How to play ... rugby

Welcome to a sport which will enchant and excite you, and take you to the heights and the depths of human emotion. Learn the rules and you will be unable to resist it.

Rugby is a game of 40-minute halves with the most **uncomplicated** of objectives – to **get** more **points** than your opponent. [1] You either **touch the ball down over your opponents' line**, known as a try, for five points, or **kick the ball over your opponent's posts;** three points for a dropped goal and a penalty, two points for a conversion (kicking the ball between the posts after a try).

The complexities in rugby arise as a result of the **obstacles** which are put in every rugby player's path to make it **harder** for him to score points. [2] **This can be done in three ways**: by **throwing you to the ground**, by teaming up with other players to **push against you** when you have the ball in your hands or by **pushing against you** when the ball is on the ground.

There is also the **law** that says **the ball can only be passed backwards**. [3] **This is clearly rather difficult to do when you have fifteen very large opponents standing in front of you** ready to throw you to the floor if they get anywhere near you.

Each team is made up of eight forwards and seven backs. The job of the forwards is to get the ball for the quicker, lighter backs to score. **Rugby is rather like chess:** chess pieces have special functions, in the same way that rugby players have specific tasks to perform. Within these roles they both employ various moves to get to the other side. [4] **Rugby is a game in which all the players work together**, and the better their relationships and understanding of one another, the better their chances of getting one of their team to the try-line.

[5] The tools you need to **overcome them** are simple: time and space. When you hear commentators talking of tactics or strategies, they're just talking about the various ways in which you 'create space' or 'make time'. For example, if the backs keep passing along the line they will eventually run into problems, as the last player has no one else to pass to, and no space to run in. He'll get thrown off the pitch by the opposition, and the ball will go to them.

There are **tactics like miss-moves** (missing someone out in the line so that a defending player runs the wrong way and leaves a gap) **and dummies** (pretending to pass so the opposition runs the wrong way). [6]

There are a few other things which could be mentioned, but basically, rugby is nowhere near as complicated as it looks. It is, after all, just a game.

A The point at which rugby becomes **much more fun than a board game** is in its **team dynamics**.

B **However**, **this complexity in the rules** of rugby does not make the game any less exciting to play, or indeed, to watch.

C **The methods of scoring** are **equally simple**.

D Because of ***this*** **rule**, **players have to run forwards** or they'll end up back on their own line.

E ***These strategies*** **are** ***both*** **ways of tricking the opposition** into opening up a gap in the defence for you to run through before you run out of space.

F ***One such*** **difficulty** is that the opposing team can **physically stop you from scoring**.

G **Now we know the aim** of playing rugby**, and the nature of the obstacles** that stand in the way, we need to look at **how to deal with these obstacles**.

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