

REFL
PLAYER
PATHWAY
HANDBOOK



SCHOLARSHIPS AND ACADEMIES RFL PLAYER PATHWAY

-  Community Game
-  Non – selective – Professional clubs Supported
-  Professional clubs
-  England programmes – RFL run



PLAYER'S WELFARE STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION

It is imperative that all individuals who are supporting the player, communicate and work together to make sure that his best interests are always put first and foremost and from a player welfare perspective, his needs are catered for. Parents / guardians play a vital role within this process to make sure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to his development as a player from all those individuals concerned above.

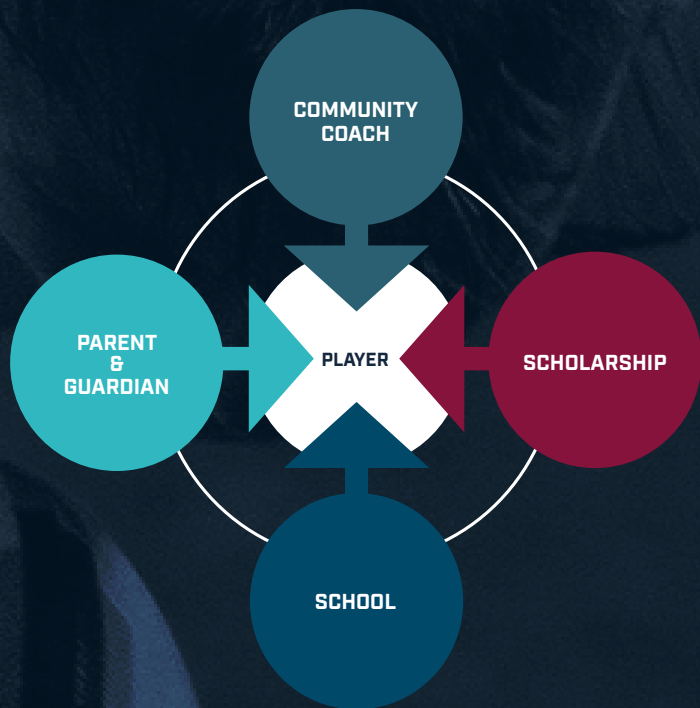
The Pathway is not linear – understanding the Relative Age Effect (RAE)

RAE is the perceived advantage some players have over others, principally due to being physically, emotionally and cognitively more developed than their peers whilst in age banded sports.

Each of the four main professional team sports played in England (i.e. Rugby Union, Rugby League, Cricket and Football) are faced with the same dilemmas of identifying and developing talented young athletes into elite senior players.

Individual differences in the timing and tempo of the maturation process, are most visible during puberty. This can have a significant impact on all aspects of sporting performance and the perception of talented players. To the untrained eye, size and speed at a young age is confused with talent. These inequalities have become known as the 'Relative Age Effect', where players born earlier in a selection year, may gain advantages over their later-born counterparts. These advantages may include more playing time, a perception of possessing more talent and a subsequent increase in the probability of gaining selection in elite environments.

Consequently, players who may not be selected to scholarship at 15, need to be reassured that there are still opportunities to play and enter the talent pathway at a later stage. Many current Super League players have enjoyed successful careers having not been part of a Scholarship or an Academy in their teens.



SCHOLARSHIPS

The Scholarship programme is an integral part of the England player development pathway and is operated by our Super League funded Licenced Academies. Each is independently accredited on an annual basis against their 4-year business plans and set criteria (see Academy Accreditation file).

Each Academy can register up to 20 scholars at each age group and in some cases may also offer a six-week trial period. Clubs can also have additional scholars above this number, who are classified as Talent Transfer players (a player who isn't currently registered as a community rugby league player).

Clubs may offer training kit and first team match tickets by way of incentives to Scholarship players, but cannot offer other financial rewards or expenses to parents, guardians and/or players.

Scholarships provide players with a holistic development programme that covers all areas of player development:

- Technical
- Tactical
- Athletic development
- Lifestyle
- Mental skills

SCHOLARSHIP CONTINUED

Process for Scholarship	Dates for U15's & U16's	Descriptor
Window in which to speak to players	Anytime	Players and parents can visit clubs and discuss scholarships
Window closes	10th June 2019	Players and parents visits cease
Clubs and players informed of all offers made	14th June 2019	Players receive offer(s) after this date and decide which club to register with
Last day for registering	5th July 2019	Clubs must return all forms to RFL to allow registration
Scholarship contract commences	1st August 2019	Date all decisions need to be completed by to start programme
Temporary (trial) Registrations	1st Sept 2019	Clubs may offer 6-week temporary registrations

Players should be given progress reviews at least every 12 weeks whilst on Scholarship and it is good practice that this should be in the presence of their parents & guardians. This review should be part of the Scholars Personal Development Plan for him to reflect upon and set achievable targets. This is also an opportunity for parents & guardians to discuss their sons progress and any matters they wish to raise with the Academy.

Some players may be offered the opportunity to join multiple scholarships, however, players are only allowed to choose one. Below is the timetable for the engagement of scholars signing onto the programme. A player can be offered a one or two year Scholarship.

SCHOLARSHIP AT U15 AND U16

- When deciding which scholarship or Academy programme to join, there are many questions you may have. Below are some example questions you may wish to consider asking:
- The pathway to the first team and club's philosophy.
- The educational offer and options that the Academy has under dual careers when signing professionally for the Academy – does it fit your son's aspirations?
- The logistics of travelling to the Academy, the whereabouts of the training facilities and any implications around education and training when the demands of training increase
- Previous Accreditation results and the current programme being offered.
- The current Staffing support and facilities of the Academy
- Post 16 offer; can the Academy facilitate the players preferred education choices or occupational pathway when they move into the Academy squad

COMPENSATION

- The decision of which scholarship to join must be taken carefully, as there may be compensation payable in relation to scholars moving from one club to another, once they have committed to a programme. This would only be payable should they subsequently sign for another Academy at Year 11 on a professional contract which meets the minimum requirements.
- The compensation relates to the investment that a club puts into the programme within the Academy. It is payable if a player moves Academies and further details can be found on the link below:

<https://www.rugby-league.com/flipbooks/2019-operational-rules-tiers-1-3/mobile/index.html#p=102>

U16 PLAYING POLICY FOR 2019

This is in place to support players who may find themselves playing games across multiple games programmes at Community, Schools, Scholarship and International.

The main points are

- Players must not play 2 days before any scholarship U16 game.
- If a player plays any part in a scholarship U16 game then ideally they must not play any further game for 48 hours.
- Players must not play 2 games in any same mid-week programmes.
- It is recommended that school games are played mid-week, on weeks when there are no Scholarship games taking place

Most U16 scholarship games will take place on a Wednesday and the games scheduled for 2019 are as follows:

March	6th 13th 27th
April	10th
June	26th
July	10th 24th
August	7th

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Yes	No	No	Game Day	No	No	Yes	Yes

Players must not play a competitive game on "Red Days"

There may be some Scholarship games played against London on a Saturday, therefore the days the player could play that week are below.

Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds
Yes	Yes	No	No	Game Day	No	No	Yes	Yes

U19 ACADEMY

The aim of the Academies is to provide a high quality talent development environment that will lead to better quality players playing in a more intense Super League competition. This will ultimately lead to England sustaining international success on a regular basis.

Currently the U19's nurtures many of the future stars of Super League and England, with a variety of programmes in which to engage onto the pathway.

Twelve Academies currently operate in the UK. There are also category 3 Academies which are partnerships between professional clubs and Further Education Institutions.

All these programmes combine to create an appropriate player pathway with combined education options for our talented rugby league players, that will give them opportunities to play at a professional level, whilst attaining educational or vocational qualifications.

All of the category 1 and 2 environments have been assessed for the last 6 years and the results of those accreditations can be found in the Academy Accreditation file.

U19 ACADEMY CONTINUED

The following table highlights key dates and timeframes to sign onto the U19's programme.

Scholars Process at end of Year 11	Key Dates	Description
Clubs are not allowed to speak to any parents, players or players representative/agent before the following dates	Clubs not allowed to approach until date below	Should anyone make an approach then this is a breach of RFL rules and you should refuse to engage in any contact and inform the RFL
Window to speak to players about contracts opens	26th Jul 2019	Players and parents can visit clubs and discuss opportunities
Window Closes	30th Aug 2019	Dates all decisions need to be completed by
Clubs able to speak to any player about an U19 contract	13th Sept 2019	Players not signed will enter into a draft list for circulation to clubs so they can complete their signings
Contract Starts from	1st Sept or later in the year	This depends on the programme of the Academy and could be as late as December

A comprehensive and more detailed operational rules for the Scholarship and Academies can be found at the following link and scrolling down to section C1:6 and C1:7

<https://www.rugby-league.com/flipbooks/2019-operational-rules-tiers-1-3/mobile/index.html#p=111>

CATEGORY 3 ACADEMY

Whilst not all players will receive a professional contract offer, all players are encouraged to continue in the game at either a Category 3 Academy, their community club and / or student rugby league.

A category 3 Academy is a partnership between a professional club and an education provider, whereby a joint programme is formulated within an education setting and offers an alternative pathway to professional Rugby League.

If players are not offered a Contract at the end of the Scholarship or indeed ever had a Scholarship, this is an option available to player's which will still potentially allow them to play at a professional level.



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