

Youth Speak Competition – Honiton Schools

8th June 2018

Reuben –

Hello and thank you for taking the time to come to listen to us this afternoon. My name is Reuben and I am your chairperson. My friend Elli will be our main speaker and will be talking in detail about our chosen topic. Eiran will give the vote of thanks.

We are delighted to be here today to talk to you about one of our passions – Rugby and Is Rugby Too Rough?

There has been a lot written in the newspapers and talked about on television about the injuries that happen in rugby. Some people think children should no longer play. George North and Mike Brown, both international players, have been out of the game because of concussion. Indeed, sadly, some young people have died.

Rugby is a contact sport where the ball is passed from player to player. The scrums are considered some of the most dangerous sections as you have to lock heads and bodies together to try to get the ball.

Does that mean it should be banned? My friend Elli is going to talk to you to convince you that rugby is as safe as many other sports. In fact there is no sport which is 100% safe – you can even get injured playing tiddly winks.

Elli –

Thank you Reuben.

My name is Elli and with my two friends here I play rugby every week for Honiton RFC Under 9s. We LOVE rugby. BUT many people think children should not play because it is too dangerous. I am going to convince you that it is as safe as other sports and with just a few changes it will be OK to carry on playing.

But first let us look at:

What can you get out of rugby?

- The fun of belonging to a team. You can play with friends and share experiences.
- Lots of chances to get fit by exercising, running and working out. No room for lazy bones!
- At lower levels girls can play in the same team as boys.
- Learn how to be competitive and go for goals (or tries). Increase your resilience.

How do we already make rugby safe?

- Well we already have to wear gum shields and you cannot play unless you have one.
- If you play in the scrum (not always a nice play to be!!) you have to wear a scrum cap – these help protect your head and mean you hopefully won't get cauliflower ears (not a good look for anybody!!)
- Rules – we play by the rules and the rules keep us safe.
- Teams for children are smaller so there is more room on the pitch and we use substitutes more often to give everyone a chance and to help us not get over tired.
- We also only play for 10 minutes a half so 20 minutes for a whole game. That is at our age as you get older you will play for longer.

How can the game be made safer?

As our chairperson said in his introduction there has been a lot reported about the risks of playing rugby. We are pleased that the Rugby Football Association are taking this seriously as we want to be safe. They have introduced new protocols (special sets of rules) to do with head injuries and concussion. If you are unlucky enough to get a bump on the head you have to come off the pitch and be looked at by professional first aiders – usually you do not play again for at least that match and if they are at all concerned they will send

you to hospital. BUT it doesn't happen often because the referee keeps a close eye on us and we are not allowed to tackle above the armpits.

Everything we learn in rugby, playing as a team member, looking after our bodies and trying our best are all really good things to learn for life. We feel very much that the good elements outweigh the risks.

We are always told at school to do our best so that is what we like to do in rugby. We keep on trying!!!

I hope I have managed to convince you that we should still be allowed to enjoy our sport and one day I would like to see all of us playing for Exeter Chiefs!!!

I am now going to hand you back to Reuben.

Reuben –

Thank you Elli for that persuasive and interesting speech. Does anyone in the audience have a question?

Now over to Eiran for the Vote of Thanks.

Eiran -

Thank you Elli for that very interesting and thought provoking speech and a well thought out answer to the question (_____). Can we please give her a round of applause? Elli has made some very good points there!

Let's now consider our original question – Is Rugby too rough? From what we have just heard, rugby can be a rough sport if players do not follow the rules carefully. Accidents can happen because it is a very fast paced game. For example in 2016 Elliot Daly received a red card when playing against Argentina when he tackled a player in the air. He made a mistake and was banned for 3 weeks. It WAS an accident

and the other player WAS ok. These things can happen. Another example are all the bruises on my legs!

Nearly all professional rugby players play with player safety and welfare at the heart of what they do. An example of this is how our coach has told us how to tackle. When we use the tackle pads we should aim for the 'N' of RHINO on the pad. If we get it wrong, no-one is injured – except from the tackle pad! We keep practising to get it right so that when we tackle other players we do it properly and safely.

When my teacher, Mr Thomas played rugby many years ago (in the stone ages), rules and laws were different. Professional players were quickly sent back on to the pitch after a head injury – now we have Head Injury Assessments (HIAs) to make sure that players are ok before going back on to the pitch.

So, in our opinion, like any sport, rugby CAN be rough if not played properly. But by following the rules you can be safe, have fun and enjoy the sport TO THE MAX!

Back to you Reuben.

Reuben –

Thank you all for listening to us today. I hope you have a safe journey home.