



FROM THE TRYLINE

# Don't Be That Parent.

*A Hong Kong Mini Rugby Survival Guide*

# So you signed up for rugby.

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There's a moment, somewhere around your third Sunday morning at a mini rugby pitch, when you realise you have absolutely no idea what's going on. Not the rules — the system. Where this all leads. Why your child suddenly has strong opinions about scrum caps. This guide is the one I wish someone had handed me then.

I was the over-enthusiastic coach on the touchline of a U7 match, shouting tactical instructions at children who were genuinely just trying to remember which way to run. My kids are now in youth rugby. I am calmer. Mostly.

What follows is everything I wish I'd understood about the bigger picture — the ecosystem, the calendar, the clubs, the etiquette, and the small but real ways a parent can stop being a passenger and start being part of why this works.

It is also, in places, a roast. Of all of us. Affectionately.

— *A Hong Kong Rugby Dad. And the editor of *The Tryline*.*

# What mini rugby actually is

Before anything else: mini rugby is not "junior rugby with smaller players." It is a deliberately graduated game, designed by World Rugby, that introduces children to the sport one element at a time over six or seven seasons. The version your U6 plays on a Sunday morning is closer to organised touch than to the rugby you saw at the Sevens. That is on purpose.

Hong Kong follows the World Rugby age-grade framework — the same age-by-age progression used by [England Rugby's Regulation 15](#) and adopted internationally. The HKMRFU operates within this structure; HK does not run a bespoke variant.

The progression, age by age:

Age	Format	Contact
U6	Train only	None
U7	Two-hand touch	Non-contact
U8	Two-hand touch	Non-contact
U9	Mini rugby	Contact introduced
U10	Mini rugby	Tackle
U11	Mini rugby	Tackle
U12	Mini rugby (transitional)	Full

**A small but important Hong Kong note.** While many countries use *tag* rugby at U7–U8 (rip a velcro flag from the ball-carrier's belt), Hong Kong uses **two-hand touch on the waist** instead — a confirmed touch by both hands stops the play. You will hear parents call it 'tag.' It isn't. The [HKFC U5–U8 Coaching Manual](#) is explicit: "*Two hand touch on waist (TWO HANDS).*"

What contact looks like, age by age:

- **U9** — tackle, not hold. Ruck and maul allowed with one support player per team. Three-player scrums (strike, no push).
- **U10** — ruck and maul with two support players. Kicking introduced — no fly-hack.
- **U11** — five-player scrums (strike, no push). Unlimited support in ruck and maul. Fend below armpits permitted.
- **U12** — boys: six-player contested scrum with push, fly-hack kicking. Girls separate from boys from U12. Uncontested lineouts with lifting.

Source: [RFU Age Grade Codes of Practice, Regulation 15](#), and the [HKFC U5–U8 Coaching Manual](#).

Two things to hold in mind as a parent:

First, **the rules at every age grade are different.** The thing that's a penalty at U10 isn't even a thing at U7. So when you find yourself shouting at your U7 about "knock-ons," see Section 7.

Second, **the goal of mini rugby is not to win matches.** It is to keep children playing the sport long enough that some of them go on to play youth, schools, club, and — for a small handful — international rugby. Every metric that matters at this age is a retention metric. A team that wins every U8 match but loses half its players by U10 has failed. A team that loses every U8 match but keeps 90% of its players to U12 has succeeded. Most parents have this backwards.

# The HK rugby ecosystem in one page

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This is the page I most wish someone had given me five years ago.

Hong Kong rugby is a small, dense, vertically-integrated ecosystem of about 7,142 registered players across 57 clubs ([Wikipedia](#)), with over 3,516 mini and 1,390 youth players spread across an active mini-club network ([HKCR](#)). To put that in perspective: HKFC alone has more than 1,100 youth players registered each season ([HKFC](#)).

It is helpful to picture it as five concentric layers, all connected:

**1. The governing body – Hong Kong China Rugby (HKCR).** The national body. Runs the leagues, the representative pathways, the referee development, coach education, and the national teams. If your child ends up on a Hong Kong U-anything tour, this is who organises it. They also run the development side that grows the game in schools and underserved districts.

**2. The clubs.** 19 of them run active mini sections, listed in section 4. These are where your child actually plays. Each club has its own culture, training day, fees, and waiting list situation. Choosing a club is mostly about logistics (where you live, when training is), but the cultures genuinely differ – visit two before committing.

**3. The schools.** Some HK schools run their own rugby programmes (the international schools especially), some don't. School rugby is a parallel pathway to club rugby; many kids do both, especially from U10 onwards. The HKSSF (Schools Sports Federation) competition is the schools league.

**4. The representative pathway.** From around U13/U14, the best players from clubs and schools are scouted via [HKCR Talent Testing Days](#), feeding into Hong Kong Age Grade national squads (U16, U18, U19/U20). These squads tour, play in tournaments like the Asia Rugby Championships, and are the visible step toward Hong Kong colours.

**5. The national teams and the showcase.** The HK Men's 15s team qualified for the [2027 Rugby World Cup](#) – a generational achievement. The HK Women's team plays in [WXV](#) and will host the [WXV Global Series Challenger 2026](#) at Kai Tak from 13–26 September 2026, against Brazil, Fiji, Netherlands, Samoa and Spain. The HK Sevens, of course, sits at the cultural centre of the whole thing.

The key insight: **all five layers feed each other.** The HKCR development officer who runs your kid's Sunday clinic is the same person who picks the U16 Hong Kong squad. The volunteer coach at your club is also a referee at the schools tournament. The Sevens revenue funds the development programmes that produce the national team. Hong Kong rugby works because the pipe is short and everyone knows everyone.

It also fails for the same reason. A small ecosystem has fewer second chances. Which makes the volunteer-and-contribution question – section 8 – not optional.

# The HK mini rugby calendar

Mini rugby in Hong Kong runs **September to April** — an eight-month season shaped by school terms and the weather. Regular Sunday morning training, six annual HKMRFU festivals through the season, and a final festival to close it out ([HKCR](#), [HKFC](#)).

A typical season looks something like this:

Period	What happens
<b>Aug</b>	Pre-season registration opens at clubs. New parents discover the waitlist.
<b>Sep</b>	Training resumes. First sessions are a chaos of new kit, lost water bottles, and reunions.
<b>Oct–Nov</b>	Inter-club friendlies and the early HKMRFU festivals.
<b>Dec</b>	Christmas tournament season. Some clubs travel regionally (Bangkok, Singapore, Manila).
<b>Jan–Feb</b>	The competitive heart of the season. Festivals run in a Cup / Plate / Bowl / Shield pool format.
<b>Mar–Apr</b>	Season-ending festivals. The HK Sevens. The HKFC Youth 10s. Trophy ceremonies. End-of-season drinks.
<b>May–Aug</b>	Off-season. Some clubs run summer touch or sevens. Most kids do other sports.

## Three dates to put in your calendar

**The HKMRFU end-of-season festival** — Hong Kong's mini rugby clubs come together for a community-wide celebration. The closest thing the game has to a town hall on grass.

**The HKFC Youth 10s — 11–12 April 2026.** A rebrand of HKFC's long-running Youth International Cup, sitting in the lead-up to the 50th anniversary HK Sevens. U5–U7 play a single-day festival on Sunday 12 April; U8–U18 run a two-day competitive format. Sources: [HKFC Youth 10s page](#), [HKFC Rugby](#).

**The Waterford Bowl — late January.** Organised by HKMRFU at HKU Stanley Ho Sports Centre, Pok Fu Lam. *"The pinnacle of U11 rugby in Hong Kong"* ([DB Pirates](#)). Bowl, Shield and Plate divisions. In its second year in 2025/26 — already the date the U11 cohort circles.

For girls, the **Kim Lam Cup** is the marquee — see section 8.

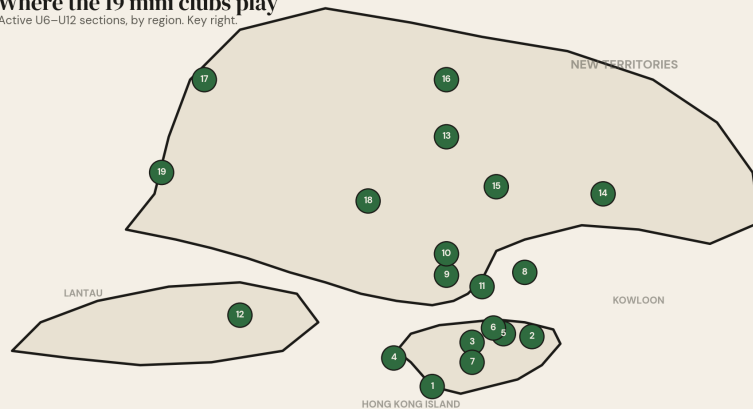
# The mini rugby clubs of Hong Kong

The [HKCR Mini and Youth Rugby Clubs directory](#) lists **19 active mini clubs** running U6–U12 sections. For a parent choosing where to sign up on a Sunday morning, those 19 are the live options.

The full list, alphabetically by region. We list neutrally — no rankings, no recommendations.

## Where the 19 mini clubs play

Active U6–U12 sections, by region. Key right.



### HONG KONG ISLAND

- 1 Aberdeen Dolphins
- 2 HK East
- 3 HKFC
- 4 HKU Sandy Bay
- 5 Monkey
- 6 SCAA Causeway Bay
- 7 Valley Fort

### KOWLOON

- 8 East Kowloon
- 9 Police
- 10 THT Lion
- 11 USRC Tigers

### NEW TERRITORIES & ISLANDS

- 12 Discovery Bay Pirates
- 13 Flying Kukris
- 14 Sai Kung Stingrays
- 15 Shatin Shapei
- 16 Tai Po
- 17 Tin Shui Wai Eagle
- 18 Tsuen Wan
- 19 Tuen Mun Sharks

If a venue or detail has changed, or if you believe a club is missing or no longer active, write to us at [editor@thetryline.com](mailto:editor@thetryline.com). Corrections will be carried in the next edition.

All of these clubs are run, in significant part, by volunteer parents — coaches, team managers, kit organisers, registration administrators, festival drivers. Which is the entire point of section 9.

Choosing a club is mostly logistics — where do you live, what day works, can your kid get there reliably for an eight-month season. The culture differences exist but are easy to over-read. **Visit two before committing.** Most clubs welcome a trial session.

# What it actually costs (and how a club stays alive)

Mini rugby in Hong Kong is the cheapest organised youth sport you will find that is run to a credible standard. That sentence is true and it is not an accident. It is held together by a fragile economic model and a lot of unpaid hours.

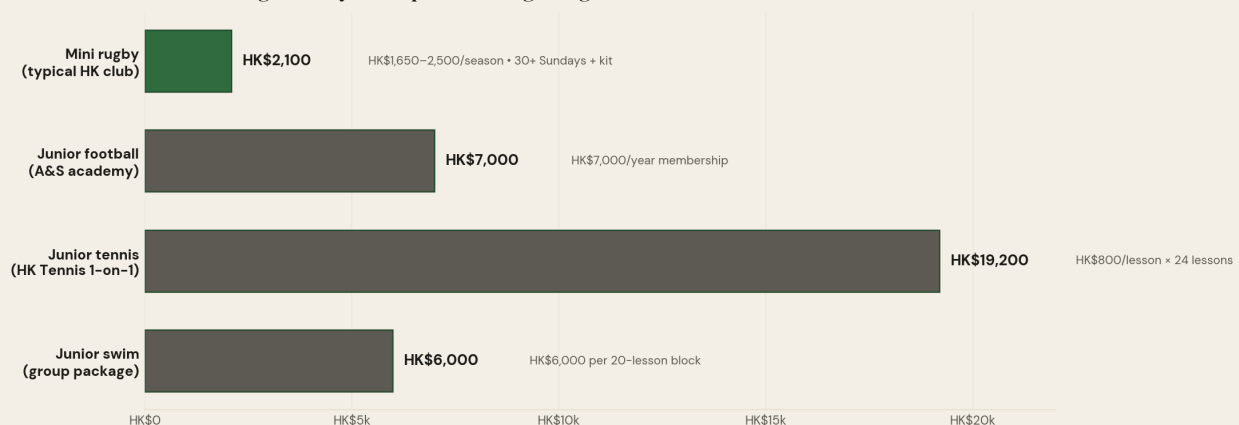
## What you pay

A full mini rugby season runs roughly September to April — about 30 Sunday mornings, plus festivals, training kit, a club shirt, and end-of-season presentation. The fee for all of that, at most clubs:

Club	Annual fee	Notes
<a href="#">HKU Sandy Bay</a>	HK\$2,500	Full season, U4–U12
<a href="#">USRC Tigers</a>	HK\$1,650	Full season U4–U11; HK\$1,100 second child
<a href="#">Sai Kung Stingrays</a>	HK\$1,600	Full season
<a href="#">HKFC (premium outlier)</a>	HK\$3,245/term × 3	Members; non-members pay more

Most clubs cluster between **HK\$1,650 and HK\$2,500 for the season**. HKFC is the high-end outlier because it is a private members club running a much larger rugby section.

Cost of one season of organised youth sport in Hong Kong



Junior football academies charge around HK\$7,000/year ([A&S Football](#)); a 20-lesson group swim block runs HK\$3,000–6,000 ([Toby](#)); one-on-one junior tennis at HK\$800 a lesson hits HK\$19,200 over 24 lessons ([HK-Tennis](#)). Mini rugby is the cheapest credible team-sport option in the city by a meaningful margin.

# How a mini club stays alive.

No mini rugby club survives on membership fees alone. The model is roughly five income streams stacked together — and five categories of expense the money flows out into. When one income stream breaks, the rest have to absorb the gap.



Volunteer hours don't show up here. They're the largest line item by far.

In 2021 the union cut junior funding by roughly 50% in a cash crisis, and clubs had to find the difference themselves — through harder fundraising or trimmed programmes ([SCMP](#)). Several clubs never fully recovered. Today the pathway is partly underwritten by the [Hysan x HKCR partnership](#), and individual clubs lean on long-running corporate sponsors — [Mourant](#) and [Natixis](#) sit behind HKFC's rugby section, for example.

The number that does not appear on any of these lists is **volunteer hours**. The parent who runs registration. The dad who coaches U7 every Sunday for five years. The mum who organises the festival catering. The treasurer doing the books at midnight. If you priced those at market rates, every club in the territory would be technically insolvent. They are the largest line item by far, and they are why the fees can stay where they are.

Which is, again, the entire point of section 9.

# Your first session: what actually happens

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You arrive ten minutes early. You are still late.

Your child is wearing the wrong shorts. Everyone else's child also wore the wrong shorts on their first day, which you do not yet know. There is a parent in a high-vis vest who appears to be in charge of registration; they will become the most important person in your weekend life for the next decade. Their name is on the WhatsApp group, which you have not yet been added to.

## What to bring

- Boots (rubber studs only at mini rugby age — no metal, ever)
- Mouthguard (mandatory from U7 — the club shop usually sells boil-and-bites)
- Gum shield case
- Long socks (most clubs sell club socks; buy two pairs immediately)
- Shorts (no pockets; pockets cause finger injuries)
- Plain top or club training shirt — the club will tell you
- Water bottle, named, with masking tape and a Sharpie
- A change of clothes, including underwear, in a separate bag, for after
- A second towel

## What to expect at the session itself

- A warm-up that looks like organised chaos but is doing more than you think
- Skill drills broken down by age group
- Small-sided games (3v3, 4v4) where the actual learning happens
- A short "match" at the end, often against another age group at the same club
- Children crying for reasons unrelated to the rugby
- A queue for the toilet that you do not want to be in
- A clubhouse afterwards that is the secret point of the whole thing

## The unwritten rules of the first session

- Do not coach your child from the touchline. (See section 7.)
- Do not approach the head coach to discuss your child's positional development. They are managing 30 seven-year-olds in 28-degree humidity. It is not the moment.
- Introduce yourself to two other parents. Ask if they're new too. Most will be.
- Stay for a drink afterwards. The clubhouse is where you'll learn 90% of what you need to know.

# Don't be that parent

Every weekend, somewhere in Hong Kong, a child is playing mini rugby badly because their parent is on the touchline doing one of the following.

You are probably one of these. We have all been one of these. The first step is recognition.



## 01 The Touchline Coach

*Has Strong Opinions. Shouts tactics at U7s mid-run.*



## 02 The Rulebook

*Confidently misidentifies a knock-on as a forward pass. Loudly.*



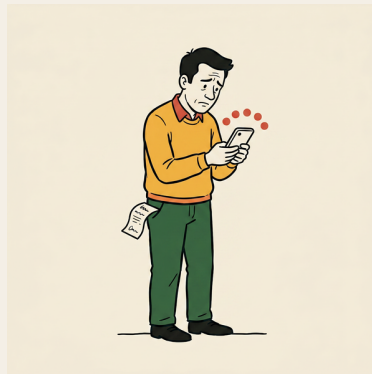
## 03 The Ref Critic

*The ref is fifteen and volunteering. You're a corporate lawyer.*



## 04 The Armchair Critic

*Why is there no coffee truck? Never volunteers.*



## 05 The Late Replier

*Four messages in. Three read. The deposit is overdue.*



## 06 The Repeat Asker

*What time is training? Every. Single. Week.*

# Don't be that parent.



## 07 The Match Tourist

*Surprised every March that the Sevens is happening.*



## 08 The Tunnel Visionist

*Their kid scored. Nobody else's name was learned.*



## 09 The Tribalist

*Forgets the third half is the point. Sees enemies.*



## 10 The Phone Holder

*Films every second. Watches none of it live.*



## 11 The Helicopter Parent

*Runs on for a knock that was, transparently, fine.*



## 12 The Sudden Expert After Sevens

*Three days of rugby a year. Now, a tactician.*

# Don't be that parent.

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## 13 The Scoreboard Parent

*Only happy when winning. The kid has noticed.*



## 14 The Seasonal Disappearer

*Registers in September. Reappears, slightly tanned, in April.*



## 15 The Club Hopper

*Always certain another club is better. The kid stops asking.*

If you saw yourself in more than one, welcome. Most of us are at least three of these on a bad weekend. The next sections are the cure.

# The girls' game in Hong Kong

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For too long, girls' rugby in Hong Kong was a footnote in a guide aimed at parents of boys. It is no longer.

Hong Kong's women's pathway is now one of the most visible in Asia. The HK Women's team plays in Almaty at the [Asia Rugby Emirates Women's Championship](#) from 28 April–9 May 2026, then hosts the [WXV Global Series Challenger](#) at Kai Tak from 13–26 September 2026 — five matches against Brazil, Fiji, Netherlands, Samoa and Spain on home soil. Your daughter will, for the first time, be able to watch a Hong Kong women's team play a global series at the national stadium. That matters.

## How girls play in mini

In mini rugby (U6–U11), girls and boys play together. This is the right call. At these ages there is no meaningful physical difference and girls who play in mixed teams almost always say later it built their confidence. Some clubs run girls-only training sessions alongside the mixed game; others do not. Ask before you commit.

**From U12, girls play in girls-only competitions.** This is the World Rugby standard, and HKCR follows it.

## Combined age groups

A practical reality of girls' rugby in Hong Kong: smaller player numbers mean HKCR combines age groups for fixtures. **U13/U14 play together. U15/U16 play together.** ([Sai Kung Stingrays](#)). This is not unusual globally and is not a sign of a weak pathway — it is how growing girls' programmes around the world build critical mass.

## The marquee girls' competitions

**The Kim Lam Cup — U12 girls.** Held at HKFC, named after Kim Lam, a driving force in HKCR women's rugby since 1998. *'The first serious competition of junior youth rugby that under-12 girls will play in Hong Kong'* ([HKFC Rugby](#)). It is the ceiling-raiser for an entire age group.

**The [Cathay Youth Invitational 7s](#) — U12 to U18, boys and girls,** played at the Kai Tak Youth Sports Ground. The Sevens-format tournament that runs alongside the senior festival.

**Hysan Youth Girls fixtures** from U13 — see section 12 for the full pathway.

## What to do if you have a daughter starting

Sign up like any other player. Ask the club about girls-only sessions. Get her to a women's HK match — there are now real ones to take her to. The pathway is no longer hypothetical.

# How to actually help — eight ways to contribute

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Here is the part nobody tells you when you sign your child up.

**Mini rugby in Hong Kong runs on volunteers.** Every coach holding a clipboard, every team manager sending the WhatsApps, every first aider with the cold pack, every referee blowing the whistle on a Sunday morning is a parent who decided to do more than drop off and watch. The clubs are not staffed organisations with a service department. They are co-operatives of parents who took on jobs.

If you take one thing from this guide, take this: **the difference between a club that thrives and a club that limps along is the depth of its volunteer bench.** And the difference between a *parent* who enjoys their child's rugby and a parent who feels disconnected from it is, almost always, whether they took on a role.

This used to be drawn as a ladder, low to high. We've stopped doing that, because the ladder framing is wrong. Anyone can step in at any level at any time. A first-year parent can do the First Aid course in a weekend. A retired CFO can join the committee. There is no apprenticeship. There is just the question of which contribution suits you.

## Eight ways to contribute

Not a ladder. A wheel. Step in at any spoke, any time.



# Eight ways in.

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**The Engaged Touchline Parent.** *Time: zero extra hours.*

Show up. Cheer for every kid on your team, by name, not just yours. Cheer for the opposition too when they do something good. Don't coach. Don't ref. Don't complain. This sounds passive. It is the foundation everything else builds on.

**The Helper.** *Time: 30 minutes a week.*

Carry kit bags. Set up cones at training. Run the touchline flag at matches. Bring oranges. Drive a teammate's kid to an away game. Ask the team manager what they need this Saturday. Do that thing. The most underrated role on the pitch.

**The First Aider.** *Time: a one-day course, then ad-hoc.*

HKCR runs the [First Aid in Sports \(FIS\) course](#) — full day, age 14+, available in English and Cantonese. One day qualifies you as the team's pitchside first aider for the season. Every match needs one. Most clubs are short of them. **The single highest-leverage low-time-commitment role in mini rugby.**

**The Team Manager.** *Time: 2-3 hours a week.*

The administrative spine of every team. Manages the WhatsApp group, tracks attendance, organises kit, handles registrations and tour bookings. Largely thankless. Entirely essential. If you are organised and good with people, this is your role.

**The Assistant Coach.** *Time: training nights + matches.*

Help the head coach run sessions. Take small groups during drills. You don't need a coaching qualification to assist — but most clubs will quietly nudge you toward the next box within a season.

**The Coach.** *Time: 4-hour course + the season.*

The entry-level coaching qualification in Hong Kong is the [HKCR FIT Introductory Coaching Course](#) — 4 hours total (1 hour theory, 3 hours practical), HK\$600, age 16+. After this, you are a coach. Your name goes on the team sheet. Your weekend has a structure for the next decade.

**The Referee.** *Time: full-day course + matches.*

Mini rugby is desperately short of qualified referees. HKCR runs the [World Rugby Level 1 Referee Course](#) — full day, HK\$600, age 14+. The Level 1 course requires online prerequisites: RugbyReady, Concussion Management, Laws of the Game, and Safeguarding Essentials — all free. After this, you can referee mini and youth matches. You will be appreciated more in this role than in almost any other.

**The Committee Volunteer.** *Time: variable.*

Every club's mini section has a committee. Treasurer, registrar, sponsorship lead, festival co-ordinator, kit officer. These roles run the section. They are filled by parents who said yes when asked. If you have a professional skill — finance, marketing, legal, design, comms — your club needs you on the committee more than on the pitch.

The rule of thumb every Hong Kong rugby club lives by: **for every player on the pitch, you need roughly half a parent doing something useful off it.** A team of 20 minis needs 10 active contributors to run well. Your team has 20 minis. Count the contributors. If the maths doesn't work, that's where you come in.

# Pitchside behaviour and rugby etiquette

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Rugby has a reputation for being well-behaved on the touchline. This reputation is mostly accurate, but it is not accidental — it's maintained, weekend by weekend, by parents who model the etiquette and gently call out parents who don't.

## What to do

- **Clap good play from both teams.** A clean break is a clean break, regardless of which jersey made it. Children notice this.
- **Cheer by encouragement, not by instruction.** *"Good run, Aiden!"* — yes. *"Aiden, pass it to the wing now!"* — no.
- **Stand back from the touchline.** There's a reason it's a line. The kids need the space. The ref needs a clear view.
- **Shake the opposition coach's hand.** Before and after.
- **Stay for the third half.** The drink afterwards in the clubhouse is the bonding event that holds the whole community together. Get to know the opposition's parents — you will see them, at this club or another, for the next ten years.
- **Acknowledge the ref.** *"Thanks ref"* at the end of the match. They are volunteers.

## What not to do

- **Don't coach from the touchline.** Even if you are a coach. *Especially* if you are a coach.
- **Don't ref from the touchline.** The ref is the ref. You are not.
- **Don't single out the opposition's "rough" player.** They are eight. They are not rough. They are eight.
- **Don't compare your child's playing time to others.** Equal-or-near-equal playing time at mini level is the World Rugby principle, embedded in the [HKMRFU Code of Conduct](#). Maximum playing time at mini grade is also capped — 10 minutes a half at U7–U8, 15 at U9–U10, 20 at U11–U12 ([RFU Reg 15](#)).
- **Don't critique the coach in front of your child.** Whatever you say in the car ride home, your kid is repeating at training next week.
- **Don't bring the same energy you bring to your kid's swim meet.** Rugby is a contact sport played in poor weather by children with mouthguards who can't hear you anyway. Save the lungs.

## The third half — what it actually is

The "third half" is the post-match social: the time in the clubhouse, beer in hand for the adults, juice in hand for the kids, where opposition teams sit together and the day's match becomes a story rather than a result. It is the most distinctive cultural feature of rugby compared to other sports your child could play.

Take it seriously. Stay for it. This is where the next decade of friendships, coaching opportunities, lift-shares, tour roommates, and sponsor introductions happens. It is also where your child sees that the people they were just hitting are also the people they are now sitting next to. That lesson is more valuable than anything they will learn in the match itself.

# Safety, player welfare, and what good coaching looks like

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Rugby is a contact sport. Mini rugby is a contact sport that has been carefully designed to be safer than most things your child will ever do — but it is not risk-free, and the parent's job is to know what good safety looks like so you can tell when it isn't there.

## The global safety framework

World Rugby's [Player Welfare hub](#) is the canonical resource. Every accredited coach in Hong Kong has worked through it. It covers concussion recognition, contact technique, injury management, and safe-play principles. Every parent should at minimum read the [Player Welfare and Medical](#) modules — they're free, online, and take 45 minutes between them.

## Concussion — the only thing that matters more than everything else

The cardinal rule: **Recognise. Remove. Recover. Return.**

- **Recognise:** any blow to the head, neck, or body that produces symptoms — confusion, dizziness, headache, 'not feeling right' — is a suspected concussion. Children show symptoms differently than adults. Err on the side of suspicion.
- **Remove:** the player comes off, immediately, no negotiation, no "let's see how they go." A suspected concussion is a confirmed end of the day.
- **Recover:** structured stand-down. World Rugby's current age-grade guidance is a minimum 14-day rest from contact for under-19s following a concussion ([World Rugby Concussion Guidance](#)).
- **Return:** graduated return-to-play, signed off by a doctor.

If your child is concussed and a coach or parent suggests anything other than the above, push back. Loudly. The science is settled and the cost of getting it wrong is paid by the child, not the adult who didn't want to make a fuss.

## What good coaching looks like

You do not need to know rugby to evaluate the coaching. Watch for these:

- **Are children active for most of the session?** A good session has children moving. A bad one has them queuing for one drill at a time.
- **Are coaches teaching technique before introducing pressure?** Tackling is taught at low height, low speed, in stages.
- **Is the language age-appropriate?** "Soft hands" is fine for U10. It's gibberish for U7. Good coaches adjust.
- **Are the smallest kids included as much as the biggest?** A coach who runs the session through their three best players is failing the other twelve.
- **Is there laughter?** Mini rugby that isn't fun fails its primary purpose. If the field looks grim, it is grim.

If your club's coaching consistently doesn't meet this bar, raise it with the section head, privately, with specifics. Do not raise it in the WhatsApp group. Do not raise it on the touchline. Do not raise it on Facebook.

# Pathways beyond minis

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Mini rugby ends at U12. From U13, the world expands.

**Youth club rugby — Hysan Youth.** HKCR's youth competition is the [Hysan Youth league](#), running from U13 to U18. Both 15s and 7s formats are played. The full structure:

- **U13** — Boys Youth Championship and Premiership; Girls Fast 15s
- **U14** — Boys Youth Championship and Premiership; Girls Championship 7s and Premiership 7s
- **U16** — Boys Premiership and Championship; Girls Youth League
- **U18** — Boys Premiership and Championship; Girls Youth League

Selection is by year of birth. Your child's club continues to be the home base, with bigger squads, fuller rules, regional and overseas tours, and the start of selection pressure.

**Schools rugby — HKSSF.** The [Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation](#) runs schools rugby through grade-banded competitions — Junior Grade, B Grade, A Grade for boys, with parallel Junior and B Grade for girls. For kids at HK schools that run rugby programmes, the schools competition runs alongside club rugby. Many top players play both; some choose one.

**Representative pathway.** From around U13, the best players from clubs and schools are scouted via [HKCR Talent Testing Days](#) — an annual selection event run with the Hong Kong Sports Institute. Successful players progress directly into Hong Kong China Age Grade national squads (U16, U18, U19/U20). The annual [New Year's Day Youth Rugby Tournament](#) at HKFC — where HK Dragons (local) play Overseas Lions (overseas-based) — is the public showcase of the pathway.

**Senior club rugby and beyond.** Premiership, lower leagues, the [Hong Kong China men's 15s team](#) (qualified for the 2027 World Cup), the [women's team](#) (hosting WXV in HK in 2026), and the Sevens programmes that put a player on the Cathay/HSBC Sevens stage at Kai Tak.

Two things to know as a mini rugby parent:

First, **most kids will not play representative rugby, and that's fine.** The point of mini rugby is not to produce internationals. It is to produce people who keep playing — at school, at university, at club, recreationally, into their thirties and forties — and who keep the game alive for the next generation. A child who plays U6-to-U18 club rugby and then turns up to your team's veterans match in 25 years has been a complete success of the system.

Second, **the representative pathway is not the only pathway worth caring about.** A child who becomes the team manager of their U16 side is being trained for a life of leadership. A child who becomes a referee at 16 is being trained for a life of fairness. The game produces more than players, and the parent who sees this is the parent who has understood it.

# Glossary, FAQ, and final word

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## Quick glossary

**Try (5 points)** — touching the ball down past the opposition's try line.

**Conversion (2 points)** — a kick at goal awarded after a try.

**Knock-on** — dropping the ball forward. Ends the play; restart with a scrum to the other team.

**Forward pass** — passing the ball forward (rugby is the only contact sport where you can't). Same restart as knock-on.

**Ruck** — the contest for the ball after a tackle. The bit that looks like a pile-on but isn't.

**Maul** — a ruck-but-standing-up.

**Scrum** — eight players (less in mini rugby) bound together to restart play.

**Lineout** — players lifted to catch a thrown-in ball, restarting play after the ball goes out.

**The third half** — the post-match social. Compulsory.

## FAQs

### Q: Is rugby safe enough for my child?

A: Honest answer: **rugby has higher contact-injury rates than non-contact sports**. The headline academic study, published in the [British Journal of Sports Medicine](#), found youth rugby players incurred 2.7 times more match injuries than soccer players, and three rugby players (none in soccer) had to stop playing through severe injury over a single season. That's the data, and we're not going to hide it.

What mini rugby does to mitigate this is the **graduated structure** described in section 1: two-hand touch and non-contact at U6-U8, tackle introduced gradually from U9, contested scrums only from U12. Coaches are trained to World Rugby standards. Concussion protocol is enforced. The risk is real and is managed, but it is real. The bigger risk for many kids is sedentary childhood; the question for each family is how they weight the two. We trust you to make that call with the data, not against it.

### Q: My child is small. Will they get hurt?

A: Mini rugby groups are by age, not weight. The concern is real and is the single most common reason parents pull kids before U10. The honest answer: good coaching and proper graduated contact mean small kids are usually fine; bad coaching means anyone can get hurt. The protection is the coach, not the size.

### Q: Should my child play another sport too?

A: Yes. World Rugby's own guidance is that early specialisation is bad for kids. Most of the best HK age-grade players are also swimmers, footballers, basketballers, or martial artists. The cross-training matters more at this age than rugby-specific training does.

**Q: Do we have to do tours?**

A: No. Tours are optional and expensive (typically HK\$3,000–8,000 per tour, depending on destination). They are also where some of the best memories of mini rugby happen. Each family decides. Don't let anyone shame you either way.

**Q: I want to volunteer but I work long hours.**

A: See section 9. The First Aider role costs you a one-day course and matchday availability. The Helper role costs you 30 minutes a week. There is a job for every level of capacity. The clubs need you.

## Final word

If your child plays mini rugby in Hong Kong for six seasons, you will spend roughly **180 Sunday mornings** at a pitch. (That's 30 weekends × 6 years.) That is a real chunk of life.

You can spend it as a passenger, watching from a folding chair, scrolling your phone, slightly resentful about the early start. Or you can spend it as a contributor — knowing the kids' names, knowing the coach, holding a clipboard or a flag or a first aid bag, in the clubhouse afterwards, in the WhatsApp group, in the running of the thing.

The first version is fine. The second version is the one that, in five years, you'll realise was the best part of your week.

# Don't be that parent.

# Be this one.

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*Mini Rugby in Hong Kong: A Parents' Guide is published by The Tryline — Hong Kong's positive, constructive voice for rugby. Read more at [thetryline.com](http://thetryline.com). Sign up to the newsletter for weekly Hong Kong rugby coverage, bilingual editions launching from Issue #4.*

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*— A Hong Kong Rugby Dad. And the editor of The Tryline.*

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