



Crewe & Nantwich RUFC Under 9

Safety for our kids in a contact rugby environment

We are just about to embark on a very exciting journey with our kids into the world of contact rugby. Judging by the enthusiasm shown at the last few training sessions of last season, most if not all the kids are really looking forward to playing 'proper' rugby.

James, Colin and I have had a couple of meetings already to plan our transition from tag to contact and we will all meet up in the next few weeks to talk to you all about our plans and aspirations for the kids this season.

What I wanted to do here is give you an introduction to the safety aspect of the game at this level and pass on my experiences as a rugby player, senior coach and now coaching coordinator for Crewe and Nantwich RUFC.

Let's start with personal administration – kit

Mouthguards

I have spoken to the advisors at the RFU and they have told me that there is no directive at this age group regarding personal equipment, they obviously recommend a mouthguard but feel the rest is up to clubs and individual players. We have decided that a mouthguard will be compulsory at all training sessions and matches and any player without one will not be allowed to participate in contact.

Shoulder Pads

Shoulder pads are fine and should be based on personal choice, whatever the kids feel comfortable with.

Headguards

We have looked at other rugby unions federations around the world and used our own experience as players. We have established that, as previously mentioned, mouthguards are essential, shoulder pads are personal choice but that headguards are frowned upon at this age group, in fact up to under 13 level (The Irish Rugby Union do not allow the wearing of headguards in competitive matches under the age of 14)



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Our feeling is that wearing a headguard or helmet gives them a false sense of security and it is far better for us as coaches to ensure that

they are equipped with the ability to tackle properly to avoid contact with the head. The danger is that our children will 'lead' with their heads thinking that the headguard is protection - **IT IS NOT!**

All the headguard does is protect from abrasions; it does not have the ability to protect against direct contact.

During the season the kids will pick up little injuries this is inevitable with a contact sport and it is how we deal with these incidents that is important. We – the coaches – have just been on a Child Protection and Best Practice course; however, this does not mean we are either first aid trained or able to diagnose injuries. Therefore it is vital that parents and carers are around at all times during matches and training sessions. It is also important that the parents try to understand the game and what your child is doing.

Boots

It is important that we stay up to date with all RFU directives and whilst currently there isn't a ruling on the wearing on 'blades', there are high level discussions taking place on their safety and whether they are fit for purpose. Therefore, we recommend that all our kids wear boots with studs to avoid any issues in the future.

Shirts, Shorts, Socks

Last season it was very impressive seeing our kids turn up for matches and competitions wearing the same kit and looking like a well drilled team. It is just as important that we keep up these standard next season so please ensure that you child has black shorts, black socks with white tops and an up to date playing shirt that matches the others and above all, fits.

We are extremely lucky that the person running the club shop is one of our coaches so there should be no excuse for not being 'match ready' as he has everything you will need – boots, mouthguards, shoulder pads, shorts, socks, training tops etc.



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This season Charlie and Nick will be sponsoring a set of playing shirts so please get your kids chest sizes to us as soon as possible – if the

playing shirt your child wore last season still fits then there is no need to spend £10 on a new one as the sponsor names will remain the same.

The coaches will assess the players throughout the season and we hope to be able to provide a mid-season and end of season report on their progress. Please bear with us on this as it's not been done before. The reports will be open for discussion and feedback from both the players and the parents and we want to make this season as open and honest as possible.

Summary

Recommendations –

No Helmets

Shoulder pads – personal choice

Mouthguard – compulsory

Boots with studs

Shirts, shorts and socks – club standard

We are all looking forward to a great season

Cheers

James, Colin and Nick