

Statement – GPS Association U11 and U12 Rugby Competition Structure

The GPS Association, in partnership with its member schools, is introducing a pilot competition structure for the U11 and U12 Rugby Union competitions designed to support meaningful and enjoyable rugby experiences in a safe environment that prioritises player enjoyment, participation and development.

Across all age groups, GPS Rugby operates on a long-standing like-for-like competition philosophy. Teams and fixtures are reviewed regularly to help ensure boys participate in competitive and appropriate matches that support enjoyment, development and player welfare. The U11 and U12 pilot is an extension of this existing approach.

Importantly, the GPS Association rugby competitions are not conducted to determine age-group premiers. There are no ladders or premierships in GPS Rugby age-group competitions, with the only official GPS Rugby Premiership awarded at the 1st XV level. The focus of the GPS Association rugby is on providing positive participation opportunities and meaningful rugby experiences for all players.

The pilot has been introduced in response to significant differences in player numbers across member schools within the primary years. Schools such as Nudgee College and Gregory Terrace have substantially larger player pools than many other schools. In addition, Brisbane State High School commences at Year 7 and therefore does not field U11 or U12 teams. Together, these factors can make it more challenging to consistently create balanced fixtures using a traditional top-down A, B, C, D, E and F team structure.

To address this, participating schools have adopted a model that creates multiple evenly selected teams within player squads, rather than progressively grading teams from strongest to weakest. This provides greater flexibility to match teams of comparable ability, experience and physical development, supporting fairer and more appropriate contests across the competition.

The GPS Association and member schools continue to review fixtures throughout the season. While scorelines may be considered as one indicator when assessing competition balance, they do not solely determine whether a game was safe, competitive or appropriate. Reviews also consider participation opportunities, player enjoyment, development outcomes, the physical nature of contests and feedback from schools and coaches.

The pilot structure has been developed collaboratively by all GPS member schools and will continue to be monitored and reviewed throughout the season to assess its effectiveness and ensure it supports the needs of players and the broader rugby community.

For further information, parents are encouraged to refer to the GPS U11 & U12 Rugby Competition – Parent Information Guide and encouraged to contact their school's Director of Rugby.

Ends.

GPS U11 & U12 Rugby Competition – Parent Information Guide

Introduction

The GPS Association, in partnership with all nine member schools, would like to provide clarity to our rugby community regarding the structure of the U11 and U12 Rugby Union competitions.

The GPS Rugby Competition, across all age groups, is built around a weekly review process that aims to ensure teams are matched on a like-for-like basis, providing players with competitive, enjoyable and safe playing experiences.

Importantly:

- There are no ladders or premierships in any GPS Association rugby age-group competition.
- The only GPS Rugby Premiership is awarded at the 1st XV level.
- The purpose of the U11 and U12 competitions is to provide boys with meaningful and enjoyable rugby experiences in a safe environment that prioritises player enjoyment, participation and development.

While no premierships are awarded in age-groups, schools continue to foster competitive environments that encourage effort, improvement, sportsmanship and team achievement.

Why Has the Structure Changed?

Due to larger primary school enrolments, some GPS schools can select from significantly larger pools of players than others. This can make it challenging to create consistently balanced fixtures using a traditional top-down A, B, C, D, E and F team structure.

In addition, Brisbane State High School commences at Year 7 and therefore does not field U11 or U12 teams. This naturally reduces the number of teams available within these age-group competitions and can further complicate efforts to maintain balanced and appropriate fixtures across the competition.

The pilot structure has therefore been introduced in the U11 and U12 age groups to better support like-for-like competition, player safety and competitive balance. By creating additional evenly selected teams within larger player cohorts, schools and the GPS Association have greater flexibility to match teams of comparable ability, experience and physical development.

Nudgee College and Gregory Terrace, which have some of the largest player pools in these age groups, have worked collaboratively with the GPS Association and member schools to pilot a new structure that aims to:

- Maintain the principle of like-for-like competition.
- Improve player safety through more balanced fixtures.
- Create fairer competition opportunities for all schools.
- Assist with balancing home-and-away fixtures.
- Reduce the frequency of significant mismatches.

U11 Competition Structure

Both Nudgee College and Gregory Terrace have entered six U11 teams.

Rather than selecting teams from A through to F in a traditional top-down order, they have created three player squads and then selected two evenly balanced teams within each squad.

This has resulted in:

- Two evenly selected "A" teams.
- Two evenly selected "B" teams.
- Two evenly selected "C" teams.

U12 Competition Structure

The U12 competition follows a similar model.

Nudgee College and Gregory Terrace have entered:

- Two evenly selected "A" teams.
- Three evenly selected "C" teams.

Anglican Church Grammar School (Churchie) has adopted a similar approach by entering:

- One U12 "A" team.
- Two evenly selected U12 "B" teams.

This structure provides greater flexibility when creating fixtures that prioritise competitive balance and player welfare.

Understanding Team Labels

The objective is not to create a ranking system within each age group, but rather to ensure boys play against opponents of similar ability, experience and physical development levels.

Parents should be aware that team labels such as "A", "B" and "C" do not necessarily determine where a team will sit within the weekly draw.

The GPS Rugby Competition is built on matching teams that provide the most appropriate and competitive contest.

For example, a school's second-best team (labelled "B") may be scheduled against another school's "C" team if that is considered the most suitable and safest match-up available.

Player Enjoyment, Participation, Development and Safety

The GPS Association and member schools conduct ongoing reviews of fixtures and team performances throughout the season to maximise player enjoyment, participation and development while maintaining a safe playing environment.

When reviewing fixtures, schools and the GPS Association consider:

- Participation opportunities for players.
- Player engagement and enjoyment.
- Skill development opportunities.
- The overall competitiveness and quality of the match.
- Feedback from coaches and schools.
- The physical nature of the contest.
- Relative player size, maturity and experience.
- Injury risk and safety considerations.

There will be occasions where a game remains safe and competitive despite a larger score margin. Equally, there may be occasions where a closer scoreline does not necessarily indicate that teams were evenly matched.

The objective is always to provide the most appropriate playing experience for all participants.

What Parents Need to Know

- The GPS Association Rugby age-group competitions are not graded competitions with ladders or premierships.
- Teams are matched on a like-for-like basis to provide safe and competitive games.
- The only GPS Association Rugby Premiership is awarded at the 1st XV level.
- Nudgee College and Gregory Terrace have adopted a model that creates multiple evenly selected teams rather than a traditional top-down A, B, C, D, E and F structure.
- Team labels are primarily used for fixture administration and may not reflect how teams are matched each week.
- A school's "B" team may play another school's "C" team if that provides the best competitive and safety outcome.
- The GPS Association and member schools regularly review fixtures and match-ups throughout the season.
- While scorelines are considered as part of this review process, they are only one factor and do not solely determine whether a game was safe, appropriate or competitive.
- The focus remains on providing meaningful and enjoyable rugby experiences in a safe environment that prioritises player enjoyment, participation and development.

In Simple Terms

The team name is less important than ensuring boys play against opponents of similar ability and experience. The goal is for every player to enjoy rugby, actively participate, continue developing their skills and do so in a safe environment.

Further Information

The GPS Association understands that parents may have questions regarding the U11 and U12 competition structure and team allocations.

Parents seeking further information are encouraged to contact their school's Director of Rugby in the first instance, as they are best placed to discuss team selections, competition structures and the application of the GPS Rugby philosophy within their school context.

The GPS Association and member schools remain committed to working together to provide meaningful and enjoyable rugby experiences in a safe environment that prioritises player enjoyment, participation and development.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why has the U11 and U12 competition structure changed?

The changes have been introduced to better support the GPS Association's objective of providing meaningful and enjoyable rugby experiences in a safe environment that prioritises player enjoyment, participation and development. The structure helps schools and the GPS Association create more balanced fixtures and reduce potential mismatches.

Why has this pilot been introduced only in the U11 and U12 age groups?

The pilot has been introduced in the U11 and U12 age groups because these cohorts experience the greatest variation in enrolment numbers between GPS member schools. Some schools can select from significantly larger player pools than others, creating challenges in maintaining balanced fixtures using traditional team structures.

In addition, Brisbane State High School commences at Year 7 and does not field U11 or U12 teams. This reduces the number of participating teams within these age groups and contributes to the complexity of creating balanced competition structures and fixtures.

The pilot structure provides greater flexibility in creating balanced and appropriate fixtures while maintaining the GPS principle of like-for-like competition. The GPS Association and member schools will continue to review the effectiveness of the structure as part of the ongoing competition review process.

Is this a new grading system?

No.

This is not a formal grading system and is not intended to rank teams or schools.

The GPS Association age-groups competitions do not operate with ladders or premierships. Team structures have been adjusted to create more balanced competition opportunities rather than determine which school has the strongest team.

Why have some schools entered multiple "A" teams?

Schools such as Nudgee College and Gregory Terrace have substantially larger player numbers in the U11 and U12 age groups than most other GPS schools.

To support more balanced competition, they have evenly distributed players across multiple teams rather than selecting one strongest team followed by progressively weaker teams.

Does an "A" team mean it is a school's best team?

Not necessarily.

In the new structure, some schools have selected multiple evenly balanced teams within the same squad. Team labels therefore do not always indicate a clear ranking order.

Why is my child's team playing another school's team with a different letter designation?

GPS fixtures are created on a like-for-like basis rather than solely by team name.

A school's second-best team may be matched against another school's "C" team if that is considered the most competitive and appropriate fixture available.

Does this mean some teams are being disadvantaged?

No.

The intent of the structure is to improve fairness and provide boys with games against opponents of similar ability and experience levels.

Are there ladders or competition points in the U11 and U12 competitions?

No.

There are no official ladders, competition points or premierships in the GPS Association age-groups.

The competitions are participation and development focused.

Is there a GPS Premiership for U11 and U12 Rugby?

No.

The only official GPS Rugby Premiership is awarded at the 1st XV level.

How are fixture match-ups determined?

The GPS Association and member schools regularly review team performances and participation outcomes to help ensure boys enjoy meaningful rugby experiences, have opportunities to actively participate, continue their development and compete against appropriately matched opposition. Player safety remains a critical consideration within this process.

Why does GPS review scorelines?

Scorelines can provide useful information about the competitiveness of a fixture and may help identify where future adjustments should be considered.

However, scorelines are only one element of the review process.

Does GPS aim for every game to be decided by a close scoreline?

No.

While GPS schools and the Association strive to create balanced and competitive fixtures, scorelines are only one indicator of an appropriately matched contest. Rugby matches can be safe, enjoyable and developmentally beneficial even where larger score margins occur. The objective is not to engineer identical results, but to create opportunities for participants to compete against opponents of similar ability, experience and physical development.

If a team wins or loses by a large margin, does that mean the game was unsafe?

No.

While significant score margins may sometimes indicate a mismatch, the score alone does not determine whether a game was safe or appropriate.

When reviewing fixtures, schools and the GPS Association consider:

- Player welfare and safety.
- The physical contest.

- Participation levels.
- Skill development opportunities.
- Feedback from coaches and schools.
- The overall nature of the match.

A game can occasionally produce a larger score differential while still being played safely and competitively.

If there are no ladders or premierships, why are scores recorded?

Scores provide useful information to schools and the GPS Association when reviewing fixtures and assessing the effectiveness of team match-ups.

They are one piece of information used in the weekly review process, but they are not the sole measure of success, competitiveness or safety.

Is this a permanent change?

The structure is currently being implemented as a pilot in collaboration with GPS member schools.

The GPS Association and schools will continue to review its effectiveness throughout the season and consider feedback when determining future competition formats.

Our Shared Goal

The objective of the GPS Association Rugby Competition is simple:

To provide every boy with meaningful and enjoyable rugby experiences in a safe environment that prioritises player enjoyment, participation and development through appropriately matched competition each week.

Player enjoyment, participation, development and safety remain at the heart of the GPS Association Rugby Competition.

I still have questions about my school's teams or fixtures. Who should I contact?

Parents are encouraged to contact their school's Director of Rugby in the first instance. Directors of Rugby work closely with coaches, school staff and the GPS Association and are best placed to answer school-specific questions regarding teams, fixtures and competition structures.