

Theme 5

Adapting the format to increase motivation

Half Game Rule

In 2018 the Rugby Football Union (RFU) piloted the introduction of the half game rule. This rule ensured that every young person taking part in youth rugby (Age Grade) who was in a match day squad, would play for at least half the game time available. This rule was created as a result of the National Rugby Survey where young players said that they wanted to play, and that being part of the team is the most important thing to them about rugby. They said that they didn't want to sit on the bench and only get a few minutes of rugby at the end of a match.

This rule aims to increase player enjoyment, aid player development and ultimately retain young players in rugby. The pilot was successful, and the Half Game rule will be enforced in all RFU Age Grade rugby from September 2019 including the School Games.

What are the benefits?

The half game rule has been reviewed by the University of Essex, who evaluated player feedback along with the impact on the game in the previous two seasons. Their research found that playing half a game means players are six times more likely to enjoy playing rugby than players who don't get to play half a game. There was no evidence that suggests the half game rule impacts on the results of games or increased injury. Clubs, schools and colleges reported a positive impact of playing the half game rule on player numbers and satisfaction whilst players, parents, coaches and teachers report wide-scale support for the implementation.

How was this used in the School Games Pilot?

A lot of SGOs piloted this approach in their competition. They informed all the schools before the competitions that every young person must play a minimum of half the playing time across the whole of the tournament. Teachers managed this process supported by the SGOs and stated that it had a positive effect on all the young people involved. Young people also saw the benefit as they explained it increased their motivation as they knew they were going to play.

"It was fun. I get to play and know I won't be sub."

Young Person