

Rugby

Rugby is a contact team sport, which originated in England during the 19th century. In its most common form the game is between two teams of 15 players using an oval-shaped ball on a rectangular field with H-shaped goalposts on each try line.

William Webb Ellis is often credited with the invention of rugby in 1823 at Rugby School when he allegedly caught the ball while playing football and ran towards the opposition goal. However, the evidence for the story is doubtful. In 1845, the first football laws were written by Rugby School pupils.

World Rugby, originally known as the International Rugby Football Board (IRFB) and from 1998 to November 2014 known as the International Rugby Board (IRB), has been the governing body for rugby union since its formation in 1886. Rugby union spread from the Home Nations of Great Britain and Ireland, and was absorbed by many of the countries associated with the British Empire. Early competitors of the sport included Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Countries that have adopted rugby union as their national sport include Fiji, Georgia, Madagascar, New Zealand, Samoa, Tonga and Wales. Rugby union is played in over 100 countries across six continents and as of 2014; WR has 101 full members and 18 associate members.

The Rugby World Cup, first held in 1987, takes place every four years with the winner of the tournament receiving the Webb Ellis Cup. The Six Nations Championship in Europe and The Rugby Championship in the Southern Hemisphere (the latter replacing the Tri Nations) are major international competitions held annually.

Major domestic competitions include the English Premiership in England, Top 14 in France, the ITM Cup in New Zealand and the Currie Cup in South Africa. Other transnational competitions include the Pro12, involving Irish, Italian, Scottish and Welsh teams; the European Rugby Champions Cup, involving the top European teams from their respective domestic competitions; and Super Rugby, involving Australian, New Zealand and South African teams and set to add teams in Argentina and Japan in 2016

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