



BLUE CARD
CONCUSSION INITIATIVE
PROTOCOLS AND
IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES
FOR PROVINCIAL UNIONS



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INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the Blue Card Concussion Initiative is the result of a trial conducted by the Northland Rugby Union in 2014.

With player welfare being a major priority, the Northland Rugby Union was concerned that players who had sustained a knock to the head, were continuing to play rugby without obtaining the appropriate medical clearances. As a result they initiated a process to improve player welfare in relation to head knocks and/or concussion.

The Northland Rugby Union were instrumental in initiating and implementing a very thorough and robust set of protocols and practices to be adopted in addressing this important player welfare issue.

As a result of this very successful trial, New Zealand Rugby has approved the introduction of the Blue Card Initiative in other provinces in New Zealand, subject to compliance with the protocols and practices detailed in this booklet. These protocols and practices are consistent with those implemented by the Northland Rugby Union in undertaking the trial in 2014 and are mandatory in implementing this initiative.

BLUE CARD CONCUSSION INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION PROTOCOLS

Provincial Unions wishing to implement the New Zealand Rugby Blue Card Concussion Initiative must adopt the actions below when introducing the initiative into the province.

1. Provincial Rugby Union Board and Management agrees to the introduction of the Blue Card Concussion Initiative to support and enhance player safety and welfare in the Union.
2. Provincial Rugby Union Management consults with all clubs and schools (if applicable) in the Union to outline the details and requirements of the Blue Card Concussion Initiative. This process is critical in obtaining the support and endorsement of the Initiative by the Clubs and Schools.
3. Provincial Rugby Union Management consults with Referees Association to obtain support and agreement in principle to introduce the Blue Card Concussion Initiative. The Provincial Union Referee Association consults with members to determine the appropriate levels of referee who will apply the Blue Card Concussion Initiative.
4. Provincial Rugby Union Management consults with the local district health authorities to provide details of the Blue Card Concussion Initiative and seek cooperation and support of the local health providers, including a process to provide all local medical practitioners with details of the Blue Card Concussion Initiative.
5. Having secured the agreement of all Clubs, Schools (if applicable) and the Referees Association and having agreed with the regional health authorities re a process for advising all local medical practitioners, the Provincial Union determines to what levels of rugby the Blue Card Initiative will apply to. Union's need to recognise the level of referee experience required to confidently apply the actions incumbent upon referees as a result of the introduction of the Blue Card Concussion Initiative. Provincial Union Management will consult with the Referees Association to determine the grades of rugby the Blue Card Initiative will apply to in the province.
6. All affected stakeholders are formally advised.

7. All Referees involved in refereeing grades of rugby in which the Blue Card Initiative applies, must receive specialist training in identifying the key signs of concussion.
8. This training can only be delivered by an approved New Zealand Rugby training provider. Provincial Union's must submit the name of the Training provider to the New Zealand Rugby Medical Director for approval, prior to the training being conducted. The Provincial Union is to maintain a register of referees who have undertaken the training. Participation in this training should also be recorded on the individual's training record in the National Rugby Database.
9. Provincial Union Management must introduce local Competition Rules which comply with all New Zealand Rugby Blue Card Concussion Initiative protocols, including the loss of competition points for teams not complying.
10. In implementing the Blue Card Concussion Initiative, Provincial Rugby Union Management must comply with all New Zealand Rugby Off-Field Follow Up Processes and administrative/record keeping requirements, which include:
11. Establishment and maintenance of a Blue Card Concussion Register (refer template page X)
 - Process of forwarding of a letter to the Club/Team Management of all Blue Carded players advising of requirement to meet all GRTP Protocols before returning to play
 - Blue Carded player being required to produce medical clearance to resume:
 - a. Contact Training
 - b. Playing
 - Establishment and maintenance of a Blue Card Concussion Return To Play Register

ON-FIELD PROCESSES/PROCEDURES

WORLD RUGBY LAW 3.9:

THE REFEREE'S POWER TO STOP AN INJURED PLAYER FROM CONTINUING

(a) If the referee believes a player has been concussed or suspects a player has been concussed, the referee must order that player to leave the playing area. That player must not return and play in that match

NEW ZEALAND RUGBY DOMESTIC SAFETY LAW VARIATION (DSL) 3.9 (B)

9. THE REFEREE'S POWER TO STOP AN INJURED PLAYER FROM CONTINUING

Add a new clause:

(b) Without limiting 9 (a) above, in Provincial Unions that have been approved by New Zealand Rugby to take part in the Blue Card Concussion Initiative, if the referee believes a player has been concussed, or suspects a player has been concussed, the referee must show a Blue Card to that player, and that player will be required to leave the playing area, and not return and play in that match. Further the player shown a Blue Card may not return to play in any future match without first meeting the requirements of the return to play protocol, as set out in the Blue Card Concussion Initiative. Full details of the protocols can be found in the New Zealand Rugby Booklet titled: Blue Card Concussion Initiative: Protocols & Implementation Procedures for Provincial Unions

OFF-FIELD FOLLOW UP PROCESSES/PROCEDURES

OFF-FIELD FOLLOW UP PROCESSES/PROCEDURES - REFEREE AND COACH

1. Issuing of Blue Card (by Referee) initiates:
 - a. Identification of concussed player on Provincial Union official team sheet
 - b. Completion and submission to the Provincial Union of a Serious Injury Report by:
 - Match Referee
 - Team Coach
 - c. Provincial Union will forward a letter to the Club and player confirming that the player has been stood down from playing rugby because of concussion. This letter will outline the procedure to facilitate the player's return to training and playing.
 - d. Provincial Union will enter player and incident details into the Blue Card Concussion Initiative player register.

OFF-FIELD FOLLOW UP PROCESSES/PROCEDURES - PLAYER

1. Issuing of Card (by Referee)
 - a. This initiates implementation of New Zealand Rugby - Community Rugby - Returning to Play Following Concussion Guidelines.

These include:

- Having no on-going symptoms, and;
- Completing the minimum rest period from playing, and;
- Having undertaken a Graduated Return to Play Protocol (New Zealand Rugby DSLV Law 10.1.2) and;
- Having been cleared by a doctor

As per Rugby Smart protocol, all players suspected of being concussed should not drink alcohol after the game.

It is recommended that suspected concussed player seek medical

attention within 24 hrs for a review.

It is noted that a:

- Player must obtain a medical clearance to resume contact training and
- Player must produce a Medical certificate to Provincial Union to resume playing, this must be received by the Provincial Union office 24 hours before scheduled return to play.

b. There are no grounds for a team to challenge the issuing of a Blue Card (except misidentification of a player)

OFF-FIELD FOLLOW UP PROCESSES/PROCEDURES - PROVINCIAL RUGBY UNION

1. Introduce and maintain Blue Card (player identified with concussion) register
2. Forward letter to club of player reminding club/team of need for this player to obtain a Medical Clearance in order to return to training/play.
3. Monitor return to play of all players issued with Blue Card
4. Introduce competition rules sanctioning team/club if they play a player who has not presented a Medical Certificate to confirm fitness to return to play.
5. Provincial Rugby Union to submit Blue Card (player identified with concussion) register to New Zealand Rugby (as required).

REFEREE TRAINING

All registered referees officiating the grades of rugby the Blue Card is being applied in, must undertake a specific training and development session focussing on identifying the symptoms of concussion. This training session must be conducted by an appropriate medical professional, approved by New Zealand Rugby.

PROVINCIAL UNION APPLICATION TO IMPLEMENT

Provincial Union's wishing to implement the New Zealand Rugby Blue Card Concussion Initiative must obtain approval from New Zealand Rugby. Provincial Union's must comply with all New Zealand Rugby protocols and implementation procedures. Page 9 of this booklet provides an Application to Implement form which is to be submitted to New Zealand Rugby upon all key steps detailed on the form, having been completed.

Once approval is granted, New Zealand Rugby will send a supply of Blue Cards to the Provincial Union for distribution to referees officiating the grades of rugby the Blue Card Concussion Initiative will apply to.

PLAYER FROM ANOTHER PROVINCIAL UNION ISSUED WITH BLUE CARD

In the event of a player from another Provincial Union (where the Blue Card Concussion Initiative is not in place) being issued with a Blue Card all New Zealand Rugby protocols and practices apply. The issuing Provincial Union forwards advice of the issuing of the Blue Card to the player's home province and the player must comply with the Graduated Return to Play protocols before resuming contact training and playing.

BLUE CARD CONCUSSION INITIATIVE PROVINCIAL UNION APPLICATION TO IMPLEMENT

PROVINCIAL UNION:

| | ACTION | Date Completed | Details/Outcome |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <p>Provincial Union Board and Management agrees in principle to introduction of the Blue Card Concussion Initiative.</p> <p>Staff member is appointed to manage the Blue Card Concussion Initiative.</p> | | <p><i>Advise Board Meeting approval date.</i></p> <p><i>Advise name of staff member</i></p> |
| 2 | <p>Provincial Union Management convenes meeting with Clubs and Schools of proposed grades the Blue Card Concussion Initiative will apply.</p> | | <p><i>Advise relevant meeting dates</i></p> |
| 3 | <p>Provincial Union Management introduce sanction/s for teams not adhering to Graduated Return To Play (GRTP) Protocols</p> | | <p><i>Outline sanctions introduced</i></p> |
| 4 | <p>Provincial Union Management meets with District/Local Area Health Board and develops process for advising all local medical practitioners of the implementation of the Blue Card Concussion Initiative and the levels of rugby it applies to.</p> | | <p><i>Advise process adopted</i></p> |

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------------|
| 5 | <p>Provincial Union Management meets with Referees Association to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure Referee Executive have consulted with members and are happy to instruct members to apply the provisions of the Blue Card Initiative 2. Referee Training session is scheduled to provide referees with training in identifying the key signs of concussion | | <i>Advise date of meeting</i> |
| 6 | Referee Training session provider approved by New Zealand Rugby | | |
| 7 | Grades of Rugby/ Competitions the Blue Card Initiative will be applied, are finalised. | | <i>List grades Blue Card will apply to</i> |
| 8 | Letter sent to all clubs/ schools formally advising of the implementation of the Blue Card Concussion Initiative | | <i>Provide copy of letter</i> |

LETTER OF NOTIFICATION TO CLUB AND PLAYER

Player Name:

Game Details:

Date of game:

Referee:

To (insert name of Club Official) of (insert Club name),

The player listed above is hereby stood down from rugby until further notice due to having sustained a concussion or suspected concussion. As per the (insert PU name) Blue Card procedure, this player is now required to get clearance from a doctor prior to returning to contact training and playing rugby. Please find attached a letter outlining this procedure for the player to provide to his doctor along with this letter. Please note that the medical clearance (see below), must be signed by a Medical Practitioner and returned to the (insert PU name) office 24 hours before the scheduled match.

As per the (insert PU) Code of Ethics - playing a player who has been concussion carded without the required clearance will (insert appropriate sanction) as per the aforementioned code.

Thank you for your understanding in this matter and for promoting safety amongst our players.

Kind Regards

(Insert signature of responsible PU person)

MEDICAL CLEARANCE FORM

I _____ (insert name), have assessed the above player on the _____ (insert dates) and confirm that they have completed the return to play requirements as outlined in the New Zealand Rugby guidelines - Returning to Play following Concussion and I hereby permit this player to return to play rugby.

Signed: _____ NZ Medical Council Number _____

LETTER OF NOTIFICATION TO LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITY/(IES)

(Insert PU letterhead)

(Insert date)

(Insert name and address of relevant party - DHB/ PHO/ GP clinics/ A&E clinics)

Dear (insert name of relevant party),

BLUE CARD CONCUSSION PROCEDURE IN COMMUNITY RUGBY

The (insert PU name) takes player welfare extremely seriously. In (insert year) the (insert PU abbreviation) is initiating a procedure to ensure players that sustain a concussion receive sufficient medical treatment before returning to rugby. The (insert PU abbreviation) realises that for this procedure to be credible, the support of all health care providers across (insert provincial area) is vital.

The procedure will be implemented from the (insert start date) to all grades from (insert grade) and above.

Concussion Management Procedure

A player is shown a Blue Card if, during the course of a match, a referee identifies they have suffered a blow and consequently showing indications to suggest that they may be suffering from concussion. The issuing of a Blue Card triggers a formal off-field follow up procedure.

At the conclusion of the match the referee will inform the PU person responsible for the Blue Card procedure that has occurred.

(Insert name and title of PU responsible person) will draft a letter to the club and player concerned confirming that the player has been stood down from playing rugby because of concussion or suspected concussion. This letter outlines the process by which they can ultimately return to play. This process is as outlined in the New Zealand Rugby guideline

for Community Rugby - Returning to Play Following Concussion - this is available at <http://bit.ly/RTP-Following-Concussion>

The essential elements of this guideline are that a player must:

- Have no on-going symptoms, and;
- Have completed the minimum rest period from playing, and;
- Have undertaken a graduated return to play protocol, and;
- Have been cleared by a doctor.

Medical practitioner involvement

It is recommended that the suspected concussed player seeks medical attention within 24 hrs. To be assessed and provided with advice about undertaking a return to play. It is recommended that the doctor perform a SCAT3 test on the first visit to achieve a post injury baseline score. This can be obtained here - <http://bjsm.bmj.com/content/47/5/259.full.pdf> or by searching for SCAT3 online.

It is mandatory that no doctor should overrule a suspected concussion or concussed player allowing them to return to play before 3 weeks as they have been witnessed to show signs of concussion on the field.

Having completed a graduated return to play process as outlined in the guideline, a player must obtain medical clearance to resume playing. It is recommended that a 2nd SCAT3 test is completed during the clearance visit.

They are required to have their doctor complete a form to indicate that they have been cleared and provide this to the provincial union responsible person.

A player must produce a clearance letter to be signed by the medical practitioner then returned to the (insert PU responsible person and title) to be permitted to resume playing. The player will have been provided with a specific form for this purpose. This must be received by the (insert PU) office 24 hours before scheduled return to play.

The player is then cleared to return to play.

Payments for consultations

Players will require assessment by a medical practitioner twice, after they have been Blue Carded. The player is to pay for the first doctor's visit. The second visit will be paid for by the (insert PU name). Please invoice your usual ACC surcharge to the (insert PU address).

Notes:

The card removes any doubt as to whether the player should be removed on the suspicion of a concussion being present. There can be no opportunity for the player to return to the field on that same day if he/she "recovers".

This procedure does not set aside the need for the mandatory stand-down period as outlined in the NZR guidelines.

The procedure outlined here has been endorsed by New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU) for use in the community game.

Thank you for your support as we look to improve the care of concussion in the community game.

Kind regards

(Insert signature of responsible PU person)

CONCUSSION

GRADUATED RETURN TO PLAY (GRTP)

All players diagnosed with a concussion or suspected concussion must go through the GRTP described in this poster. For more information talk to your coach, your local union, contact New Zealand Rugby or check out rugbysmart.co.nz

GRADUATED RETURN TO PLAY STAGES

Minimum Time

Rehab stage

19 Years+

Under 19

| | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| 1 | Complete mental and physical rest until symptoms have cleared. | 14 days | 14 days |
| 2 | Once symptom-free, light aerobic exercise, such as walking or stationary cycling. | 2 days | 2 days |
| 3 | Rugby-specific exercise, such as running or ball-handling activities only if symptom-free. NO head impact activities. | 1 day | 2 days |
| 4 | Non-contact training drills until medical clearance given and only if symptom-free. | 1 day | 2 days |
| 5 | Once medical clearance has been given, full contact training | 2 days | 2 days |
| 6 | Return to play | | |

RECOGNISE | REMOVE | RECOVER | RETURN

