

# SMALL BLACKS U7 ENVIRONMENT



# Be a role model for kids and adults

A role model is a person who serves as an example by influencing others. For many children, the most important role models are their parents and caregivers. It can also be their coach!

Children learn how they should be treated by the way we behave towards them and others.

You can do this by:

- Using positive, age appropriate language.
- Helping kids manage their emotions in a positive way.
- Being able to hear feedback without getting defensive.
- Asking for help when you need it as a coach.
- Modelling good practice when it comes to touch - Explaining what you're doing and why, and asking permission first.
- Following the rule of two - avoid 1:1 time and supervise in pair in changing rooms, when travelling.

Show respect and concern for others

Commitment to Team

Clear Set of Values

Passion and Ability to Inspire



Communicate and interact with everyone

Selflessness and Acceptance of Others

# RUGBY SMART

## KEEPING OUR PLAYERS SAFE



Small Blacks Rugby is all about making the game as safe and enjoyable for all participants therefore taking responsibility is everybody's task.

- It is advisable to have at least one qualified First Aid person with all teams.
- Your local St Johns will have course dates for a variety of First Aid qualifications.
- All team players, management and parents should be aware of where the team or club's telephone, First Aid Kit, ice and stretcher are situated.
- It is important that all players' contact details are available at all times, in case of an emergency.
- Clubs are responsible for ensuring that all team managers and coaches are aware of the procedures surrounding Serious Injury Reports for NZ Rugby and injury reports for their own Union.

### Mouthguards

- Mouthguards are compulsory in rugby. They help to reduce injuries to the teeth, lips, mouth and tongue, and help to reduce jaw fractures.
- Since mouthguards became compulsory in 1997 there has been a 47% reduction in rugby related dental injury claims to ACC. Over half of all dental injuries happen at training. In 2003, the law was tightened to allow referees to enforce wearing of the mouthguards and consequently there have been further reductions.
- Coaches must ensure players wear mouthguards at trainings, especially in activities involving collision or body contact.
  - ▶ Remember it is compulsory that players wear mouthguards during games
  - ▶ Check your players have mouthguards – make the big call if they don't – no mouthguard, no play.
- A mouthguard needs to be replaced every season to ensure it provides the best protection.

### Headgear

Headgear must be fitted properly and securely to prevent serious cuts to the scalp and ears. Remember this is no evidence that headgear protects against concussion.

### Concussion

Concussion can occur when a player receives an impact to the head or body that causes the brain to shake inside the skull. It's important to know that a player does not need to be knocked out to have a concussion.

As a coach, it is really important that you are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of concussion. New Zealand Rugby has developed a Sideline Concussion Checklist to help you with this.

First steps:

- Apply first aid principles: Danger, Response, Send for help, Airway, Breathing, Circulation.
- If unconscious do not move unless trained to do so.
- Do not remove headgear (if present) unless trained to do so.
- Call 111 if there is concern regarding the risk of structural head or neck injury.

These red flags are the most important signs and symptoms of a concussion to recognise:

- Neck pain
- Confusion
- Vomiting
- Seizure
- Weakness, tingling or burning in arms or legs
- Decreasing or loss of consciousness
- Bad or worsening headache
- Unusual behaviour
- Double vision

If a player displays any of these they need to immediately seek urgent medical attention.

Other symptoms are covered in what you see, what players say and what players feel.

What you see:

- Lying on the ground not moving or slow to get up
- Loss of balance/co-ordination
- Disorientation/confusion
- Visible injury to face or head (especially in combination with any signs)
- Grabbing/clutching of head
- Dazed, blank or vacant look

What they say:

If they can't answer these questions, they may have a concussion

- Where are we playing or training?
- Which half/time is it now?
- Who scored last in this game?

- What team did you play last week/game?
- Did your team win the last game?

What they may feel:

- Blurred vision
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Difficulty sleeping
- Headache/pressure in the head
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Fatigue
- More emotional
- Nervous or anxious
- Irritable
- Problems with memory
- Unable to concentrate

\*It's important to remember that these symptoms may occur right after the event, or up to 48 hours later.

Players who are concussed are often unaware of their symptoms and may want to continue playing - they usually do! As a coach it is important that you take responsibility for the player by removing them from training or playing, and get them checked out.

If in doubt sit them out.

Players with suspected concussions should be regularly checked and not left alone for the first four hours. You should ensure that the player has a 'buddy', gets home safely, and you should advise their parents or guardian to seek medical attention within 48 hours.

Children and teenagers need to be managed more carefully than adults. New Zealand Rugby recommends children and teenagers should rest for 48 hours and then can start light to moderate exercise that is guided by how bad their symptoms are. Students are required to return to school, or full studies, before recommencing exercise.

After 48 hours of complete rest a GRADUATED RETURN TO PLAYING (GRTP) programme must be followed.

## GRADUATED RETURN TO PLAY STAGES

Rehabilitation Stage	Minimum Time U19
1 <b>Rest / No Activity</b> Avoid physical activity, thinking tasks and screens (TV, phone and laptops)	2 days
2 <b>Light to moderate exercise</b> Symptom-guided activities such as walking, jogging or stationary cycling.	14 days
3 <b>Moderate to high exercise</b> Running drills, no impact activities.	2 days
4 <b>Non-contact training drills</b> Progression to more complex training drills: passing, catching, weight training.	2 days
MEDICAL CLEARANCE FROM DOCTOR	
5 <b>Full contact practice</b> May participate in normal training activities (contact training).	2 days
6 <b>Return to play</b> Player rehabilitated.	1 day

You can find more information of concussion at [Rugbysmart.co.nz/concussion](http://Rugbysmart.co.nz/concussion)

### Treating the Injury R.I.C.E.D.

A soft tissue injury such as a sprain, strain, or bruise should immediately be treated with the R.I.C.E.D. procedure:

- Rest - Rest reduces further damage. Avoid as much movement of the injured part as possible to limit further injury. Don't put any weight on the injured part.
- Ice - Ice cools the tissue and reduces pain, swelling and bleeding. Onto the injured area place ice wrapped in a damp towel. Apply ice for 20 minutes every two hours for the first 48 hours.
- Compression - Firm bandaging helps to reduce bleeding and swelling. Ensure that bandaging is not so tight that it cuts off circulation or causes tingling or pain past the bandage. Between ice treatments bandage the injury.
- Elevation - Elevate the injured area to stop bleeding and swelling. For comfort and support raise the injured area on a pillow.
- Diagnosis - Consult a medical professional such as a doctor or physiotherapist especially if you are worried about the injury, or if the pain or swelling gets worse. Also seek treatment if the pain or swelling has not gone down significantly within 48 hours.

## WEIGHT LOSS FOR SMALL BLACKS TO MAKE TEAMS

NZ Rugby strongly advises against Small Blacks players losing weight in order to make weight restricted teams. The use by children of weight loss techniques, including, but not limited to, saunas, fluid restriction and/or crash dieting, in order to make teams with weight restrictions should be actively discouraged. These techniques can lead to dehydration and undernourishment in the short term, thereby impairing mental and physical performance. In the long term these techniques may interfere with normal growth and development and lead to serious health consequences, including the development of eating disorders and organ damage.

Any weight loss programme undertaken by a child for health reasons should be done in full consultation with a healthcare professional.

## SAFE CLUBS SAFE KIDS

### CHILD PROTECTION

### SAFE CLUBS SAFE KIDS

Our rugby clubs are a wonderful place for kids to learn and grow. We all work hard to deliver a great experience for them and part of this is creating a safe environment. To do this we need to understand the risks children can be exposed to and to prevent it from happening while they are in rugby's care.

- F**ollow safe club guidelines
- L**ook out for signs of abuse
- A**ct on any concerns
- G**et support

## FOLLOW SAFE CLUB GUIDELINES

Forming a safe and welcoming environment is a key way we can prevent harm from occurring in our clubs. Here are some simple things you can do before and during the season.

Prevention starts with the kind of environment and team culture we create.

- At the start of the season create a charter or code of conduct that sets out clear rules for how people should act throughout the season - including players, coaches and caregivers.
- Familiarise yourself with your club's Child Protection Policy and Overnight and travel guidelines, including who the Child Protection Advisor (CPA) is, and what the process for reporting is.

- Talk about the Child Protection Policy with caregivers and let them know how to contact the CPA if they have any concerns.
- Deal with bullying, sexually inappropriate play or fighting immediately. This will reinforce the way others should conduct themselves.
- Use age-appropriate language and speak to the team in a positive manner. This will make the kids feel safe and supported.
- Encourage kids to talk about their concerns, and listen, believe and act on these concerns.
- Avoid negative side-line behaviour. Show support for the children with positivity and enthusiasm and encourage side-line supporters to do the same.

### Practical Tips

Being alone with children should be avoided. Supervising in pairs in changing rooms, knocking before entering where kids are changing, and keeping trainings group-based are all measures you can take to ensure everyone stays safe.

If you need to contact a child, be sure to include their caregiver and keep it rugby-related. This includes texting and using social media.

There will be times when 1:1 time is unavoidable, for example if a child gets sick and must be taken home but you can keep yourself safe by:

- Letting the child's caregiver know what's happening. If you can't get hold of them let your team manager know.
- If you must transport a child home by themselves, have them sit in the back seat and drop them off without detouring to other places.
- Explain to the child and always get their permission for what you are doing.
- Rugby is a physical game and an important part of coaching is also making sure our team are doing things correctly and safely.

### Travelling and overnight stays

- If travelling with the team, make sure there's a lead person assigned to manage the trip who can distribute information to parents/caregivers and who will have access to all necessary contact details.
  - Where possible there should be a mix of male and female adults, accompanying children especially on overnight trips.
  - Ensure adults aren't sleeping alone with kids other than their own on overnight trips.
  - Full guidelines for Overnight Stay and Travel are on the website or from your PU.
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- Ensure any physical contact with children is appropriate and relevant to the activity and happens in open environments.



- It's okay to correct kids' technique to help keep them safe. Always explain to the child what you're doing and ask their permission. The easiest ways to put this into practice is:
  - ▶ Explain to the team how you will correct their technique.
  - ▶ Ask before you do it and get their permission. E.g. "Johnny is it ok if I move your waist down, so you don't hurt your back going into the scrum?"
- Touch can also be a good thing and helping a player up, giving them a high five, or putting an arm around someone who is hurt where everyone is comfortable with this is fine. It is also okay for you as the coach to let kids know if you are not a hugger.

## **L**OOK OUT FOR SIGNS OF ABUSE

Children can be vulnerable to many forms of abuse - physical, sexual, or emotional, or neglect. Sadly, sometimes children may experience abuse and we need to know what to look for.

Some of the things you might see include bruising particularly in the shape of objects, unexplained injuries, burns or cuts where the story doesn't add up.

Sometimes kids tell us that something is wrong by their behaviour - they may be withdrawn, anxious, particularly aggressive, self-destructive, have sexual knowledge and play that seems beyond their years or there may be big changes in their behaviour that worry you.

## **A**CT ON ANY CONCERNS

### **Behaviours in adults**

It's okay to ask questions and remind adults of these rules if we see behaviours such as:

- An adult or older child consistently seeking alone time or having especially close relationships with certain children.
- Buying gifts or giving money for no apparent reasons.
- Overstepping children's personal boundaries, for example making a child to sit on their lap. making kids do things that is significantly beyond their skill
- Being threatening or degrading towards a child
- Letting kids have access to alcohol or other adult material.

All concerns of child abuse should be acted upon. It is vital that you do not do your own investigation, and instead report them to a trained Union Child Protection Advisor (CPA) who can take the appropriate action. You can also call Oranga Tamariki on 0508 FAMILY anytime for advice.

## Disclosures

If a child tells you they are being harmed all you need to do is listen and reassure them, don't ask the child questions other than 'who, when, where', write down word for word what was said and tell your CPA.

Contact the police on 111 if the child is in immediate danger. The police have a dedicated team of investigators who focus on child protection in all 12 districts. They will take over the process and can advise you.

## GET SUPPORT

Dealing with possible child abuse can be hard for the person handling the concern. Talk with your Provincial Union about getting support through the process and having a confidential debrief.

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

Creating a great environment for your players, their whanau and supporters is critical to having fun and being safe.

Your role as coach in making this happen is essential. No matter how confident we might be that people will have fun and be safe there is a real need to be intentional about creating culture.

This can sound scary or 'a big ask' for some people but really it is as simple as:

- Inviting the wider team in for a conversation
- Bringing together the wisdom and strengths of the team
- Looking for ways to maintain the culture we want to see
- Getting everyone on the same page

THE RUGBY WAY or TE ARA RANGA TIRA can be a blueprint for your time coaching and a strong base for your team and clubs' culture.

The Rugby Way is made up of four pou or pillars which uphold our game.

- BE WELCOMING
- BE OUR BEST
- BE PASSIONATE
- PLAY FAIR

Inviting players and whanau to a pre-season get together to set the standards for the season ahead is a great start to creating culture.

### WHAT IS A TEAM CHARTER?

A charter is a document that describes the purpose, boundaries and agreements of the team. It can be created for a team or co-created by whoever is involved in the team.

Enlisting the support of whanau, club or other community members who may be willing to support is an option if you feel you need it. You may even decide to do this along with other teams in your club. Take some time before meeting to think about what you would like in terms of behaviour from the team so you have a general idea of what good will look like.

Beginning the get together by asking team members to think about each of the pou above and what it means to them. Capture their words on a big piece of paper with your team or club name in the centre, e.g.

### **Be Welcoming**

What does being welcoming mean? What does it look like? What will our team do to make sure we are doing this?

### **Be our Best**

What does this mean? What does it look like?

Inviting the children and young people as well as supporters to participate will ensure everyone knows they are a part of it and have a role to play.

When you have finished talking about each pou you will have a roadmap/poster explaining your team's culture.

It would be good to think about ways of keeping this alive in the team. You might have awards for people showing this within the team. You might have people in charge of each of the pou for the team. You might decide to pull out the roadmap/poster throughout the season to check in how you're going.

## **IS IT ALL ABOUT COACHING SMALL BLACKS?**

The physical and emotional differences in the development of five-year-old, to eight-year-old or 12-year-old kids can be enormous therefore coaching them in the same way can create huge problems. This is one of the main reasons why we now have three separate compulsory courses for our Small Blacks grades.

- Beginning Rugby - Under 6 to Under 7
- Learning Rugby - Under 8 to Under 11
- Playing rugby - Under 12 to Under 13

Keep everybody engaged at practice. Don't leave anyone out. It is very easy to spend a lot of time with the 'good' and 'bad' kids. The big groups, that don't provide you with any stress, are just as important.

When coaching young rugby players there is so much to consider that coaches often forget the prime role that they have, which is to coach the players in the relevant skills of the game of rugby.

Children are easily intimidated, especially in a contact environment like rugby. Therefore we must progress through in stages to match the players' personal and physical development.

Skill development in these grades should be well-structured, positive, and enjoyable!

But “coaching” isn’t always the issue when you turn up to a game or practice as a coach. Sometimes the behaviour of the players will be your biggest challenge and all the good skill development and will in the world won’t help if the team is misbehaving or you aren’t organised. This is all part of coaching Small Blacks!

This handbook will hopefully be your “survival guide” but it won’t have all the answers. Talking to other coaches, teachers and your local Provincial Union rugby development officers is the best way to have an enjoyable year coaching. If you are enjoying yourself, you can bet your kids are too!

## BEHAVIOUR AT PRACTICE

It’s not all about coaching.

### The Voice and The Look

- Players need to recognise by your tone of voice and manner when you mean business, or a boundary that they must not cross.
- Yelling just does not work.
- Use a firm voice and a strong look - DEMAND attention.
- Make it clear that some things are non-negotiables - and the chance that they will listen will improve significantly.
- However, observe your players’ reaction carefully as what might scare U7 kids with a tone of voice may encourage U13s to think. The message here is to adjust to your audience.

### The Art of Refocusing Interest

Use a quick, firm word, action, whistle or clap to get activities back on track. If this doesn’t work, don’t yell or recklessly run around to get the attention of the players - just STOP the group - DEMAND that they all stop talking and look at you - WAIT until everyone does so before trying to start with the your comments. For example: “Eyes on me. Now.”

If someone starts clowning around or chatting in the background after you start talking - STOP! Confidently re-demand silence before continuing. Keep doing this until they learn. Eventually, the other players will know your boundaries and they may even start to tell a player to be quiet themselves. When the disruptive player starts to get negative attention from their peers, the behaviour tends to cease swiftly.

### Choose Your Battles Wisely

All young children misbehave at times. If the player is not normally disruptive or if the disturbance is not a big deal - and is quickly abandoned with a quiet word from you - don’t make a big deal over it.

If you are too strict, and launch with all ‘guns blazing’ to deal with a small offence, this causes two problems. First, the non-disruptive players will start to fear you and they will become afraid to make mistakes for fear of disappointing you. Secondly, the more defiant players will figure out that you explode in response to an offence - so they won’t see any reason to change their behaviour until you do. As a result, it is not unusual to find utter chaos when the coach is not using good judgement to deal with unsatisfactory behaviour.

### Effective Techniques

When misbehaviour disrupts the activities of the other players, the coach needs to use “the Voice” and “the Look” to stop the behaviour instantly.

Talk to the players in terms of Rules. They tend to remember Rules better as they have them at school and home. So, tell them that “Pushing a team-mate is against our Rules”.

Then, quietly get the offender to tell you WHY this is against the rules. Getting the offender to put into words why other players might not like to be pushed shows the other players that this kid knew better.

Once the player admits that they knew better, make them apologise. The apology is likely to be reluctant but requiring them to apologise helps to breed good sportsmanship. If they initially refuse to apologise make them sit out the activity until they do.

Sometimes, a player may not understand why something is against the Rules. In these cases, it is important to explain why you are displeased, and explain what you want in the future.

If one team-mate started it, and the other finished it - make them both apologise, then make the player that finished it explain to you how they plan to handle things next time ie come to you. The instigator should have to do the same AND say two good things about his foe (usually effective in healing the wounds all around).



## Consequences

Be very cautious in using physical activity as punishment. Learning to connect running or exercise with punishment can cause players to dislike that activity. This isn't too helpful when you need them to do this activity as part of their rugby training. Even so, there are times when a quick set of star-jumps or press-ups may help to refocus the player. These should not be tedious (no more than 5-10). Be careful with this. If the player is looking for attention and wants to muck around, they will use the punishment as an opening to have fun at the expense of the coach. If the coach already knows that they are dealing with a disobedient player, tell the player to go sit out until they can behave.

## Time-out or Sit-out

A time-out is very effective. Most players want to be with everyone else - even if they are a troublemaker.

The coach can give the player the choice of returning when the player decides to behave or if the player is refusing to take part in an activity which they don't like, then sit the player out for the remainder of the practice. This may seem harsh but otherwise the coach will send the message to the team that, if you don't want to do an activity, just go sit down - and you won't experience any punishment. Once the players witness that they don't get to pick and choose activities, they will work out that they can't avoid doing hard work.

The perfect spot for a player to sit out is where you (or another adult) can keep them in sight, but far enough removed they cannot easily distract the rest of the group. Don't let a playmate join them for company; if two players must be sent out, send them to opposite ends of the field.

## Praise Works Better

Good behaviour should be praised and rewarded to reinforce behaviours you want at practices and games. Praise goes a long way in turning a good team into a great team.

Another angle to improve a whole team that's indifferent and unfocused is to make the most of the players' favourite part of the practice: THE GAME. Try this: "The sooner we learn to do this, the longer we can play a game".

## Bad Days

Sometimes, your team's energy and frame of mind simply isn't going to complement your well-intended, planned practice session. If normally cooperative players are exceptionally wild and your fine-tunings don't work, discard the plan and play nothing but modified games. As long as the players are getting lots of touches on the ball and you are able to relax, consider it as an opportunity to recharge the batteries, and just have fun. You will live to fight the battle another day.

## CULTURAL AWARENESS

New Zealand is a society made up of many different cultures, and as a coach you should be aware of the cultural differences between players, such as differences in behaviour and beliefs and the social structures that belong to different cultures.


### Why be Aware of Different Cultures?

- To help you gain a better understanding of your players and their family
- To enable you to create coping strategies for yourself, your players and your team
- To help foster understanding within your team
- To gain support from your players, their families and the wider community

### Cultural Issues of Which a Coach Should Be Aware

- In all cultures family has high importance and to gain the players support the coach should also seek the support of the whole family.
- Religion has a huge influence in many cultures and prayer (karakia) may be appropriate. The use of inappropriate language should be avoided.
- Many cultures believe making direct eye contact or speaking out of turn is inappropriate, and yet looking down and not talking can be interpreted by the coach as evidence a player is inattentive and is unwilling to interact.



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- Questioning and confronting players in front of the whole team can be interpreted by a player as belittling and may be better done privately.
  - As a coach, your standing in the eyes of your players will be enhanced if you take time to learn a little about their culture, are able to pronounce their names correctly, and learn some basic forms of communication, such as greeting and farewell.
  - Most cultures have spiritual aspects and rituals to consider. The spirit of the group and individual should be treated with respect.

#### **Basic Tips To Be Aware Of For Coaching Maori Players**

- Treat all elders with respect.
- The most sacred part of the body is the head, so do not tap another person on the head or pass food over someone's head.
- Do not put your hat or hair implements near food - don't sit on tables or other surfaces where food is prepared.
- Separate personal clothing from clothes used for cooking or washing dishes.
- Do not step over a person lying down.
- Treat your visitors well by serving them first and providing plenty of food.
- If you are meeting someone bring a koha (donation) such as a packet of biscuits.
- Everyone pitches in to help, so offer your services before you're asked - you will be told if you don't need to lend a hand.
- Take shoes off when entering a home or meeting house.

If you are unsure how to react or communicate with a player from a different culture, then ask someone for advice, otherwise a sincere honest and friendly approach will always be appreciated.



## SCORE BLOW-OUTS

**“WINNING ISN’T EVERYTHING, BUT STRIVING TO WIN IS.”**

Score blow-outs are seen as an on-going concern in Small Blacks rugby. The winning coach may be concerned with having his team play to their potential and not care about the score. The losing coach may be most concerned about the fairness of the situation. So how do we bring these two attitudes closer together?

If score blow-outs are occurring (ie 35+ at halftime), both coaches must meet and come to an agreement as to how they can generate a more even contest. A range of strategies that coaches can consider when they meet are:

Often the answers lie with the Winning coach:

- Don’t stack your team with all the best players.
- Use all your players - it may be a chance to use some of the players who don’t get a lot of game time.
- Try a few new tactics, moves or combinations.
- Rotate some of the playing positions around. Place some players who don’t often get the ball at first-five-eight or halfback.
- Swap your forward pack and backline around (consider age and safety requirements).
- Encourage support play and passing to space rather than running through or around defence.
- Construct a minimum pass concept to score, ie team must do five passes before someone can score.

Together the coaches can:

- Make the second half a coaching lesson. Play the game as usual but when there are lessons to be learnt, stop the game and control the game environment with instructions for further learning, eg offside at ruck - what makes a ruck? Where are the gates?

The Losing coach can:

- Give their team meaningful and attainable goals which are essential to success, not the score.

Option for the brave:

- Swap coaches!