



# Harlow Rugby Club Player Availability & Selection Policy

Ensuring Fairness, Opportunity, Progress for All Senior Teams & Players

## Background

Harlow Rugby Club acknowledges that a robust and effective approach to player availability and selection is essential for the ongoing success and progress of the club. Recent seasons have underscored the importance of prioritising the selection of players for our higher teams, ensuring that these squads are consistently strong and representative of the club's highest standards. To achieve this, there is a renewed emphasis on clear and proactive communication between players, coaches, and team managers, with particular attention given to the timely confirmation of availability for 1<sup>st</sup> XV, 2<sup>nd</sup> XV and 3<sup>rd</sup> XV fixtures. Inconsistent or late notifications have previously resulted in difficulties fielding our top teams, disruption to match preparations, and, at times, the regrettable cancellation or rescheduling of fixtures. In some cases, 3<sup>rd</sup> XV have played games with larger squads than are needed and the 2<sup>nd</sup> XV haven't had enough players to fulfil a squad.

Player development presents difficulties when skilled young athletes are ready for first or second team rugby but require additional time to mature. If the second XV team cannot compete consistently, this gap impacts both the retention and progress of talented individuals who have undergone years of training within the club.

These challenges not only affect the club's reputation but also reduce playing opportunities and the overall rugby experience for all our members. This policy aims to strengthen our focus on prioritised selection for higher teams, fostering a culture of proactive communication, inclusivity, and transparency, so that the club continues to advance positively and cohesively.

## Objectives

- To field as many senior teams as possible each week, maximising playing opportunities for all eligible players.
- To ensure players are selected to play at a level that matches their current form, fitness, and development needs.



- To apply clear, consistent, and fair selection criteria, including but not limited to recent form, fitness, availability, attitude, skill level, suitability to the game plan, past performance, and potential for further development.
- To guarantee transparency and fairness throughout the selection process.
- To communicate promptly and sensitively with players who are not selected, maintaining morale and engagement.
- To manage player availability through the coaches and team management, ensuring all relevant information is gathered and considered.
- To prioritise player development and retention, including the integration of returning university players and the nurturing of home-grown talent.
- To minimise fixture cancellations and unnecessary fixture switching, complying with league rules and upholding the club's commitments.

## Selection Process

### Team Selection Order

Team selection will be conducted in the following order to ensure the strongest representation at each level:

1. 1st XV
2. 2nd XV
3. 3rd XV (and additional senior teams, where applicable)

This approach upholds the club's competitive ambitions while providing a clear pathway for player progression and development.

Players who feel uncomfortable playing in a higher team should work with their coaches to ensure they feel prepared to face the challenges they may face in a higher team.

Should there not be enough players available to field all teams the lowest team game will be cancelled.

### Selection Criteria Application

Selection for all senior teams will be based on a balanced consideration of the following criteria:

- Form – Recent match and training performance.
- Fitness – Current physical readiness as assessed by coaching staff.
- Availability – Confirmed prior to the weekly selection meeting.
- Attitude & Reliability – Commitment to training, teamwork, and club values.
- Skill Level – Suitability for the demands of the specific fixture.



- Game Plan Fit – Tactical suitability for the opposition and strategy.
- Performance – Consistency and impact in previous games.
- Development – Opportunities to foster growth, particularly for emerging players.

Priority will be given to players wishing to further their rugby career over those who wish to play social rugby. Social rugby is defined as friendly games and competitive rugby is considered league and cup games for this policy.

## Availability & Selection Meetings

Selection meetings will be held each week, with attendance from relevant coaches and team managers. The primary meeting will take place at the club on Tuesday at 9pm after senior training, by which time all players must have submitted their availability for the upcoming fixture. Selection decisions will be made collaboratively, with the objective of ensuring club-wide fairness and maximising participation.

Additional conversations may continue when the fitness of player is in doubt and additional time is needed. Notification should be given the coaches, managers and the player that a play may be required to step up to a higher team at short notice.

Availability and Selection meetings will focus on player development and progression, ensuring coaching time is allocated for player's growth.

## Communication with Players

All selected players will be notified as soon as possible following the selection meeting. Players not selected will be contacted individually and provided with constructive feedback, ensuring that lines of communication remain open and supportive. The club is committed to managing this process with sensitivity and respect, recognising the importance of positive engagement for player retention and morale.

## Player Development and Retention

The club is dedicated to the ongoing development and retention of its players. Priority will be given to nurturing home-grown talent and creating clear opportunities for progression through the senior teams. Returning university players will be actively integrated into squads, with their reintegration managed collaboratively between coaches and managers. Regular reviews will ensure that all players, regardless of experience or background, are given fair and meaningful opportunities to play, develop, and contribute to the club's success.



## Fixture Management

The club acknowledges the significant impact that fixture cancellations and switching can have on player experience, club reputation, and league standing. Every effort will be made to avoid cancellations. In cases where team numbers are low, creative solutions (such as flexible squad rotations or player sharing) will be explored before considering cancellation or rearrangement. All fixture changes will be made in accordance with league rules and communicated promptly to affected players and teams.

## Availability Management

Players are required to confirm their availability for the coming weekend's fixtures by no later than 9pm each Tuesday. This deadline ensures that selection meetings can proceed efficiently and that all players are considered fairly. Availability must be communicated via the designated platform or directly to the relevant coach or manager. Coaches and managers are responsible for collating and verifying availability, and for supporting players in meeting this requirement.

Failure to communicate availability by the deadline may result in non-selection for that week's fixtures, barring exceptional circumstances.

## Coaches' Commitments

The club recognises the vital role that coaches play in fostering a positive and inclusive rugby environment. Coaches are committed to creating a welcoming atmosphere where all players, regardless of ability or experience, feel valued and included from the outset. This includes ensuring that new and returning members are integrated into squads and supported as they progress through the club's teams.

Coaches will proactively manage situations where playing time may be limited or unpredictable, ensuring that players are kept informed and understand the reasons behind selection decisions. Open and honest communication will be maintained, with constructive feedback provided to help players develop and remain engaged.

Players will have accessible opportunities to discuss their ambitions and potential pathways with coaches, including those from higher teams. This approach aims to break down barriers and encourage ongoing development, ensuring that every player feels supported in pursuing their rugby goals.

To reinforce unity across the club, coaches will facilitate cross-team social events, bringing together players from all teams. These occasions promote camaraderie and shared identity, helping to strengthen connections and foster a spirit of collective achievement throughout the club.



In return the collective pool of players will be expected to support coaches and help facilitate games going ahead.

## Review and Amendments

This policy will be reviewed annually by the club's playing committee, in consultation with coaches, managers, and player representatives. Feedback from all club members is encouraged and will be considered as part of the review process. Amendments to the policy may be made at any time in response to significant changes in club structure, league requirements, or membership feedback, with all changes communicated clearly to the membership.

Members are encouraged to share suggestions or concerns regarding the availability and selection process directly with their team manager, coach, or via the club's formal feedback channels. The club values open dialogue and is committed to continuous improvement in all areas of operation. Ensuring feedback is provided direct to the coaches reduces the opportunity for mis-information to spread and ensure players receive messages in the way they are intended.

This policy forms part of Harlow Rugby Club's commitment to fairness, opportunity, and the ongoing success of our teams and members. By working together and maintaining open communication, we can ensure a positive rugby experience for all.