Hong Kong Mini Rugby Play Up / Play Down - Chairman's Statement

The following statement concerns mini rugby players who intend to play out of their official age groups.

(1) If Clubs play players outside their official age groups in the absence of a properly documented dispensation, they are not abiding by the spirit of the game. I can also be dangerous and can violate insurance requirements.

(2) Clubs, coaches and parents, when playing players in accordance with the age group regulations, must still have regard to their duty of care to ensure the safety of the players. They should not automatically assume that it is safe to play a 9 year old in an Under 10 squad just because he is 9. They need to take into account physical, mental and emotional developmental, playing ability and experience. They must exercise their duty of care by ensuring that all players are properly coached, taking into account the players individual circumstances before allowing them to play competitively.

(3) An application should not be made for a player to play down, solely on the basis that he/she is inexperienced. This will only give the player a false understanding of his abilities, while also putting other players at risk, particularly with regard to the contact element of the sport.

(4) The vast majority of children, when properly coached, can play in their correct age groups, but in exceptional cases where child safety may be compromised due to a learning disability or physique; application may be made for an individual dispensation. Such dispensation, if agreed, will only last for that season. Application should be submitted to the Chairman, HKMRFU, prior to the player undertaking a competitive game or festival. The application must: -

(a) Give full details of the reasons for playing outside the correct age group;
(b) Be signed the players Parent / Guardian, Coach, and Club Chairman.
(c) All those listed at 4(b) will have been expected to consider all aspects of the application, including both the short term and long term implications of the application.

5) Once an application has been accepted, and before EVERY GAME, the player's coach will inform the opposing team's coach AND the referee of the status of the player. Should the player's presence cause concerns over safety, they will NOT play. Furthermore, in the even that a player who is playing down clearly influences the game, the opposing team coach can request that he be substituted, and best endeavours will be made to agree with the request.

Andrew Robertson
Chairman Mini Rugby 22nd October 2007