

To: CUMRC 2023 Participating Teams
From: CUMRC Board of Governors
CC: CUMRC Organizing Committee, Rugby Canada
Date: November 06, 2023
Re: Eligibility for 17-year-olds to play in the front row at 2023 CUMRC Tournament

The CUMRC Organizing Committee has received a request to clarify the eligibility for 17-year-olds to play in the front row at the 2023 Canadian University Men's Rugby Championship. The following information is being provided in response to this request.

U SPORTS:

The CUMRC, although not associated with U SPORTS, attempts to follow the U SPORTS regulations established for Women's Rugby. There are currently no age restrictions in the U SPORTS Women's Rugby Playing Regulations. Furthermore, there are known cases of 17-year-olds playing in the front row in U SPORTS Women's Rugby (including at the 2023 U SPORTS Women's Rugby Championship).

Playing Regulations: https://usports.ca/uploads/hq/Playing_Regs/2023-24/230816_Playing_Regulations_Rugby_%28W%29_ENG_FINAL.pdf).

WORLD RUGBY:

With respect to World Rugby guidance related to age differential, the restriction on 17-year-olds playing in the front row is specifically for "Elite Adult Rugby": "*A player should not, under any circumstances, play Elite Adult Rugby in the front row if they are eligible to play Under 18 Age Grade Rugby.*". Elite Rugby has the common definition of "*Rugby played between representative teams of unions, cross border rugby played between the senior clubs, provinces, states and other sub-unions or associations of unions...*". Elite is considered to be the highest levels of the game (international, professional, some representative), and all other levels of rugby would be considered Community or Participation, which includes university rugby.

With respect to the Community Game, World Rugby is clear that the "*Union having jurisdiction over the Community Game in its territory shall decide having regard to safety, player welfare and local conditions and circumstances on the policy, regulations and/or guidelines applicable if Under 18 players are to be permitted to play Participation/Community Adult Rugby.*"

Player Welfare Guidelines: <https://www.world.rugby/the-game/player-welfare/guidelines/age-grade>

RUGBY CANADA:

Age banding guidelines published by Rugby Canada in February 2020 address age-grade rugby, but do not contemplate adult rugby or 17-year-olds specifically playing adult rugby or positional restrictions in such a case. There is reference to restricting players from playing front row where there is a three-year

“age window”(This tends to be driven by calendar year, for example born in 1997 or in some Unions by academic year.): *“Under no circumstances should consideration ever be given to allowing a player to play front row within a three year “age window” situation.”*, however, the applicability to university rugby is difficult to assess given there is no separation of athletes based on age.

MEN’S UNIVERSITY RUGBY

There are known cases of 17-year-olds playing in the front row during the 2023 season of men’s university rugby. There is no evidence in any Canadian men’s university rugby regulations that restricts 17-year-olds from either playing university rugby or having any positional restrictions.

CUMRC TOURNAMENT:

The CUMRC Tournament is not sanctioned by Rugby Canada (in the same fashion as how the U SPORTS Women’s Rugby Championship is not sanctioned by Rugby Canada), and each university program is covered by insurance specific to that university program. Only the officials are covered by Rugby Canada insurance.

DECISION:

The CUMRC Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the CUMRC Organizing Committee, and lacking any overarching direction from World Rugby or Rugby Canada, does not have authority to impose restrictions on athletes based on age and position. It is therefore up to each participating university program to determine the suitability of their athletes to play at the CUMRC Tournament, in consideration of player welfare, safety, age and position, so long as they meet the CUMRC Student Eligibility Rules. In making that decision, each university should also consider whether their insurance carrier would provide coverage in the case of a 17-year-old front-row player injury given the World Rugby regulation and possible interpretation of “Elite Adult Rugby”.

CUMRC Eligibility Rules <https://www.cumrc.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CUMRC-Eligibility-Rules-Revised-20230521.pdf>