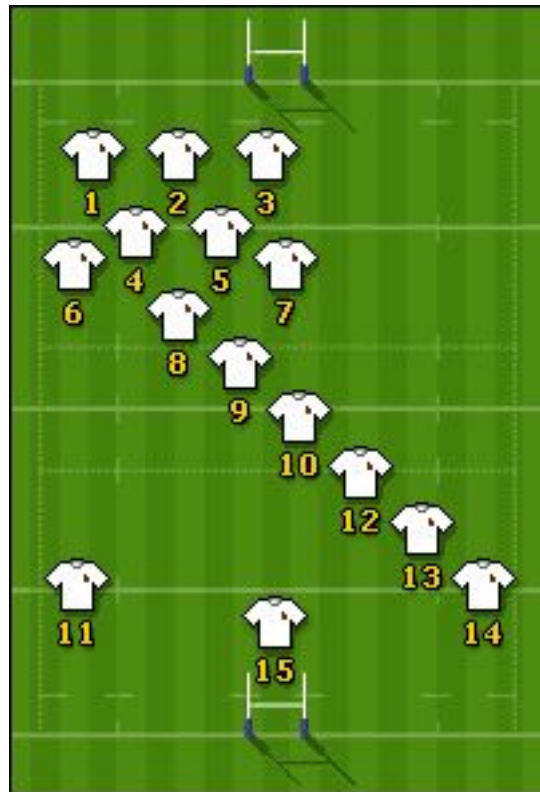


Rugby Positions

In Rugby Union there are 15 players who take to the pitch (field) and they fall into one of two categories: forwards or backs. Use the image below for a reference to each of the positions. The image shows how the players would (traditionally) form up at a scrum situation. Make sure to check out the “rugby terminology” page in the Spectators Section if you are unfamiliar with any of the terms used here.



Standard Rugby Positions Layout

Forwards- There are 8 forwards numbered 1-8 who form the scrum. These are the guys that get stuck in and primarily are there to defend their territory and win any scrums, rucks and mauls, and on offense make the hard yards by charging up the field. Forwards are, in short, primarily responsible for securing the ball and presenting it cleanly to the backs in various situations.

Backs- In contrast to the forwards, the backs are the players used primarily to attempt to score the ball and move it forward by various means. Though they

should still be involved in rucks and mauls, because they are not involved in scrums and lineouts they are charged first and foremost with making the most of any ball won by the forwards.

Both the backs and the forwards are joined together by the scrum half (#9) and fly half (#10) who act as the tacticians of the game. These two positions control the flow of play between the pack (forwards) and the backs.

1-Loosehead Prop □ - Usually one of the stockier players on the field, the Loosehead prop is essential to winning scrums and lineouts. Contrary to popular opinion, the prop position is actually one of the most technically demanding and skill oriented positions on the pitch. It's difficult to consistently win with a bad set of props as securing possession in scrums will be nearly impossible. The prop's primary responsibilities are to win scrums, lineouts, rucks and mauls.

2-Hooker □ - A front row forward who is essential to winning scrums, as his job is to hook the ball backwards to his team during a scrum. Often roves more like a loose forward (Flankers and Eightman) than a tight five player, as he is not as responsible for pushing in the scrum (though everyone should push in a scrum ideally). The hooker still absorbs a lot of force in the scrum so he needs to be hearty enough to handle a lot of pressure during scrums. He is located between the two props. His primary responsibilities are to win scrums by hooking the ball back, (typically) throwing into the lineouts, and being very active at the rucks and mauls. Hookers can also expect to do more support running than the two props.

3-Tighthead Prop □ - With the Loosehead Prop the Tighthead prop will support the hooker in the front row. Similar to his Loosehead Prop colleague he will generally be one of the biggest and stockiest players on the pitch. The Tighthead Prop position is arguably the toughest position on the field to do properly and is the cornerstone of the scrum as the majority of the force of the opposition scrum is channeled through him. It is a surprisingly technical position as the tighthead prop is at a slight mechanical disadvantage to the opposition loosehead prop who only has one shoulder in. This means he needs great technique to make up the difference against a quality loosehead. The prop's primary responsibilities are to win scrums and lineouts, and to hit the rucks and mauls.

4-Lock- (aka Second Row) □ - You have two Lock forwards. These players tend to be the tallest players on the pitch and are as a result vital at lineout time. They act in similar fashion to the props in that they are sturdy in defence and hard charging on offense. Primarily concerned with winning set pieces, rucks and mauls. The two Locks bind together and fit in between the hooker and props hips and are essential for a strong push in the scrums. Locks are often important short distance ball carriers meant to batter the opposition defense and gain forward momentum.

5-Lock- (aka Second Row) □ Same as the #4 Lock forward above.

6-Blindside Flanker- (aka Flank, Wing Forward, or Breakaway) □ Flankers fit on to the sides of the scrum helping push the props, but should always be ready to break off immediately from the scrum to chase down the ball. As a member of the Loose Forwards (Flankers and Eightman) the Blindside Flanker is looking to be as near the ball as he can at all times and serve as a link between the forwards and backs on offense and as a roving defender when not in possession. Since the openside flanker is usually the first to the breakdown after a scrum, the blindside flanker will often be the first ball carrying forward option for a scrum half to pass to. For this reason, the blindside flanker tends to be more of a ball carrier than the openside flanker who will be more consumed with being the first to the breakdown. Defensively, covering the blindside channel from Eightman picks and weak side plays at scrum time is one of the Blindside Flankers most urgent responsibilities.

7-Openside Flanker- (aka Flank, Wing Forward, or Breakaway) □ The Openside Flanker is a ball winner who can also support backs on attacking runs. His other key job (similar to the Blindside Flankers need to cover the weak side) is to attack the opposition's fly half from scrums (if running a drift defense) and to always be a tireless pursuer of the ball. For both Flankers, but particularly the Openside Flanker, the phrase "always be near the ball" sums up their essential role whether on offense or defense. An openside flanker should be an absolute monster in the contact area, constantly trying to turnover the ball. The openside flanker also has to have a very high level of fitness to play his position well.

8-Eightman- (aka Number 8) □ Appropriately named the number 8, the Eightman sits at the back of the pack (literally the eighth man to fit into the scrum) and, like Flankers, will be looking for loose balls and then supporting his backs when on the attack. Another key responsibility is controlling the ball at the back of the scrum for the scrum half once it has been won or picking the ball up himself from the back of the scrum to charge up the field or pass to his scrum half to try and create an overload.

9-Scrum Half- (aka Scrummie, or Half Back) □ A key position on the pitch. The scrum half is responsible for feeding the ball into the scrum on offense or guarding and pressuring the opposition scrum half on defense. The Scrum Half also typically passes the ball from scrums to his fly half or other backs. Although usually one of the smallest players on the pitch, he also has to be one of the most physical as he will be getting into the thick of it throughout the game as he plays so close to the opposition forwards and is always around the break down to distribute the ball.

10-Fly Half- (aka Five-Eighth, First Five-Eighth, First Five, Stand Off, Fly, or Pivot) □ The key decision-maker amongst the backs whose role is to distribute

the ball. The Fly-Half is almost guaranteed to be a major point scorer for his side given his frequent time with ball in hand (as the first receiver from scrums) and typically good kicking skills. Fly Halves should generally be able to pass very well and be able to kick well as they will be called upon to kick the ball and relieve pressure given they typically receive the ball first amongst the backs.

11-Left Wing- (Blindside Winger) □ Out on his own on the blindside or short side of the field, the Blindside Winger's job is to run strongly when he receives the ball, gain territory and score tries just like his strong side counterpart. The Winger may not get the ball as often as other backs, but he is designated as the finisher and should look to attack any space opened up for him and score tries. He will also need to have good kicking skills to help support the fullback in making clearance kicks to relieve pressure. Wingers are usually the fastest players on the field given the nature of their job.

12-Inside Center- (aka Second Five-Eighth, or Second Five) □ The Inside Center tends to perform a lot of the defensive work for the backs and is integral to getting the ball out wide to the wingers. The Inside Center is typically the largest back if he is being used for lots of crash ball or is one of the most skilled if he is being utilized more as a second Fly-Half, pivot style role.

13-Outside Center- □ Typically very good try scorers and ball carriers, the Outside Center is the last man before the wingers. Typically the Outside Center is used to set up the Winger, but should attack any opportunity in the defensive line first and foremost before passing to the winger.

14-Right Wing- (Strong Side Winger) □ Like the left wing, the Strong Side Winger's job is often to hang around on the periphery until he gets passed the ball at which point he will hopefully make the most of any opportunities given him and score some tries.

15-Fullback- (aka Sweeper) □ The Fullback is the last line of defense as he normally hangs back in defense to cover opposition kicks and as such should have superb tackling skills. Traditionally one of the most athletic players on the field, he should be able to make 50-60 meter dashes to score tries if he is called to fill in the offensive line. A good fullback also needs excellent field vision to pick the right spots to attack on offense when he sees an opening. He will also need to be able to kick well from deep to help clear the ball and relieve pressure when the opposition are attacking.