



ABU DHABI HARLEQUINS

JUNIOR RUGBY TOURNAMENT RULES 2026

• SAT 7 & SUN 8 NOVEMBER 2026 • ZAYED SPORTS CITY, ABU DHABI

Playing rules, age-grade format and competition regulations
for the 2026 tournament.

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SECTION 1

GENERAL

1.1 Spirit of the tournament. The ADH Junior Rugby Tournament is the UAE's friendliest festival of junior rugby, and it exists for the children. Their safety and enjoyment come before any result: we want every child to leave having enjoyed their rugby, whatever the score.

Rugby's values of respect, teamwork, enjoyment, discipline and sportsmanship come first. Abu Dhabi Harlequins (ADH) asks everyone taking part, on and off the pitch, to play hard, play fair and respect the Laws of the Game, opponents and their clubs, and the referees, officials and volunteers who make the weekend happen. The Code of Conduct in Appendix B sets out what this means for players, coaches and parents.

1.2 Laws of the Game. Matches are played under the Laws of Rugby Union set by World Rugby and adopted by the UAE Rugby Federation (UAERF), following the UAERF rugby pathway as closely as possible. Any differences are set out in these rules, or will be explained at the coaches' meeting before the first match of each age group (rule 6.4).

1.3 Rules and codes of conduct. Players, coaches, club officials and parents must follow the letter and the spirit of the rules, regulations and codes of conduct of World Rugby, the UAERF and other governing bodies.

1.4 UAERF registration. All players in Under 9 competitions and above who play for UAE clubs must be registered with the UAERF.

1.5 Questions and disputes.

- Send any question about these rules to the Tournament Director as soon as possible. In these rules, "the Tournament Director" includes their appointed deputies.
- For disputes within an age group, first speak to ADH's head coach and manager for that age group, who will try to resolve it quickly.

1.6 Who decides.

- On the field, the referee's decision is final.
- Off the field, the Tournament Director's decision on how these rules are interpreted and applied is final.
- Only the Tournament Director and ADH can change these rules. When doing so they will consider player welfare, safety, inclusion and the fairness of the competition.

1.7 Pitch Marshals. Each pitch has a volunteer Pitch Marshal who keeps its matches running smoothly and on time. When the marshal asks, clubs must go to the pitch and leave the pitch. The marshal can also keep time for the referee if needed. Please always treat marshals with respect.

SECTION 2

AGE GRADES AND ELIGIBILITY

2.1 Which age group? A player's age group is set by their age at midnight on **31 August** at the start of the season (RCM rule 12.1), and it stays the same all season. A player plays in the age group one year above that age. For example, a player who is 11 on 31 August plays Under 12.

The table below gives each age group's ages and, for the 2026 tournament, the matching dates of birth. The ages stay the same every year; the dates move on by one year each season.

AGE GROUP	AGE AT MIDNIGHT ON 31 AUGUST	DATE OF BIRTH (2026 TOURNAMENT)
Under 6	5	1 Sep 2020 to 31 Aug 2021
Under 7	6	1 Sep 2019 to 31 Aug 2020
Under 8	7	1 Sep 2018 to 31 Aug 2019
Under 9 Mixed	8	1 Sep 2017 to 31 Aug 2018
Under 10 Mixed	9	1 Sep 2016 to 31 Aug 2017
Under 11 Mixed	10	1 Sep 2015 to 31 Aug 2016
Under 12 Mixed, Under 12 Girls	11	1 Sep 2014 to 31 Aug 2015
Under 13 Mixed	12	1 Sep 2013 to 31 Aug 2014
Under 14 Boys, Under 14 Girls	13	1 Sep 2012 to 31 Aug 2013
Under 16 Boys, Under 16 Girls	14 or 15	1 Sep 2010 to 31 Aug 2012
Under 18 Boys, Under 18 Girls	16 or 17	1 Sep 2008 to 31 Aug 2010
Under 18, third year (rule 2.2)	18, enrolled at a UAE school	1 Sep 2007 to 31 Aug 2008

2.2 Under 18: the oldest age group. To play Under 18, a player must be 17 or younger on 31 August (RCM rules 7.10 and 9.1). A player who is 18 on 31 August may play a third year in Under 18 if they are enrolled at a secondary or high school in the UAE (RCM rules 7.11 and 9.1.1).

2.3 One age group only. For the whole tournament, a player may play in only one age group: the one they are registered in. Playing up follows the RCM rules (RCM rules 14.5 to 14.7):

- A player may play up one or two years, never more. Years are counted in accordance with the RCM guidelines.
- A player who plays up must have a signed RCM dispensation form (see rule 2.4).
- **Exception:** girls of Under 9 age (8 on 31 August) may play in Under 12 Girls Quick Rip, which is three years up. They also need a signed dispensation form.

2.4 Waivers and dispensation forms. Clubs must keep every waiver, dispensation form and proof of enrolment the RCM requires for their players. This includes forms for playing up and proof of school enrolment for third-year Under 18 players. Paper or electronic copies (for example on a phone) are both

fine. Either way, the club must be able to show them to tournament officials during the tournament if asked.

2.5 No playing down. Players may not play in a younger age group. A team that breaks this rule may be disqualified from the tournament.

2.6 One team, one squad. Each player may play only for the team they are registered with, and belongs to one squad for the whole tournament.

- **Injury exception.** If injuries leave a team short, the ADH JRT age group manager will be consulted. The Tournament Director may then allow a player to move to another team from the same club. This is at the Tournament Director's sole discretion.
- **Up only.** A player may only move **up** a squad (for example C to B, or B to A). A player may **never** move down a squad.
- **The move is permanent.** A player who moves stays with their new team for the rest of the tournament, and the one-team rule then applies to that team.

2.7 Mixed teams.

- Up to and including Under 13, teams may be mixed, following World Rugby and UAERF guidance.
- From Under 14 upwards, teams must be all boys or all girls.
- A girl who wants to play in a boys' Under 14 competition needs approval from the Tournament Director, working with the UAERF.

SECTION 3

FORMATS

3.1 Competition formats. Appendix A sets out the format for each age group. Most competitions start with pools of 3 to 5 teams, followed by knockout matches. ADH aims to give every team a fair chance to progress, whether in the main competition, a plate or another knockout competition. Where a team finishes in its pool decides which one it goes into. The Lead Coach may change this if needed to keep the age group running smoothly.

3.2 Under 6 and Under 7. There are no league tables, knockout matches or overall champions. Instead, trophies are awarded to individual players and teams for their achievements and for showing rugby's core values.

3.3 Seeding teams (Under 8 and above).

- A club may enter up to three teams in each age group.
- Clubs with more than one team are expected, but not required, to seed them, so the first team is the strongest, the second team the next strongest, and so on.
- Each team must play in the pool and fixtures it has been given in the draw.
- Players must play for the team they are registered with (see rule 2.6).
- A club may never field a lower team in a higher team's place unless the Tournament Director has agreed. Breaking this rule means forfeiting the match or matches concerned.

- At Under 6 and Under 7, clubs should follow the spirit of this rule, but it is accepted that their teams may be of similar standard.

3.4 Two teams from the same club. If two teams from the same club are drawn against each other, the match must be played, and neither team may forfeit it. If a pool match between them is not played, both teams get 0 points.

SECTION 4

MATCH RULES

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE MATCH

4.1 Be on time. Teams must be ready to start at the scheduled time, or as soon as the pitch is free. When the match ends, leave the pitch straight away so the next match can start.

4.2 Match length. Matches are played in two equal halves, with the length set in Appendix A. There is no extra time except in the knockout stage (see 5.4).

4.3 Half-time. Half-time is short. Teams swap ends and must be ready to restart straight away. There is little time for coaching.

4.4 Substitutions. Rolling substitutions are allowed from the named squad at any stoppage (for example a scrum, lineout or try), as long as:

- the number of players on the field never goes over the maximum for the age group, and
- the referee is told.

4.5 Match balls. Marshals provide the match balls. Teams must bring their own balls for warming up.

COACHES AND SPECTATORS

4.6 Coaches on the pitch.

- **Up to and including Under 8 (Tag):** one coach per team may be on the pitch to guide players.
- **Under 9 and Under 10:** where coaches may stand will be agreed before the first match.
- **All other age groups:** apart from the players and substitutes, only the team's coaches, team managers and first aider may be inside the pitch rope, and they must wear clearly identifiable club tops. Parents and spectators must stay behind the rope.

4.7 Team boxes. Unless UAERF pathway guidance says otherwise:

- Coaches, managers and other team staff may not enter the pitch without the referee's permission.
- Coaches and substitutes must stay in their team's box on the sideline. The two boxes are either side of halfway, at the 10-metre line, at least 1.5 metres back from the touchline.
- Coaches and players must stay in their own box and must not argue with each other.
- The only club member allowed to cross the touchline is the team's first aider.

LAWS AND SCORING

4.8 Age-grade laws.

- Under 12 and above play the Laws of the Game with the UAERF age-grade variations.

- All age groups, including Under 12 Girls and Under 14 Girls Quick Rip, follow the UAERF Junior Pathway Laws where they apply.
- The type of rugby and the scoring for each age group are in Appendix A.

4.9 Points. Points are scored as follows. Appendix A shows which scores each age group can use.

SCORE	POINTS
Try	5
Try in the try box (Under 12 Girls and Under 14 Girls Quick Rip only)	7
Conversion (drop kick, where allowed)	2
Penalty goal (drop kick, where allowed)	3
Drop goal (where allowed)	3

The **try box** is a 3 m by 2 m box in the middle of the try line. A try scored inside it is worth 7 points instead of 5.

4.10 Kicking. Kicking follows the UAERF age-grade variations. From Under 13 upwards, drop goals, penalty goals and conversions are allowed, but **all kicks at goal must be drop kicks**. Place kicks are not allowed.

4.11 Scrums and lineouts.

FORMAT	PLAYERS IN A SCRUM	MINIMUM PLAYERS IN A LINEOUT
10-a-side	5	3
12-a-side	6	4

DISCIPLINE

4.12 Under 12 and below: no sin bin. Players in these age groups are not sin-binned. For serious or repeated offences, the referee may take the player off. The player stays off for as long as the referee decides, usually the rest of that match. The coach should make sure the player understands what they did wrong and what to do differently. This rule is there to keep everyone safe.

4.13 Under 13 and above: sin bin. A sin-binned player must stand in the marked area beside the pitch for at least two minutes of playing time, and must give their name to the Pitch Marshal.

4.14 Under 13 and above: two sin bins. A player sin-binned for a second time in the tournament must meet the Tournament Director straight away, with their head coach and/or parents. This also applies to any later sin-binning. After hearing from everyone, the Tournament Director will usually suspend the player for one match, unless there are mitigating circumstances. The Tournament Director may extend the suspension.

4.15 Under 13 and above: red cards. A player sent off by the referee takes no further part in the tournament. A sending-off counts if a red card is shown, or if the referee confirms it to the Pitch Marshal.

at the time. The referee and Tournament Director will report the player to the UAERF where appropriate. If there are mitigating circumstances, the team's lead coach may appeal to the Tournament Director, who will decide with the referee concerned.

SECTION 5

RESULTS, LEAGUE TABLES AND KNOCKOUT MATCHES

5.1 Recording results. The Pitch Marshal records each result in the tournament app straight after the match. The referee then confirms the score by signing it off in the app on the marshal's phone: they type their name and tick to confirm. If the referee has already left, the marshal saves the score without it, and the age-group table follows up. Coaches should check the score with the referee before leaving the pitch. If the app cannot be used, the referee fills in and signs a paper result slip instead, which the marshal hands in at the pitch-side marshals' desk. If a result is disputed, the referee decides, and that decision is final.

5.2 League points.

RESULT	POINTS
Win, or walkover win	4
Draw	2
Loss, or failing to turn up	0

Walkovers.

- If a team is more than three minutes late onto the field, ready to play, the Pitch Marshal awards a walkover to the other team.
- A walkover counts as a 20-0 win for the team that was ready to play.
- If there is time later in the tournament, the Tournament Director may allow the match to be played as a friendly. The score of a friendly is not recorded.

5.3 Teams level on points in a pool. Teams level on league points are separated by these tests, in order. Go to the next step only if teams are still level. Points are counted across all pool matches unless the table says otherwise.

STEP	TWO TEAMS LEVEL	THREE OR MORE TEAMS LEVEL
1	Better points difference	Better points difference
2	More points scored	More points scored
3	Winner of their match against each other	Fewer points conceded
4	Fewer points conceded	Steps 1 to 3 again, counting only the matches between the tied teams
5	Coin toss between the coaches	Coin toss between the coaches

If, after step 4, two of the tied teams are still level, the team that won the match between them finishes higher. Only if that match was drawn, or not played, do the two go to step 5 (coin toss).

5.4 Extra time in knockout matches. Extra time is played only in the knockout stage.

Up to and including semi-finals: Golden Try

- Extra time is played in periods of up to 3 minutes. Teams swap ends after each period.
- **Golden Try.** The first team to score a try wins.
- **Reply.** If a team scores from its first possession of a period, the other team then gets one possession to reply. If they do not score, the first try wins. If they do, play continues until there is a winner.
- If many periods of extra time still produce no winner, the Tournament Director may decide the match another way.

Finals

- Extra time in a final is played in periods of 5 minutes. Teams swap ends after each period.
- Extra time in a final is also Golden Try, with the same reply as above: if a team scores from its first possession of a period, the other team gets one possession to reply. If they do not score, the first try wins.
- If there is no score after two periods of extra time, the two teams share the trophy as joint winners.

SECTION 6

REGISTRATION ON TOURNAMENT DAY

6.1 Team sheets and consent forms. Every player must be on the team sheet and have a completed player consent and medical declaration form. A player who does not have both cannot play.

6.2 Proof of age. Coaches should carry documents that prove each player's age in case they are needed. If a player's age is disputed and cannot be proved, the Tournament Director decides, and that decision is final. The team may be removed from the tournament.

6.3 Registration deadline. Player registration closes at the end of **Saturday 31 October 2026**. Every player must be registered by then. After that, players can only be added with the Tournament Director's approval (rule 6.5).

6.4 Check-in on the day. Every age group plays on one day only (see Appendix A). For each age group it has entered, a club must:

- **Check in at Tournament HQ.** One representative goes to the Tournament HQ desk at least 45 minutes before the age group's first match and checks in all of the club's teams in that age group. This confirms they are taking part.
- **Attend the coaches' meeting.** Each team's head coach, or a representative, must be at the pitch-side marshals' desk at least 30 minutes before the age group's first match.

The Tournament Director may agree a different arrangement in advance.

6.5 Squads.

- Each squad is named for the whole tournament, not just for one day. This applies to every age group.
- Teams may not add players or swap in new players without the Tournament Director's approval.
- Once registered, a player cannot play for another club, or for another team except as allowed by rule 2.6.

6.6 Match check-in (Under 13 and above). Coaches and the appointed referee must check in at the pitch-side marshals' desk at least 10 minutes before each match. Please do the coin toss for kick-off and ends before the previous match on your pitch finishes. Marshals will explain any different arrangements for other age groups at the coaches' meeting (rule 6.4).

6.7 Withdrawing a team. If a club withdraws a team within 5 days of the tournament, the schedule stays the same. Each match the withdrawn team was due to play counts as a walkover to its opponents: 4 league points and a 20-0 win (see rule 5.2).

SECTION 7

REFEREES

7.1 Senior age groups. The UAE Referees Society and other qualified referees will referee the older age groups, expected to be Under 14, Under 16 and Under 18. More details will be given closer to the tournament.

7.2 All other age groups. A neutral coach from a third club will referee, unless the Tournament Director says that the UAERF or ADH is providing referees for that competition. Each club must provide a competent referee for every age group it enters. A club that does not may be removed from the competition.

7.3 Results. At the end of each match, the referee signs off the score in the app on the Pitch Marshal's phone by typing their name and ticking to confirm. Please stay with the marshal until this is done. If the app cannot be used, the referee signs a paper result slip instead (rule 5.1).

SECTION 8

SAFETY AND LIABILITY

8.1 Injuries. Rugby is a contact sport, and injuries can happen even when everyone plays safely. By taking part, players and their parents or guardians accept this risk. ADH will take reasonable care to run a safe tournament. Beyond that, and as far as UAE law allows, ADH, its officers, members and volunteers are not liable for any injury or accident.



8.2 Insurance. Every player must be covered by player accident insurance, as the RCM requires (RCM rule 10). Families should also have their own medical insurance.

8.3 Concussion (HIA). The Head Injury Assessment (HIA) protocol will be followed. A player with suspected concussion will not play again in the tournament. The event paramedic makes this call. The Tournament Director will follow the paramedic's advice, and the Tournament Director's decision is final.

8.4 Belongings. Leave nothing in the changing rooms. Players and coaches must take all clothes, valuables and other belongings with them. Coaches and spectators are responsible for their own belongings. ADH is not responsible for belongings that are lost or stolen, as far as UAE law allows.

8.5 Team gazebos.

- **Where.** Clubs may put up gazebos only in the marked team area. Gazebos for tournament staff, marshals and referees come first, and tournament staff may ask a club to move its gazebo at any time.
- **When.** Gazebos may be dropped off pitch-side on the evening of Friday 6 November, but may not be put up until the morning of the matches. Every gazebo must be fully taken down at the end of Saturday, and may be put up again on Sunday morning.
- **Safety.** Every leg must be weighted down. A gazebo must be taken down straight away if tournament staff ask, for example in high wind.
- **Responsibility.** Each club is responsible for its own gazebo, including any damage or injury it causes, as far as UAE law allows. Gazebos left at the venue overnight are at the club's own risk (rule 8.4).
- **Litter.** Leave the area clean. Take all rubbish away or put it in the bins.

SECTION 9

MATCH-DAY CONTACTS

- **Tournament Director:** Terry Rooke, +971 58 638 0042
- **ADH Junior Manager:** Candice Woodhead, +971 55 107 7569

APPENDIX A

COMPETITION FORMATS

AGE GROUP	DAY	TYPE OF RUGBY	FORMAT	SQUAD	SCORING
U6	TBA	Tag	7-a-side	12	Tries only. No scores kept (rule 3.2)
U7	TBA	Tag	7-a-side	12	Tries only. No scores kept (rule 3.2)
U8	TBA	Tag	7-a-side	12	Tries only
U9 Mixed	TBA	Contact	7-a-side	12	Tries only
U10 Mixed	TBA	Contact	10-a-side	15	Tries only
U11 Mixed	TBA	Contact	12-a-side	18	Tries only
U12 Mixed	TBA	Contact	12-a-side	18	Tries, conversions
U12 Girls	TBA	Quick Rip	7-a-side	12	Tries, try box (7 points)
U13 Mixed	TBA	Contact	12-a-side	18	Full scoring
U14 Boys	TBA	Contact	12-a-side	18	Full scoring
U14 Girls	TBA	Quick Rip	7-a-side	12	Tries, try box (7 points)
U16 Boys	TBA	Contact	12-a-side	18	Full scoring
U16 Girls	TBA	Contact	7-a-side	12	Full scoring
U18 Boys	TBA	Contact	12-a-side	18	Full scoring
U18 Girls	TBA	Contact	7-a-side	12	Full scoring

- **Day:** coming soon. Playing days are announced once team entries close on 22 October.
- **Squad** is the most players a team may name for the tournament.
- **Full scoring** means tries, conversions, penalty goals and drop goals. All kicks at goal must be drop kicks (rule 4.10).
- **Try box:** a 3 m by 2 m box in the middle of the try line. A try scored inside it is worth 7 points; a try anywhere else is worth 5.
- **Match length:** Under 6 to Under 8 play two 6-minute halves with a 2-minute half-time. All other age groups play two 7-minute halves with a 3-minute half-time. Every match has a 20-minute slot in the schedule.
- U9 to U11 score tries only because kicks at goal are not used. At a penalty, U9 take a free pass and U10 and U11 tap and play.

APPENDIX B

ADH TOURNAMENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Rugby union has its own culture and values. They allow a very competitive, physical sport to be played safely and enjoyably by all kinds of players. At the heart of these values is **respect**: for the game, for other players, and for the referee and officials.

PARENTS' CODE OF CONDUCT

This code sets out how parents can best support their child in rugby.

- Parents may not go on the pitch. Always stay behind the pitch rope.
- Junior rugby is for the children, not the adults.
- Always show good sportsmanship. Behave in a way that earns the respect of your child, their teammates, other parents, officials, coaches and the opposition.
- Never behave unsportingly towards any official, coach, player or parent. That includes booing, taunting, refusing to shake hands, and swearing or rude gestures.
- Respect everyone taking part, whatever their ability, gender or background.
- Never shout at or criticise any child, coach, official, parent or the referee.
- Respect the officials and their decisions during matches. The referee is **always** right.
- All ADH staff at the tournament are **volunteers**, working so the children can have a great tournament. Please treat them with respect and remember they are doing their best.
- Always keep your self-control and remember your role:

WHO	THEIR JOB
Players	Play
Coaches	Coach
Officials	Officiate
Parents	Encourage

Remember: children play rugby for their enjoyment, not yours.

PLAYERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

- Know the rules and play by them.
- Never argue with the referee or any official. If you disagree, ask your captain, coach or manager to speak to the official politely.
- Always control your temper. Abusing officials or other players, or deliberately winding up an opponent, is not acceptable in rugby or any sport.
- Be a good sport. Applaud good play, whichever team it comes from.
- Treat everyone on the pitch the way you would like to be treated.
- Always shake hands with your opponents at the end of the match.

- Respect everyone taking part, whatever their gender, ability or background.

COACHES' CODE OF CONDUCT

Coaches set the tone for their team, their players' parents and their club. At the tournament, every coach should:

- **Put player welfare first.** Winning never comes before a child's safety. Take any injured player off, and follow the concussion (HIA) rules without argument (rule 8.3).
- **Respect the referee.** Accept every decision on the field. If you have a concern, raise it calmly with the referee after the match, or with the Pitch Marshal or Tournament Director, and never in front of the players.
- **Stay in your team box.** Keep yourself and your substitutes in your box, and only go on the pitch where the rules allow it (rules 4.6 and 4.7).
- **Keep it positive.** Encourage your own players and applaud good play from both teams. Never shout at, belittle or criticise a child, whichever team they play for.
- **Play fair.** Field only eligible, registered players in the right age group and team (section 2), and keep the club's waivers and dispensation forms ready to show (rule 2.4).
- **Give every player a game.** Use rolling substitutions so that everyone in the squad gets fair time on the pitch.
- **Help when a player is disciplined.** If one of your players is sent off or sin-binned, make sure they understand what they did wrong and how to avoid it next time (rules 4.12 to 4.15).
- **Referee fairly.** When your club provides a referee for another club's match (rule 7.2), referee impartially, and sign off the score with the Pitch Marshal straight away.
- **Work with the volunteers.** Marshals and tournament staff are volunteers. Follow their instructions on moving on and off the pitch, and keep matches running on time.
- **Lead your parents and spectators.** Remind them of the Parents' Code of Conduct, and deal with any poor behaviour from your own supporters.
- **Set the example.** Shake hands with the opposition coaches and referee at the end of every match, whatever the result.