



World Rugby Proposals on Tackle Height:

World Rugby are expected to present formal proposals to lower tackle height in the community & age grade game. World Rugby have advised this will take place at the March meeting of their executive board.

We expect this will take the form of a global law trial, which would be on an opt-in basis.

This means that over the next number of weeks, you are likely to see activity and commentary in the media about tackle height in the community game.

Will the IRFU be opting into any proposed World Rugby law trial?

That has not been decided yet.

We are engaging in a community consultation process as directed by the IRFU Union Committee on reviewing tackle behaviour to assess what changes could reduce head-on-head impact. You will see an overview of current consultation activities later in this document.

Why are the IRFU looking at measures to improve tackle behaviours?

The IRFU has been reviewing existing studies in this area, including a series of controlled trials to amend the height of an illegal tackle under Rugby Union Law 9.13.

Examples include, but are not limited to setting the legal tackle height as follows:

- Below the sternum targeting the belly area (Community Rugby in New Zealand, 2023)
- Arm-pit tackle height (University Level Competition, South Africa, 2019)
- Waist-height tackle (Community Game, France, 2019)
- Below the line of the nipple (World Rugby U20 Trophy, 2018)

Some of these trials have included additional measures including:

- Restricting late dipping/leading into contact with the head by the ball carrier
- Restricting simultaneous double-tackles

Areas of focus for the IRFU assessment of current research include:

- Effectiveness in reducing occurrence of head injuries



- Variations in the setting of legal tackle height
- Other measures to 'separate heads'
- Timeframe for any possible implementation

Where can I find out more information about trials and studies on tackle behaviour?

The IRFU Medical Department is currently finalising an information guide to be issued to clubs and schools next week (commencing March 13th). This is to ensure you are fully informed on the latest medical research in relation to tackle behaviours.

It is also expected that World Rugby will be making a series of resources available in relation to tackle height.

Separately to this document, you will also receive an invitation to an IRFU Information Briefing (Webinar) in the coming days.

What are the objectives of the IRFU Community Consultation Process?

- Provide clear information to all stakeholders including Players, Coaches and Referees on current research and World Rugby's proposal on tackle behaviours
- Gather feedback from stakeholders on how best to prioritise player safety and navigate the challenges of behavioural change
- Discuss outcomes of opt-in / non opt-in to any potential global law trials
- Ensure the IRFU's evidence-based approach to governance considers the views of those impacted by decisions which affect the game as player safety is always paramount

Having received this memo, what do I need to do?

Please review this information and share with all relevant stakeholders within your club, school or committee. This should include your Players, Coaches and Referees.



What will happen next?

You can expect ongoing correspondence over the coming days and weeks from the IRFU Rugby Development & Medical Departments. These will be delivered in line with the Community Consultation Process overview and will include:

- Updates on any formal World Rugby proposal
- Distribution of IRFU Information Guide on tackle behaviour research
- Invite to World Rugby Briefing on formal proposals
- Invite to IRFU Webinar Series on improving tackle behaviour
- IRFU survey of clubs and schools on player safety and behavioural change

Thank you for taking the time to review this memo.

I have enclosed some additional resources below, including an overview of the IRFU Community Consultation Process and a sample of the current and future IRFU initiatives on tackle behaviour and player safety.

Yours sincerely,

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IRFU Rugby Development Director



IRFU Community Consultation Process - Overview			
			Timeline
PHASE 1	Internal Assessment	Review of existing trials, studies and medical research. Engagement of IRFU and Provincial Staff.	January to March 2023
PHASE 2	Community Notification	Memo to clubs with overview of consultation process. Information guide for clubs and schools. Invite to webinar series. Ongoing updates on World Rugby proposals.	March 7 th to March 13 th 2023
PHASE 3	Community Engagement	World Rugby Briefing To Irish Rugby Community. IRFU Survey of Irish Rugby Community. Webinar Series for stakeholder groups (IRFU and branch committees, age-grade/schools, junior & senior clubs, match officials). Frequently Asked Questions Document.	March 14 th to April 6 th 2023
PHASE 4	Evaluation & Recommendation	Full evaluation of feedback from community engagement phase. Review of World Rugby Council vote on global law trials. Formal IRFU Committee vote on World Rugby Recommendations.	April 17 th to May 30 th 2023
SUBJECT TO OPT-IN The following phases would only be implemented in the event of an opt-in to a global law trial on tackle height.			
PHASE 5	Education	Roll out of new resources to support clubs and schools in injury reduction and positive tackle behaviours.	Commence June 2023 pending
PHASE 6	Implementation & Monitoring	Implementation of safer tackle behaviours to reduce head-on-head impact. Active monitoring through IRIS data. Periodised review and reporting.	Commence August 2023 pending



What is the IRFU currently doing to promote injury reduction for head-on-head contact in community rugby?

The IRFU continually reviews tackle behaviours in the community game.

In July 2021, the IRFU agreed and applied a zero tolerance of high tackles or contact above shoulder height when making or attempting to make a tackle. This required the tackler to ensure all parts of his/her body (including head) are below the line of the shoulders of the ball carrier.

Current Initiatives:

Best Practice in Coach Delivery: Formal Coaching courses and resources at IRFU and provincial level with emphasis on safe tackle behaviours.

Regulations For Mini-Rugby: Focus on correct tackle technique (U8 to U12) including sanctions for tackles above the waist.

IRFU Engage Programme: Readiness, Robustness programme to enhance performance and reduce risk of injury.

IRIS Project: Continued investment in data and research through the Irish Rugby Injury Surveillance (IRIS) project.

Distribution Of World Rugby Resources: Including Tackle Module on World Rugby Passport.

New Initiatives:

A series of additional resources are being made available ahead of the 2023/24 season to support clubs and schools in injury reduction and positive tackle behaviours.

Revised Graduated Return To Play Protocols: Best practise and guidance to help amateur players make a safe return to rugby after head injury occurrence.

New Video Resources: The IRFU Coaching Department are currently finalising a suite of coaching resources to be in place ahead of the 2023/24 season. These include a series of videos on tackle behaviour.

Tackle Smart Module: Tackle Smart is the IRFU's key resource outside of formal courses for education on developing the tackle. Through IRFU's active coaching badge, a new module will be launched on GAINLINE - the IRFU's online education platform.

Additional resources will also be available through Level Up - the IRFU's online coaching resources portal.