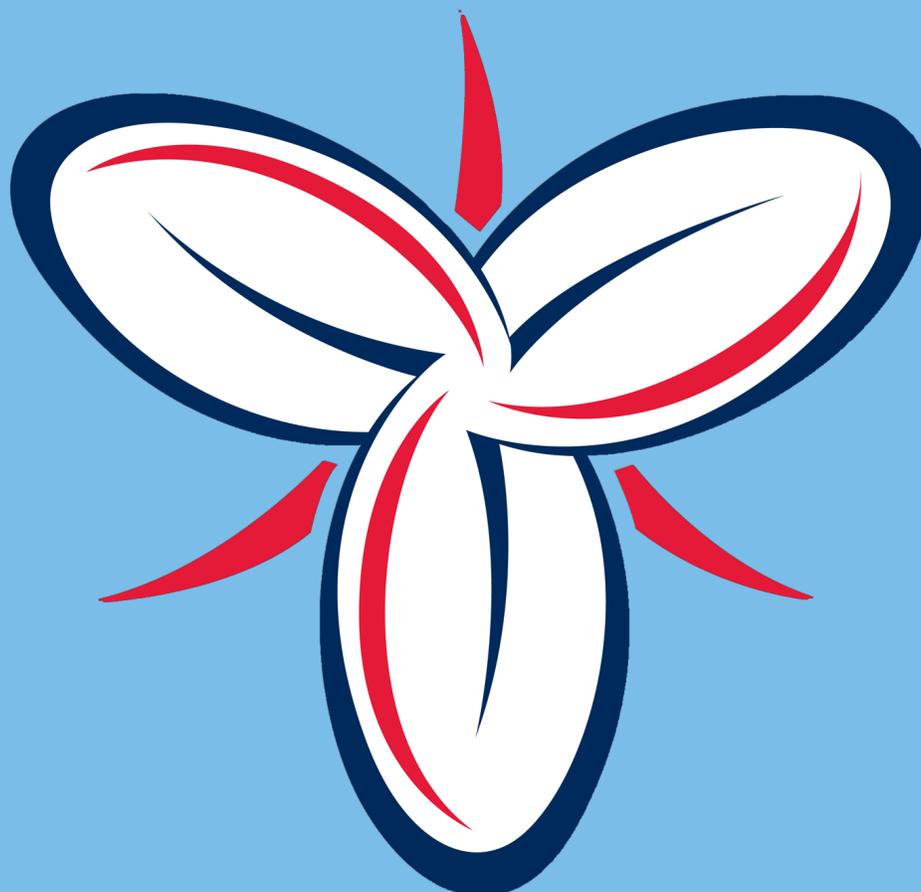


RUGBY ONTARIO BLUE CARD 2020



Protocols & Implementation Procedures

Proud Sponsor





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The Blue Card is a part of a national concussion management initiative. The program is being trialed in Ontario with the vision that the program will be implemented nationwide.



ABOUT CONCUSSIONS

A concussion is a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). It can't be seen on X-rays, CT scans or MRIs. It may affect the way a person thinks, feels and acts.

Any blow to the head, face or neck may cause a concussion. A concussion may also be caused by a blow to the body if the force of the blow causes the brain to move around inside the skull. A concussion can happen to anyone – anywhere – including:

- at home, school or your workplace
- during a car, bike or pedestrian crash
- from participating in games, sports or other physical activity

All concussions should be taken seriously. While the effects are typically short-term, a concussion can lead to long-lasting symptoms and even long-term effects.

There are many signs and symptoms of a concussion to look out for, including, but not limited to:

- headache
- dizziness
- ringing in the ears
- memory loss
- nausea
- light sensitivity
- drowsiness
- depression

You can get a concussion even if you don't black out or lose consciousness.

If you notice signs of a concussion in others, or experience any of these symptoms yourself, consult with a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

Take time to heal

It is important to take time and heal if you have a concussion. Rushing back to activities can make symptoms worse and can make recovery longer.



ROWAN'S LAW

Rowan's Law legislation was passed by the Government of Ontario in 2018. This legislation is named in memory of Rowan Stringer who in 2013 tragically passed away due to Second Impact Syndrome, the result of suffering multiple concussions within a week playing high school rugby. The legislation is designed to create a safer environment for competitive amateur athletes, children and youth to play sport.

Knowing how to recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion, and what to do if a concussion is suspected saves lives – whether you're an athlete, a student, a parent, a coach, a team trainer, an official or an educator. The Government of Ontario is committed to implementing Rowan's Law by putting concussion safety information in the hands of people who need it most. Increasing awareness and changing conversations in sport, at school and in our homes, will result in transformative change to the way in which concussions are managed in amateur competitive sport and beyond.

Rugby Ontario is committed to be a leader in the support and implementation of Rowan's Law. Rugby Ontario, and by association all our Member Clubs and registrants, are legally bound by the requirements of the Law.

Rowan's Law: Concussion Awareness Resources

Review the Concussion Awareness Resources if you are an athlete, parent, coach, team trainer or official.

- www.ontario.ca/page/rowans-law-concussion-awareness-resources

Requirements for Sport Organizations

Ontario is a national leader in concussion management and prevention. *Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2018* makes it **mandatory for sports organizations** to:

1. ensure that athletes under 26 years of age*, parents of athletes under 18, coaches, team trainers and officials confirm every year that they have reviewed Ontario's Concussion Awareness Resources
 - **Rugby Ontario has made this a requirement for all athletes participating in rugby in Ontario.**
2. establish a Concussion Code of Conduct that sets out rules of behaviour to support concussion prevention
3. establish a Removal-from-Sport and Return-to-Sport protocol

* Special Rule: A sport organization that is a university, college of applied arts and technology or other post-secondary institution must not register any athlete regardless of age unless the same requirements are met.



The new rules requiring the review of Concussion Awareness Resources and Concussion Codes of Conduct came into effect on July 1, 2019.

The rules for Removal-from-Sport and Return-to-Sport protocols are expected to be in place by July 1, 2020.

[Read more about the concussion requirements for sport organizations](#)

- www.ontario.ca/page/rowans-law-information-sports-organizations-and-schools#section-1

BLUE CARD

Introduction

Enhancing player safety and game welfare is a primary concern and responsibility of Rugby Ontario. Consequently, all matches played under the jurisdiction of Rugby Ontario must comply with World Rugby Concussion Guidelines (recognize and remove). To assist in player safety and game welfare, in 2019 Rugby Ontario piloted the introduction of the Blue Card. In 2020, to comply with the requirements of Rowan's Law, Rugby Ontario will be launching the Blue Card with all Junior and Senior competitions across the province. The Blue Card process meets the rules for the Rowan's Law Removal-from-Sport and Return-to-Sport protocols that are expected to be in place by July 1, 2020.

What is a Blue Card?

The Blue Card is a process initiated on field by a Match Official when a player has been identified on the field with a suspected concussion in accordance with Law 3.22 or Law 3.24. The Match Official will show the Blue Card to the athlete with a suspected concussion in the same manner as holding up a yellow or red card, if appropriate. The Match Official will submit a 'Blue Card Report' in SportLomo which will trigger a process to ensure the correct return to play protocols are followed. The Blue Card has been already successfully introduced in Australia, New Zealand and France.

The Pilot

The Blue Card pilot was conducted in all Marshall, OWL, McCormick Cup and OWL Cup 1st team matches during the 2019 season. There were seven players issued a Blue Card in the 2019 season. Those seven individuals were removed from the game and were unable to participate in another game until they were medically assessed and cleared by a medical professional. Due to the successful implementation of the Blue Card Pilot and the requirements of Rowan's Law, the Blue Card will be introduced throughout all junior and senior competitions conducted under the jurisdiction of Rugby Ontario in the 2020 season.



Blue Card Overview

- 1) When a player is removed from the field of play for a suspected concussion, the match official will issue that player with a “Blue Card”, in a similar manner to which a red or yellow card is issued. Note, depending on circumstances, the referee may not physically show the blue card. In such cases the referee will communicate with the coach of the player.
- 2) The player suspected of a concussion is required to leave the field of play immediately and cannot return and play in that match.
 - **Please note, there is no sideline Head Injury Assessment (HIA) process at any level of Club rugby in Canada.**
- 3) The match official includes the issuing of the Blue Card in their match report.
- 4) The player and their club receive an email notification from Rugby Ontario of the issuing of the Blue Card and the required process to be followed.
- 5) The player issued with the Blue Card cannot return to play in any future match without receiving a written medical clearance, meeting the requirements of the World Rugby Return to Play Protocols and receiving a written clearance from Rugby Ontario to return to play.

ON-FIELD PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Relevant World Rugby Laws

Law 3.24

If, at any point during a match, a player is concussed or has suspected concussion, that player must be immediately and permanently removed from the playing area. This process is known as “Recognize and Remove”.

Law 3.22

A player is deemed to be injured if:

- a. At national representative level, it is the opinion of a doctor that it would be inadvisable for the player to continue.
- b. In other matches, where a match organizer has given explicit permission, it is the opinion of a medically trained person that it would be inadvisable for the player to continue. If none is present, that player may be replaced if the referee agrees.
- c. The referee decides (with or without medical advice) that it would be inadvisable for the player to continue. The referee orders that player to leave the playing area.



Issuing of a Blue Card

When a player is removed from the field of play in accordance with Law 3.22 and/or Law 3.24, the match official shall issue a Blue Card to that player. As per Law 3.22 a. there is no option for the player to continue play after a suspected concussion as the law only applies to a national competition. Anybody involved in the game can recognize signs and symptoms of a suspected concussion and the athlete must be removed from play. The match official should be made aware of a suspected concussion to ensure the appropriate process is put in place.

Replacement of a Player Issued a Blue Card

A player issued a Blue Card may be replaced. Furthermore, in accordance with Law 3.33, a tactically replaced player may return to play to replace a player who has been issued a Blue Card. This will not count towards the number of replacements a team is allowed in a game.

OFF-FIELD PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

The issuing of a Blue Card by a match official initiates the Rugby Ontario Blue Card off-field processes and procedures:

- 1) The match official includes in their match report to Rugby Ontario the name, club and circumstances surrounding the issuing of the Blue Card.
- 2) Rugby Ontario notifies the player and their Club President & Secretary via email indicating that the player has been stood down from all rugby activity due to a suspected concussion. The notification outlines the procedure for the player's return to training and playing.
- 3) Rugby Ontario enters the player and incident details into the Rugby Ontario Blue Card register.
- 4) Rugby Ontario changes the status of the player in the Rugby Canada Registration system from active to inactive/blue carded. The player cannot be included on a team sheet or participate in any match until the player's status is returned to active.
- 5) The player seeks a medical assessment from a qualified medical doctor or nurse practitioner, ideally within 24 to 48 hours. The doctor completes and signs the Rugby Ontario Medical Assessment Letter. The player provides a copy of this letter to Rugby Ontario, their team coach and Club President and Secretary.
- 6) If the medical doctor/nurse practitioner indicates through signing the Rugby Ontario Medical Assessment Letter that the player has not been diagnosed with a concussion, they can resume full participation in rugby related activities and will be returned to "active" status in the Rugby Canada Registration system.



- 7) If the medical doctor indicates through signing the Rugby Ontario Medical Assessment Letter that the player has been diagnosed with a concussion, the player must undertake the World Rugby Graduated Return to Play (GRTP) Program (see page 10).
- 8) Prior to entering Stage 5 of the GRTP (i.e. the stage at which the player resumes full contact practice), the player must obtain a signed copy of the Rugby Ontario Medical Clearance Letter from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner clearing them as fully recovered. The player must provide a copy of the Medical Clearance Letter to Rugby Ontario, their team coach and Club President and Secretary no later than 5pm two business day prior to a scheduled match in which a return to play is planned. i.e. if a match is scheduled on Wednesday night the notification is required on Monday before 5pm.
- 9) Upon receipt of this medical clearance, Rugby Ontario will amend the status of the player in the Rugby Canada Registration System from “inactive/blue carded” to “active”. The player and their Club President and Secretary will be notified accordingly. Once this notification is issued, the player is eligible to commence playing again as long as the player successfully completes Stage 5 of the GRTP Program.
- 10) If a player participates in a match prior to clearance for return to play being issued by Rugby Ontario (i.e. whilst the player’s status is inactive), both the player and their Club may be sanctioned in accordance with the Rugby Ontario Schedule of Sanctions.

INCORRECT PLAYER REPORTED

In the event that the player issued a Blue Card, for whatever reason, is incorrectly identified in a Match Official’s match report, the player’s Club shall notify Rugby Ontario by email as soon as practicable following the receipt of the Blue Card notification. In their notice, the Club shall:

- 1) indicate the name of the player who was incorrectly reported; and,
- 2) indicate the name of the player that should have been reported

In such circumstances, the correctly identified player shall be required to undertake the Blue Card off-field processes and procedures.

MEDICAL ASSESSMENT

A player issued a Blue Card is required to seek medical assessment from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner within 24 to 48 hours. The medical doctor or nurse practitioner, having completed the medical assessment of the player, must complete and sign the Rugby Ontario Medical Assessment Letter. This letter confirms that the player has either:



- a. been diagnosed with a concussion; or,
- b. been cleared of a suspected concussion

The player, based on the medical assessment letter, either:

- a. is diagnosed with a concussion and must commence the World Rugby Graduated Return to Play (GRTP) Program; or,
- b. is not diagnosed with a concussion and can resume full participation in rugby related activities

The player must provide a copy of the completed and signed Medical Assessment Letter to Rugby Ontario, their team coach, Club President and Secretary.

MEDICAL CLEARANCE

Prior to entering Stage 5 of the World Rugby Graduated Return to Play (GRTP) program (i.e. the stage at which the player resumes full contact practice), the player must obtain a signed copy of the Rugby Ontario Medical Clearance Letter from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner clearing them of any concussion symptoms.

The player must provide a copy of this Medical Clearance Letter to Rugby Ontario, their team coach and Club President and Secretary no later than 9am on the business day prior to a scheduled match in which a return to play is planned (e.g. 9am Friday for a Saturday match).

WHO CAN PROVIDE A MEDICAL ASSESSMENT OR MEDICAL CLEARANCE?

Whilst the role of the any medical staff present on match day (e.g. athletic therapists, physiotherapists) is vital in the recognize and remove procedures for any player with a suspected concussion, **medical doctors and nurse practitioners are the only healthcare professionals in Canada with licensed training and expertise to provide comprehensive evaluation of athletes with a suspected concussion.** Therefore, **all players with a suspected concussion should undergo evaluation by one of these professionals, and it is strongly recommended that the medical doctor or nurse practitioner has training in Traumatic Brain Injuries.**

The following types of medical doctors are qualified to evaluate patients with a suspected concussion: pediatricians; family medicine, sports medicine, emergency department, internal medicine and rehabilitation (physiatrists) physicians; neurologists; and, neurosurgeons. In geographic regions of Canada with limited access to medical care (i.e. rural or northern communities), a licensed healthcare professional (i.e. nurse) with pre-arranged access to a medical doctor or nurse practitioner can facilitate this role.

SPORT SPECIFIC RETURN-TO-SPORT STRATEGY

Both the Medical Assessment Letter and Medical Clearance Letter contain a Sport Specific Return-to-Sport Strategy sourced from the *5th International Conference on Concussion in Sport* held in Berlin in 2016. This strategy has been included as it has been widely circulated within Canada, and thus medical practitioners in Canada may be more likely to be familiar with this strategy than the World Rugby Graduated Return to Play (GRTP) program. Please note, The Sport Specific Return-to-Sport Strategy and World Rugby Graduated Return to Play (GRTP) program directly align.

World Rugby Graduated Return to Play (GRTP) Program Table

REHABILITATION STAGE	EXERCISE ALLOWED	OBJECTIVE
1. Initial Rest (Physical and Cognitive)	Normal activities of daily living which do not worsen symptoms, vigorous activity should be avoided. Relative cognitive rest, limiting screen time etc. Ensure symptoms continue to improve or remain absent.	Resolution of symptoms
2a. Symptom-limited activities (symptoms persist at 24 hours)	Initially activities of daily living that do not provoke symptoms. Consider time off or adaptation of work or study.	Return to normal activities (as symptoms permit)
2b. Light aerobic exercise (ensure symptoms continue to improve or remain absent)	Light jogging for 10-15 minutes, swimming or cycling at low to moderate intensity. No resistance training. Ensure symptoms continue to improve or remain absent.	Increase heart rate
3. Sport Specific Exercise	Running drills. No head impact activities.	Add movement
4. Non-contact training drills	Progression to more complex drills (e.g. passing drills). May start progressive resistance training.	Exercise, coordination and cognitive load. A return to learning must be achieved before returning to sport.
5. Full contact practice*	Normal training activities	Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff.
6. Return to sport	Normal game play	

* Prior to entering this stage, the player must obtain a signed copy of the Rugby Ontario Medical Clearance Letter from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner clearing them of any concussion symptoms.



RETURN-TO-WORK/SCHOOL STRATEGY

Whilst the requirements of Rugby Ontario under the Blue Card initiative only relate to the Graduated Return to Play (GRTP) program, an important part of the recovery process from a concussion involves the player being able to return to regular life activities, such as work or school.

As such, information in this regard, provided by *Parachute Canada* and sourced from the *5th International Conference on Concussion in Sport* held in Berlin in 2016, is designed to assist those who have suffered a concussion by providing a Return-to Work/School Strategy. Whilst this strategy is targeted at students, the approach can also be applied to those returning to the work environment.

The Return-to-Work/School Strategy is included with the Medical Assessment Letter and Medical Clearance Letter.

It is important to note that an athlete must return-to-learn before they fully return-to-sport. However, both programs can begin together.

RUGBY ONTARIO CONTACTS

All correspondence relating to the Rugby Ontario Blue Card initiative including the lodging of a Medical Assessment Letter and/or Medical Clearance Letter should be directed to:

Ryan Jones
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Email: rjones@rugbyontario.com
Phone: 647 560 4790 ext 1010

Jamie Holmes
Coach Coordinator
Email: jholmes@rugbyontario.com
Phone: 647 560 4790 ext 1013

David Bushell
Match Official Coordinator
Email: dbushell@rugbyontario.com
Phone: 647 560 4790 ext 1009

Elisa DiGiulio
Member Services Coordinator
Email: edigiulio@rugbyontario.com
Phone: 647 560 4790 ext 1011



REFERENCES & KEY SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Rugby Ontario Blue Card

www.rugbyontario.com/bluecard/

Visit the Rugby Ontario Blue Card website for the following resources:

- Rugby Ontario Medical Assessment Letter
- Rugby Ontario Medical Clearance Letter
- Blue Card Notification Email
- SportLomo Blue Card Reporting Guide
- Holland Bloorview – Signs of a Concussion Card
- Parachute Canada – Concussion: The Basics

Rugby Canada – PlaySmart

playsmart.rugbycanada.ca

World Rugby - Concussion Guidance

playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/concussion

World Rugby Concussion App

Apple Store: apps.apple.com/ca/app/world-rugby-concussion-management/id1031517215

Google Play:

play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.worldrugby.concussion&hl=en_CA

World Rugby Concussion Management for the General Public – Interactive Learning Module

playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/?documentid=module&module=21

World Rugby Activate Injury Prevention Program

iris.world.rugby/coaching/activate-injury-prevention-exercise-programme

New Zealand Rugby - Blue Card Concussion Initiative

www.bluecard.co.nz/

Parachute Canada – Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport

www.parachute.ca/guideline

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital - Concussion Handbook

hollandbloorview.ca/programsandservices/concussioncentre/concussioneducation/handbook