

Risk Assessment



Introduction

The RFA exists to:

- Promote the game of Rugby Fives throughout the world
- Publish and review the constitution for the management of the game, and the Rules that govern the playing of the game
- Develop a safe environment for children and adults playing the game

As part of the above activities, this Risk Assessment has been completed to review the safety of playing Rugby Fives and define the control measures necessary to reduce the risk level to as low as reasonably practicable.

The RFA is promoting the playing of Squash Fives (SqF) in a squash rackets court and this assessment has been completed with this in mind. Consequently, it is equally applicable to SqF.

Playing Rugby Fives and SqF results in very few significant injuries. This is because the sport:

- Does not involve the use of rackets: thus minimising the risk of impact damage
- Involves the use of a hard ball that does not conform to the shape of the eye during impact: thus minimising the risk of eye damage
 - This contrasts with a soft ball that can conform to the shape of the eye, penetrating the eye socket and leading to significantly more severe injuries
- Is non-contact: thus minimising the risks associated with collisions

Never the less, risks exist and should be managed using the control measures indicated.

A glossary of terms is included in Appendix A for clarification and the guidance of readers not familiar with Health and Safety Risk Assessments.

Publication Dates

Date

January 2004
October 2011

Reason for issue

Initial release covering the playing of fives
Updated to include consideration of spectators

Existing Control Measures

The following control measures are those currently viewed as being necessary to ensure safe play. Experience suggests that they are standard practice in Clubs, Schools and Universities and so, for the purpose of completing the Risk Assessment, it has been assumed that they are broadly followed.

1. Novice players should be trained to follow safe practices
- All players should:
2. Challenge any player not exhibiting safe practices.
 3. Warm-up muscles and hands before starting vigorous play so as to avoid strains and bruises.
 - Warming-down after play is recommended to provide additional protection, however, in practice this procedure is rarely followed.
 4. Ensure gloves, together with inner gloves and padding (if used), provide adequate protection so as to avoid bruises.
 5. Wear appropriate shoes with a good level of grip (e.g. trainers) and ensure shoe laces are properly laced and tied so as to avoid slipping and tripping.
 6. Not play if the floor is slippery due to condensation, spilt liquid or other debris so as to avoid slipping.
 7. Ensure that the court is free of obstructions so as to avoid tripping and collisions.
 - This includes ensuring that the door is firmly closed before starting play and not opening it while others are playing.
 8. Ensure that there is sufficient light to avoid tripping and collisions.
 - This includes not turning out the lights while others are playing
 9. Not turn around to face a player who is about to strike a ball forwards so as to avoid being struck in the face or neck.
 - As an alternative control measure, protective goggles could be worn to protect the eyes; however, fives balls are hard and rigid and eyes have good protection from impact by such objects through being recessed and surrounded by bony ridges. The ball has to approach the face from the front if it is to impact the eye. Protective goggles prevent such impacts; however, they also marginally impair the perception of players, making other accidents such as collisions and tripping more likely; thus one risk is substituted for another. In addition, protective goggles do not protect the rest of the face and neck. 'Not turning around' is judged to be an effective control measure to reduce the risk to as low as reasonably practicable.
 10. Watch the ball (with the exception of control measure 9) so as to anticipate its movements and move to avoid being struck.
 11. Watch the other players (with the exception of control measure 9) so as to anticipate their movements and move to avoid tripping and collisions.
 12. Stop playing if another player physically blocks their progress or if hitting the ball would cause impact/collision with another player so as to avoid injury to oneself and/or others.
 - It is likely that the other player will be an opponent and the Rules expect a 'let' to be offered and accepted without loss of points to either side.
 13. Not play while wearing or carrying sharp or hard objects that might cause injuries in the event of a collision or fall.
 14. Not play while wearing or carrying loose clothing or jewellery that might cause injuries through tangling or tripping.
 15. Shout 'turning' when planning to turn through 360 degrees to hit the ball forwards so that other players can move to avoid collisions and being struck.
 16. Play under conditions where a responsible adult is easily contactable to deal with the consequences of any accident that occurs.
 - With adult players, an injury is likely to affect only one player and another player can provide or organize appropriate assistance.

- In the case of children who have reached a reasonable level of maturity as judged from their adherence to the above control measures, it is common practice and considered acceptable to allow play as long as a responsible adult is easily contactable and an uninjured player can call on the adult for assistance. For such children, the presence of an adult at the back of the court provides no additional protection.

Spectators should:

17. Watch the ball so as to avoid being struck in the face.

- Spectators naturally follow the ball as part of watching the game, but it is recognized that occasionally they will be distracted by activities around the court.
- A few existing courts have metal mesh installed above the back wall which eliminates this risk – although the reason for installation was usually the exclusion of trespassers. This mesh obscures the view and impedes communication between the playing and viewing areas, thus coaching is unreasonably hampered.
- It is very unlikely that a spectator would be struck in the face because:
 - It is rare that the ball is hit out of the court.
 - A ball hit out of the court is moving relatively slowly, having had much of its energy absorbed by the impact with the front wall and its flight to the back of the court – consequently it is easy for a spectator to guard against being struck.
 - There are no known incidences of spectators being injured by a ball flying out of court.
- 'Watching the ball' is judged to be an effective control measure to reduce the risk to as low as reasonably practicable.

These control measures have been summarized into a format suitable for placing on notice boards near fives courts so as to promote safe practices – see next page:

Advice to Players, Coaches and Spectators



Playing Rugby Fives results in very few serious injuries. There is, however, some risk of injury and this should be guarded against by the measures indicated below. A full risk assessment has been conducted and the document is available from the General Secretary or on the RFA web site (www.rfa.org.uk).

To avoid risk of injury to players, the court should at all times be adequately lit, dry and free of obstruction. The door should be closed at all times during play.

Novice players should be trained to follow safe practices and children should only play under conditions where a responsible adult is easily contactable.

The RFA urges players, coaches and spectators to heed the following advice:

Injury / Accident	Measures to guard against injury
Pulled muscles / strained ligaments	Players should “warm-up” before the game and “warm-down” afterwards.
Bruising of hands	Players should wear appropriate gloves with padding or inner gloves as preferred. Players should “knock up” at length and refrain from hitting the ball hard until both hands are warm.
Being struck in the face by ball	Eyes, nose, teeth and ears are the most vulnerable. Players should watch the ball and other player(s), but should <u>not</u> turn round to face a player about to strike it. Spectators should watch the ball. Players should shout “Turning!” if rotating through 360° to hit the ball. Protective goggles can be worn to eliminate risk to the eyes.
Tripping or slipping	Players should wear appropriate footwear with good grip, properly laced and securely tied. Play should not take place on courts wet from condensation or leakage. Play should be abandoned if the floor becomes wet during play.
Colliding with other players	Players should not physically block the movement of any other player, nor should they hit the ball if either of these actions would cause impact or collision with another player. Players should not play while wearing or carrying loose clothing, sharp or hard objects, e.g. jewellery, that might cause injuries.

Fitness to Play

It is assumed in this Risk Assessment that players are reasonably fit, healthy and able – if this is not the case, then a supplementary Assessment may need to be made taking into account the particulars of the situation.

It is important for older players to ensure that they are free from coronary heart disease, as any exertions may bring on a heart attack with potentially fatal consequences. This can be checked through a G.P. or other medical services.

Risk Matrix

The following table derives the level of risk from the combination of the probability that a specified undesired event will occur and the severity of the consequences of the event. The risk is given by the intersection of the respective column and row in the risk matrix resulting in a high, medium or low risk rating.

For example, a hazard that was judged to be probable and resulted in a major injury would score 4 for probability and 3 for consequence. The Risk would therefore score 3 times 4 = 12 and would be rated as 'High'. The scoring system allows Risks to be prioritised, and the rating is used to judge the nature of the action required to control it.

Consequence		Probability				
		Incredible: Extremely unlikely to ever occur	Improbable: Unlikely but may occur exceptionally	Occasional: Likely to occur some time	Probable: Likely to occur often	Frequent: Regular or continuous occurrence
		1	2	3	4	5
Multiple fatality	5	Medium	Medium	High	High	High
Single fatality	4	Low	Medium	High	High	High
Major injury	3	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
Lost time injury (from work or study)	2	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
First aid injury	1	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium

There are a number of 'occasional' hazardous events associated with playing fives that result in minor injury not requiring any first aid, such as bruises, abrasions and muscle strains. These are considered trivial and fall outside the risk matrix classifications; consequently they have not been included in the Risk Assessment - only those events leading to first aid injuries or worse are included.

In addition, only plausible hazardous events and consequences have been included in this risk assessment. For example, it is conceivable that two fives players could collide, resulting in multiple fatalities, but this is not plausible and so is excluded. In effect, this worst-case event is considered less likely than 'Incredible: extremely unlikely to ever occur,' and so does not fit into the risk matrix classification system.

Action for Risk Reduction

The allocated risk rating determines the level of action required as follows:

- High risks cannot be tolerated under any circumstances and would require immediate action so as to reduce the level of risk to 'as low as reasonably practicable'. If necessary, this may require temporary suspension of an activity or the installation of temporary control measures.
- For Medium risks, judgement would need to be made on the urgency of further action so as to reduce the risk to a level that is 'as low as reasonably practicable' – a prioritised action plan may therefore be needed.
- Low risks are broadly tolerable but should be kept under review and reduced further wherever reasonably practicable.

The term 'As low as reasonably practicable' means the point at which further risk reduction would be disproportionate to the time, trouble, difficulty and cost of achieving it. The greater the risk, the more reasonable it would be to go to very substantial expense, trouble and invention to reduce it. Clearly an informed judgement is needed.

Risk Assessment Procedure

In completing this risk assessment, the following steps 1 to 6 have been followed and steps 7 and 8 will be completed in due course:

1. Create list of potential 'hazardous events' – e.g. player collides with wall, floor or another player
2. Determine 'foreseeable causes' – e.g. wet/damp floor
3. Judge/determine 'consequences' – e.g. torn ligaments, which rates as a level 2 consequence as it could result in lost time from work or study
4. Judge/determine the probability of the event/consequence occurring
5. Determine 'Risk' from Risk Matrix
6. Consider existing 'Control Measures' to judge their effectiveness and whether other control measures could reasonably be implemented to reduce or eliminate the risks
7. Communicate the results of the risk assessment to ensure that all organizations where fives is played are aware of the control measures specified
8. Review this risk assessment on a regular basis in the light of any events recorded in the intervening period and after any serious event has occurred

Risk Assessment with existing control measures

Hazardous event (what happens)	Foreseeable Cause (cause of hazardous event)	Consequence (details of harm)	Consequence (1 to 5)	Probability (1 to 5)	Risk (1 - 25)	Existing control measures
Player collides with wall, floor or another player	Wet/damp floor, debris on floor, obstructions, inappropriate footwear, poor light, not anticipating the movements of other players, tangling through wearing loose clothing/ jewellery	Minor impact/bruise to head, torn ligaments, severely twisted ankles	2	2	4 – Low	1,2,5, 6,7,8, 11,12, 13,14,15
Ditto	Ditto	Significant impact to head leading to unconsciousness	3	1	3 - Low	Ditto
Player struck in eye with ball	Turning around to face a player who is about to hit the ball	Temporary loss of sight	3	2	6 – Medium	1,9,12,15
Ditto	Ditto	Permanent loss of sight	3	1	3 - Low	Ditto
Player struck in Adam's-apple with ball	Turning around to face a player who is about to hit the ball	Swelling of the throat leading to difficulty breathing requiring first aid	1	2	2 - Low	1,9,12,15
Ditto	Ditto	Swelling of the throat leading to asphyxiation	4	1	4 – Low	Ditto
Player strikes wall/floor or another player with hand	Misjudging the positions of the walls/floor/other players	Dislocated finger/strained ligaments	1	3	3 - Low	1,8,11, 12,15
Player strains muscle/ligament	Not warming-up sufficiently, playing an awkward shot	Severe strained muscle/ligament requiring first aid	1	3	3 - Low	1,3
Player damages hand through hitting ball	Not warming-up sufficiently, inadequate padding in gloves	Severe bruising sufficient to require first aid	1	2	2 - Low	1,3,4

Hazardous event (what happens)	Foreseeable Cause (cause of hazardous event)	Consequence (details of harm)	Consequence (1 to 5)	Probability (1 to 5)	Risk (1 - 25)	Existing control measures
Spectator hit in eye with ball	Not following the movement of the ball	Temporary loss of sight	3	1	3 - Low	17
Ditto	Ditto	Permanent loss of sight	3	1	3 - Low	17

Adequacy of Existing Control Measures

Fives is judged to be a relatively safe activity for both adults and children as long as the existing control measures are followed.

The existing control measures are judged to be adequate to reduce the risks to as low as reasonably practicable, and no additional controls are thought to be necessary or desirable.

Communication and Review

The Control Measures should be communicated to the fives playing community in order to emphasize the importance of following them. This should be in the form of a notice that can be attached to a notice board or wall where players will see it.

This risk assessment should be reviewed on a regular basis and after any serious incident so as to examine the effectiveness of the Control Measures in the light of new information.

The practices associated with playing fives are well established and have not changed significantly in living memory; consequently, it is reasonable that the regular review should be every 10 years. Thus the next scheduled review should be in January 2014.

The collection of data concerning incidents is required as an input to the review but the collection of such data is difficult, given that they are few and far between and that the RFA does not directly manage the facilities at which the game is played.

Two actions should be taken in order to collect relevant data:

Firstly, the annual Handbook and web-site should include Health and Safety sections requesting readers to make the RFA aware of any recent accidents or 'near misses'.

Typically, this section will read as follows:

“**Health and Safety** – A Risk Assessment to cover the playing of Rugby Fives and Squash Fives (Sqf) is available and can be viewed on the RFA web-site (www.rfa.org.uk). Please ensure that you follow the Control Measures specified. If any accidents or near misses occur, then you are requested to report these to the General Secretary so that the Risk Assessment can be reviewed and updated if required – this can be done through a link on the web site”.

Secondly, as part of the regular scheduled review, the General Secretary will arrange for a reasonable proportion of the Clubs, Schools and Universities to be contacted with a request for information on any incidents that have occurred and the Risk Assessment will be reviewed in light of all reported events.

APPENDIX A – GLOSSARY

Accident – An unplanned, uncontrolled event causing harm to people.

As Low As Reasonably Practicable – To reduce the risk to a level which is a low as reasonably practicable involves balancing reduction in the risk against time, trouble, difficulty and cost of achieving it. This level represents the point, objectively assessed, at which the time, trouble, difficulty and cost of further reduction measure become unreasonably disproportionate to the additional risk reduction obtained.

Consequence – The outcome of an incident or event in terms of the injury sustained.

Control Measure – A measure put in place to reduce the risk by preventing the hazard from occurring or by providing protection once the hazard has occurred.

Could – An optional course of action.

Foreseeable Causes – The realistic ways in which an incident could arise and the acts, conditions or circumstances which allow or promote it – also known as threats.

Hazard – Something with the potential to cause harm, ill health or injury.

Hazardous Event – An incident, which leads to or has the potential for harm.

Major Injury – Injuries in the category would include: broken bones (not fingers or toes), amputations, dislocations of major limbs, unconsciousness, loss of or damage to sight (including temporary) and injuries requiring admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours.

Prevention – Completely eliminating a hazard, the cause of the hazardous event, or an escalation factor.

Probability – The estimated likelihood of an incident occurring, determined by evaluation of the possible causes.

Risk – A term which combines the probability that a specified undesired event will occur and the severity of the consequences of the event.

Risk Assessment Process – The structured methodology involving hazard identification, assessment, control, communication and review.

Risk Classification – A rating used to derive an appreciation of the relative risk from a hazard.

Risk Matrix – The matrix portraying risk as the product of the probability and consequences, used as the basis for qualitative risk determination.

Should – Indicates a preferred course of action. If an alternative course of action is taken it must be demonstrated that it is at least equally as effective.

Worst-case event – The worst possible consequence arising from a hazardous event in terms of harm.