



Kent County Rugby Football Union

County Representative Squad Selection Policy

Purpose

This policy sets out the rationale, principles, and process for selecting players for Kent County RFU representative squads through a scouting-based model rather than open trials. It aims to ensure that selection is inclusive, fair, and supportive of player welfare, club development, and equitable access across all levels of the game.

1. Background and Rationale

Traditionally, selection for representative squads has relied on open trials, a model historically prevalent in many parts of rugby. However, growing insight from across the rugby community highlights the need for a more inclusive and effective approach that reflects the diverse realities of the player base.

Key drivers of this approach include:

- **Accessibility and Equity:**
Open trials often favour players who are already confident, well-resourced, or familiar with performance environments. Many talented players may come from non-traditional pathways or have limited exposure to elite settings. A scouting model helps identify and support these players by observing them in their regular playing environments.
 - **Structural Variation:**
The rugby landscape is marked by differences in coaching, facilities, and resources across clubs and regions. Scouting mitigates these disparities by assessing players within their usual team context, rather than relying on one-off performances at trials.
 - **Player Welfare and Retention:**
A scouting model reduces the pressure and anxiety associated with trial dates and allows for more authentic assessments over time. This approach prioritises mental well-being and fosters an environment that encourages long-term participation.
 - **Recognition of Dual Commitments:**
Many players balance rugby with work, studies, or caring responsibilities. By eliminating the need for additional travel or attendance at separate trial events, scouting offers a more accessible and realistic pathway for selection.
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2. Principles of the Scouting-Based Model

- **Representation:**
Scouts will attend a wide range of fixtures across multiple levels and leagues to ensure that all eligible players have the opportunity to be considered. Clubs will not be notified in advance of scouting visits, to minimise external pressure on players.

- **Consistency:**
All scouts and selectors will use a standardised scouting template and receive guidance to ensure fairness and consistency in evaluations.
 - **Feedback Loop:**
Where feasible, constructive feedback will be shared with players and clubs following selection decisions to support ongoing development.
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3. Engagement and Co-Design

This policy is grounded in consultation with players, coaches, and other stakeholders who have shared experiences and identified challenges within previous selection systems. It also reflects:

- Lessons from inclusive talent identification models across the sport.
- A commitment to continuous improvement through collaboration with clubs, development officers, and local rugby communities.
- A clear aim to build a system that reflects the values and needs of today's diverse rugby population—not to replicate outdated practices.

Feedback is actively welcomed to improve the process in future seasons.

4. Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. All representative clubs will have formal opportunities to contribute to the review and development of future iterations. A mid-season feedback point may also be introduced to support real-time improvements during the selection cycle.