



Why Rugby is Safer than Other Contact Sports

"The risk of injury in rugby is relatively low compared to American sports – such as football, ice hockey, and lacrosse - a fact borne-out by numerous studies to ascertain the risk of sports injury in different activities."

Lyle J. Micheli, MD

Past President of the American College of Sports Medicine

Despite perception, rugby is safer than most other contact sports, including collision sports like football. Before you form an opinion, you should know the following:

ATHLETES ARE SAFER WITHOUT PADS

Rugby players wear no pads. The pads athletes wear in other sports provide a false confidence to hit another player with greater speed, force and wreckless abandon. Pads do not protect the athlete, but safe instruction on how to manage contact does.

TEACHING SAFE CONTACT PROTECTS PLAYER WELFARE

Rugby has evolved to protect padless and helmetless players, which has led football teams to coach this same rugby tackle. Rugby players do not throw their entire body into the tackle, so they'll never achieve that same level of force as takedowns during football games.

Sports that only perceive themselves as having incidental contact, such as soccer and lacrosse, do not spend much time instructing safe contact skills. The result is that athletes are ill-prepared when contact occurs, which often results in injury.

GOALS OF RUGBY PROTECT ATHLETES

Rugby doesn't have a system of downs like football and it is not important to contest every single yard. It's more important in rugby to bring the ball carriers to the ground even if they drag the defender an extra yard or two. In football, every yard is crucial as it may result in a new set of downs, which results in more violent player impacts. Tackling in rugby is tactical and involves far less force.

CONCUSSION RATES

Ice Hockey	12%
Snowboarding	10%
Water tubing	9%
Football	8%
Lacrosse	8%
Wrestling	7%
Horseback riding	7%
Rugby	7%
Soccer	6%
Cheerleading	6%
Snowmobling	6%
Street Hockey	6%
Baseball	5%

National Safety Council, 2017

HOW RUGBY IS PLAYED PROTECTS ATHLETES

In rugby, the ball must always be passed backwards and the defender must come from a position facing the ball carrier, which allows for the offensive player to simultaneously see the ball coming and the tackler, and allows both players to safely prepare for contact. Sports whose design allows athletes to turn their backs to defenders to face the passer results in defenseless contact and far higher rates of injury.

Rugby also teaches its athletes to fall correctly both in offensive and defensive position, which is necessary to maintain possession of the ball. The byproduct of this instruction is player welfare.

RUGBY LAWS PROTECT ATHLETES

The most crucial thing to know is that player welfare is of primary importance to the organizations that govern the sport. World Rugby supports independent research about the safety of the game and responds directly to empirical studies with changes in the Laws of the game.

As example, research studies resulted in the following law changes that directly resulted in reduction of injury: (a) 2010 changes in the scrum; (b) February 2010 changes to reduce dangerous charging into the ball-carrier, ruck and maul; (c) February 2011 penalization of dangerous (high) tackles; and (d) November 2016 penalization of reckless and accidental tackles. **No other sport has changed the laws of the game as frequently as rugby and solely for the purpose of protecting the safety of its athletes.**

PERSONAL CONCERN

The coaches of Elmhurst Rugby each have children, have played the game and care deeply for the future of the sport. We pride ourselves in ensuring our youth athletes receive the best instruction facilitating the safest competition offered. We strictly adhere to the 5 R's of injury and concussion assessment: **Recognize, Remove, Refer, Recover & Return**. We also have adopted a ground-breaking training program that research has shown to reduce overall injuries by 72% and concussions by 59%. With a neuropsychologist on staff and Olympia Chiropractic & Physical Therapy as a professional partner, Elmhurst Rugby offers a safe experience beyond other sports.

RUGBY vs FOOTBALL

"The general principles are the same... but I got more head knocks playing American football than I did in rugby. The first thing you learn in rugby is head protection."

Martin Johnson

Former Captain and World Cup Champion, Head Coach & played both rugby and football