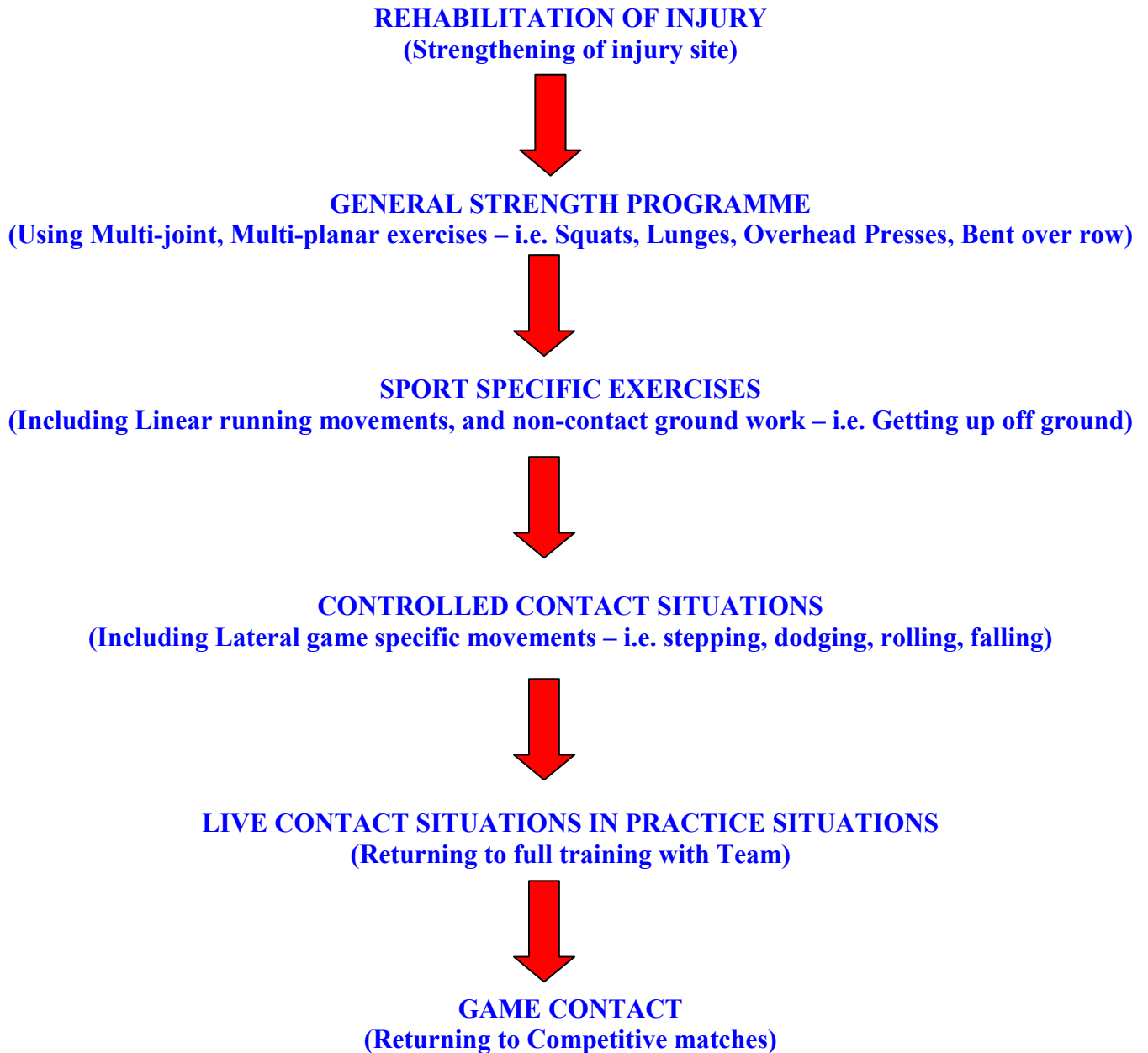
Exercises that help prevent injury can be divided into five main areas. They are specific to the joints and muscles involved in Rugby:

1. General flexibility exercises of the joint. (Strength without flexibility is valueless)
2. Muscle strength and stability exercises around a joint which promote good movement control of the joint
3. Core trunk stability exercises for the transmission of energy. Energy is transferred from lower limbs to upper limbs through the trunk. The pelvis and trunk produce muscular torques (forces) to accelerate smaller joint and muscle actions
4. Proprioceptive exercises. These exercises help to stabilise joints by ensuring that all the muscles acting across a joint are being used to stabilise and support that joint. Unstable surfaces are ideal for this type of training, which can progress from non-weight bearing to dynamic weight bearing exercises as the joint is strengthened.
5. Sport-specific technique exercises. This type of exercise recreates patterns of movement and physical stresses that will be encountered during a game of Rugby, helping to develop physical coordination and mental familiarity with certain actions and conditions.

PREPARING FOR CONTACT

When returning to play after a break from the game, it is important that there should be a controlled programme of physical activities which includes a phased approach to returning to full contact.

The following staged programme is recommended for **ALL PLAYERS** when returning to play after a break from the game:



SUPERVISION OF RETURN TO PLAY PROGRAMME

Players can often opt to return to competitive games before being fully fit. Often, Coaches can put pressure on players to return early, which jeopardises any previous rehabilitation or preparation programme and potentiates the likelihood of further injury. It is recommended that all players are closely monitored by Coaches, Teachers and particularly Physiotherapists before returning to play competitive matches.



FURTHER PHYSICAL CONDITIONING INFORMATION

For further specific information on Physical Conditioning for Rugby, go to the IRB “Rugbyready” website on: <http://www.irbrugbyready.com/irbrr/en/physical8.jsp>