

The Players

Each side consists of 15 players and usually 6 replacements. Each player has a position. These are:-

Forwards

Loose Head Prop (No 1) - A loose head prop is at the front of each scrum. They are traditionally very strong, sometimes quite short, and squat. They possess very good neck, back, leg and arm strength, as they are the foundation of the scrum.

Hooker (No 2) - A hooker is the person who packs down in the middle of the front row of the scrum. They traditionally throw the ball in at the lineouts, and like props are very strong in the neck, back, legs and arms. However, hookers are normally slightly smaller than props and have to be flexible because, as their name implies, they hook the ball back with a leg or foot when the scrum half puts the ball in to a scrum. This takes considerable flexibility in the hips and shoulders.

Tight Head Prop (No 3) - Same attributes as the loose head but packs down the tight head side (right hand) of the scrum, which requires different scrummage technique to a loose head (left hand). (Tight Head / Loose Head - see below)

Second Row (No 4&5) - This position is referred to as the "engine room." Second rows provide the push in the scrum and generally are the persons who jump for the ball in the lineout. Second rows are normally tall, very athletic, and have an excellent standing jump along with good strength.

Flankers or Wing Forwards (No 6&7) - Considered the position where the player should have all round attributes; speed, strength, fitness, and handling skills, amongst other skills. Flankers are always involved in the game as they are the real ball winners once play has commenced. Flankers can be broken down into open side and blind side. The open side being normally smaller, faster and more mobile as he starts play nearer to the potential action and needs to be the first person to arrive. The blindside being larger as he has a more physical role to play at the lineout and may well be used as a jumper.

No 8 or Lock (No 8) - Packs down at the rear of the scrum and therefore controls the ball out of the scrum. A very influential position and is often used to attack with a pickup of the scrum. Normally tall and athletic and used as an option to win the ball in the lineout.

Backs

Scrum Half (No 9) - The person who is the link between the forwards and the backs. Normally acts as the 'General' for the forwards and is always in the hub of the action. A scrum half is normally quite small but with a high degree of vision and speed off the mark, and pound-for-pound is very strong. They have to be able to react to situation very quickly. A key player in any side.

Fly Half (No 10) - Often considered the most influential person on the field, the fly half is the person who makes the key decision during a game. Responsible for deciding whether to kick or to run the ball, the fly half should be very fast, able to kick off both feet and operate in pressurised situations.

Center (No 12 & 13) - Centers provide the cutting edge to a side. They are the "Rapiers" that are given the ball-normally via the fly half-to make breaks through the opposition backs; they can also act as decoys for other attacking options for the backs. A Center should be very strong, fast ,and able to pass with pinpoint accuracy.

Wing (No 11 & 14) - The wingers are the finishers of the game. The idea being that the space should be created by the forwards and backs inside the wingers so once they receive the ball, they have a clear run to use their speed and agility to score tries. Need to be very fast and able to jink and side step to finish off scoring situations.

Full Back (No 15) - This player should posses great courage as he is likely to be the person who will be required to catch the high kicks referred to as "up and unders" or "bombs". The Full Back is also an essential part of any side's attacking option; a full back will appear in the back line as an extra man or as a decoy to provide space for the wings. Like all backs, the Full Back should have good speed and very good kicking skills.