

Rugby's 10 Steps to Becoming a Better Athlete

There are numerous reasons why we might encourage a young athlete to take up rugby, not the least of which are an increased opportunity to participate in a positive activity, the health benefits of physical activity and the psycho-social traits of cooperation, teamwork and respect for others.

While we may logically conclude that any sports participation will improve a teenager's athleticism, here is a concise listing of rugby's benefits.

1. **Speed Development** – Every player will be challenged many times in the course of a match to either chase an opponent in defense or run away from a defender in attack. This must be done as fast as possible, therefore, speed is very important for success at the majority of positions in rugby.
2. **Stamina** –The lack of regular substitution requires all players to sustain their efforts for extended periods of time.
3. **Reduced Recovery Time** – The rules requiring the continuous nature of play after a tackle forces players to repeatedly provide a maximal effort, immediately reposition themselves and make another maximal effort.
4. **Agility** – Multidirectional running takes place when a player pursues play to attain the proper support position, to evade a defender or tackle an opponent.
5. **Hand-Eye Coordination** – There are multiple opportunities for each player to give and receive passes, all while running at various levels of maximal pace.
6. **Core Development** – Abdominal and lower back musculature must be well developed in order to perform duties in the scrum, lineout and to attain proper positioning in and immediately after the tackle.
7. **Tackling Skill** – Each player on the team has equal responsibility for playing defense. Therefore, he/she will have numerous opportunities in each match to carry out one-on-one tackles.
8. **Self-Confidence** – Successful execution in multiple contact situations in every match will contribute to an individual's confidence that he/she can succeed in any pressurized situation.
9. **Focus** – Continuity of play dictates that positive team performance is based on every player's ability to adhere to team strategy without regular instructions from the coach.
10. **Competitive Intelligence** – Every player must appropriately respond to any change in the opponent's attack or defense as well as switching from offense to defense immediately when a change in possession occurs.

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