



FALCONS RUGBY CLUB

POLICIES & MEMBER HANDBOOK

Effective September 2026

**PLAYERS PLAY. COACHES COACH. REFEREES REFEREE.
PARENTS SUPPORT. EVERYONE RESPECTS THE GAME.**

Applies to players, parents/guardians, coaches, administrators, volunteers, team managers and spectators representing Falcons Rugby Club.

1. Purpose

This handbook establishes the standards expected of everyone participating in Falcons Rugby Club programs. It applies at training, matches, tournaments, camps, clinics, travel events, social activities, online communications and other activities where a person is representing the Club.

Where applicable governing-body, competition, safeguarding or legal requirements impose a higher standard than this handbook, the applicable requirement takes precedence.

- Player safety and welfare
- Enjoyment and development
- Respect for the game
- Positive coaching and sportsmanship
- Inclusion and opportunity
- Responsible Club administration
- Development of lifelong rugby participants

2. Club Values & Culture

Falcons Rugby Club believes strong rugby culture is created through the behavior of the people within it.

- Respect - treat teammates, opponents, coaches, referees, families and volunteers appropriately.
- Integrity - be honest, responsible and accountable.
- Passion - enjoy rugby and contribute positively to the Club.
- Teamwork - support the team before individual interests.
- Discipline - respect the Laws of the Game, officials and Club standards.
- Player Welfare - the safety and wellbeing of young people comes before winning.

3. Membership, Registration & Eligibility

Players must complete required registration steps before participating in official matches. Requirements may vary by program and competition.

Parents/guardians are responsible for maintaining accurate emergency, medical and contact information. Providing false age, eligibility or registration information may result in suspension from Club activities.

- Falcons Rugby Club registration
- Rugby Xplorer or governing-body registration where required
- Parent/guardian consent and waivers
- Emergency and relevant medical information
- Age-grade eligibility documentation
- Payment or an approved payment arrangement

4. Fees, Refunds & Financial Assistance

Registration fees may support fields, equipment, competition entry, referees, insurance, administration, training resources and other program costs. Travel, hotels, meals, special camps and optional events may carry additional charges.

Refund requests are considered in light of the timing of withdrawal, costs already committed, uniforms or tournament entries already purchased, and exceptional medical or family circumstances. Third-party or non-refundable costs may remain non-refundable.

Where resources permit, Falcons may offer scholarships, partial assistance, payment plans or equipment support. Assistance is subject to available resources and does not create an entitlement to free participation.

5. Player Code of Conduct

- Respect coaches, teammates, opponents, officials and volunteers.
- Follow coaching and safety instructions.
- Arrive prepared, on time and appropriately equipped.
- Avoid bullying, hazing, discriminatory language, threats and deliberate dangerous conduct.
- Respect facilities, equipment and team property.
- Demonstrate sportsmanship before, during and after competition.
- Tell a trusted adult if you feel unsafe or if you witness serious misconduct.

6. Parent & Guardian Code of Conduct

Parents and guardians are essential partners in a positive rugby environment. Spectators may be asked to leave a venue if their behavior is abusive, disruptive or harmful to player welfare. Repeated misconduct may result in attendance restrictions.

- Encourage rather than criticize.
- Allow coaches to coach and referees to referee.
- Do not give tactical instructions from the sideline.
- Do not verbally abuse, threaten or follow officials after matches.
- Keep outside designated playing and technical areas.
- Raise concerns through appropriate Club channels rather than confronting coaches or officials immediately after a match.
- Help ensure players arrive and are collected on time.

7. Coach & Volunteer Standards

Coaches and volunteers serving youth athletes occupy positions of trust. They must maintain professional boundaries, follow applicable safeguarding rules, place player welfare ahead of results and maintain required registrations, screening, training and rugby qualifications for their roles.

- Use age-appropriate coaching methods.
- Never use humiliating, degrading or physical punishment.
- Promote respect for officials and opponents.
- Follow injury and concussion procedures.

- Avoid favoritism and retaliation.
- Communicate professionally with players and families.
- Report welfare concerns through appropriate channels.

8. Player Welfare & Safeguarding

Falcons Rugby Club is committed to an environment in which young athletes can participate safely. Club personnel must follow applicable safeguarding and abuse-prevention requirements governing adult/minor interactions, meetings, training, communications, transportation, lodging, changing areas, photography and reporting.

In-program adult/minor interactions should be observable and interruptible except where a recognized policy exception applies. Safeguarding concerns must not be dismissed because the person involved is a respected coach, parent, volunteer or administrator.

9. Electronic Communications With Minors

Club communications with minor athletes should be open, transparent and professional. Where required by applicable safeguarding rules, a parent/guardian, another adult family member or another Adult Participant must be included in communications.

Adults may not use secret accounts, inappropriate personal messaging, sexually suggestive communication or methods intended to conceal interactions from parents or Club leadership.

10. Social Media, Photography & Video

Falcons may use photographs or video for coaching, match analysis, recognition, promotion and community outreach subject to appropriate consent and safeguarding practices. Images must not compromise a minor athlete's privacy, dignity or safety.

Cyberbullying, harassment, threats, discriminatory content, sexual content involving minors, publication of confidential medical or disciplinary information, and targeted online abuse of referees or opponents are prohibited.

11. Anti-Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination

Bullying, hazing, harassment, intimidation and discriminatory abuse have no place at Falcons Rugby Club. Reports should be taken seriously and reviewed fairly. Retaliation against a person for raising a genuine concern is prohibited.

12. Attendance, Commitment & Team Selection

Players should attend training consistently, arrive on time, communicate absences and match availability, participate actively and bring required equipment.

Selection may consider player safety, eligibility, attendance, skill development, fitness, attitude, commitment, position, opponent, competition rules, team balance and development needs. Selection must not be used to punish a player because of a parent's disagreement with Club leadership.

13. Playing Time

Falcons believes young athletes develop by playing rugby and coaches should seek meaningful participation where reasonably possible. Registration does not guarantee equal playing time, a starting position, selection for every tournament, selection for a particular squad or a preferred position.

Developmental programs should prioritize broad participation. Competitive squads may use more selective playing-time decisions based on player safety, game conditions, development and team needs.

14. Playing Up & Age-Grade Dispensation

Any player participating outside the normal age division must satisfy applicable eligibility and safety requirements. Playing up should never occur solely to fill numbers where doing so would create an unreasonable safety concern. Required parental consent, waivers or governing-body approvals must be obtained before participation.

15. Concussion & Return to Play

Falcons follows a conservative Recognize and Remove approach to suspected concussion. A player showing signs or symptoms of concussion must be removed immediately and must not return during that match or session.

The player must be evaluated by an appropriate healthcare professional and may return only after meeting applicable medical and rugby return-to-play requirements. Coaches may not override medical restrictions, and players must never be pressured to conceal symptoms.

16. Injury, Medical Emergency & Emergency Action Plans

The Club should maintain reasonable emergency procedures appropriate to each venue. USA Rugby player-welfare guidance emphasizes injury prevention, venue-specific Emergency Action Plans and return-to-play procedures after injury.

Parents/guardians should disclose medical information reasonably necessary for safe participation. Serious injuries should be referred to appropriate medical professionals.

- Emergency contact information
- First-aid resources
- Emergency vehicle access information
- Named responsibilities for calling 911 and contacting parents
- Injury/incident reporting
- Concussion procedures

17. Weather & Playing Conditions

Training or matches may be delayed, shortened, relocated or cancelled when conditions create an unreasonable safety risk. Coaches and administrators may stop activity for lightning, severe storms, extreme heat or cold, poor air quality, unsafe fields or facility closures.

18. Equipment & Uniforms

Players must arrive with appropriate footwear, mouthguard, training clothing, water and any other required equipment. Club-issued jerseys and equipment remain Club property unless specifically sold or awarded. Lost or unreasonably damaged items may result in a replacement charge.

19. Transportation

Parents/guardians are normally responsible for transportation unless Falcons specifically organizes travel. Club-organized transportation involving minor athletes must follow applicable safeguarding requirements.

In-program transportation should be observable and interruptible unless an applicable exception or required written consent applies. Seat belts and all applicable vehicle laws must be followed.

20. Tournament & Overnight Travel

Players remain subject to Club policies throughout Club travel. Travel rules may address curfews, rooming, supervision, team meals, visitors, hotel behavior, transportation, team meetings and emergency procedures.

Adult Participants must not share sleeping rooms with minor athletes except where a recognized safeguarding exception applies and required consent has been obtained. Room checks should follow applicable safeguarding requirements.

21. Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco & Vaping

Youth players may not possess or use alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco or vaping products during Falcons activities. Adults participating in youth activities must behave responsibly and may not supervise young athletes while impaired.

22. Referee Respect & Sideline Culture

Respect for match officials is fundamental to rugby. Players and spectators may not threaten or abuse referees, enter the playing area to dispute decisions, follow officials after a match to confront them, or target officials online.

Falcons may appoint Culture Keepers or sideline representatives to encourage positive support, help maintain boundaries, de-escalate inappropriate spectator behavior and alert Club or match officials where intervention is needed. Culture Keepers do not interfere with refereeing decisions.

23. Discipline & Fair Process

Falcons may respond to misconduct using measures proportionate to the circumstances. Serious safeguarding concerns do not need to progress through informal stages before referral to appropriate authorities.

Where practical and appropriate, discipline should provide notice of the concern, an opportunity to respond, review of available information, reasonable impartiality, a written outcome for serious matters and an opportunity for review or appeal where appropriate.

- Informal conversation or coaching
- Verbal or written warning
- Behavior agreement or probation
- Temporary removal from training or matches
- Spectator restriction
- Suspension or termination of membership
- Referral to competition, governing-body, safeguarding or law-enforcement authorities where required

24. Complaints & Raising Concerns

Routine concerns should normally begin with the relevant coach or program lead. Serious concerns involving player safety, abuse, harassment, financial impropriety, retaliation or conflicts of interest may be raised directly with Club leadership or the appropriate external authority.

Except where immediate safety is involved, parents should avoid confronting coaches directly after matches. A calmer follow-up meeting or written communication is preferred.

25. Privacy & Player Information

Falcons may collect information reasonably necessary to operate youth rugby programs, including contact details, emergency and relevant medical information, registration records, photographs and participation data. Access should be limited to legitimate Club purposes and sensitive information should not be publicly disclosed without appropriate justification or consent.

26. Financial Governance, Sponsorship & Fundraising

Club funds must be used only for legitimate Falcons Rugby Club purposes. Financial procedures should include reasonable authorization, receipts, reimbursement records, bank controls, budget monitoring and separation of Club and personal funds.

Fundraising or sponsorship conducted using the Falcons name, logo or programs must be authorized by Club leadership. Funds raised for a stated purpose should be used consistently with that purpose.

27. Club Name, Logo & Brand

The Falcons Rugby Club name, logo, uniforms and related branding are Club assets. They may not be used without authorization for commercial products, independent events, unauthorized fundraising, personal businesses or other activities that imply Club endorsement.

28. Program-Specific Application

Huskies Rugby is the high-school program operating under Falcons Rugby Club. Falcons Minis, T1/non-contact rugby, girls programs, camps and other Club initiatives remain subject to this handbook while individual programs may publish additional age-appropriate or competition-specific rules.

29. Development Philosophy

Falcons Rugby Club exists to develop rugby players and people, not merely teams. The Club seeks to create a pathway from first exposure through participation, competition and leadership.

- Try Rugby
- Learn Rugby
- Play Rugby
- Develop
- Compete
- Lead and give back

30. Policy Authority & Review

Club leadership may establish reasonable procedures necessary to implement this handbook. Program-specific rules may supplement these policies but should not contradict the fundamental standards of player welfare, safeguarding, respect, integrity and fair administration.

The handbook should be reviewed periodically and when governing-body, safeguarding, competition or operational requirements change.

Reference Resources

This handbook is an internal Club policy document. It should be administered together with current governing-body and safeguarding requirements. Key reference resources used in the September 2026 review include USA Rugby Player Welfare and Concussion guidance and the U.S. Center for SafeSport 2025 Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPP).

Before adopting or materially revising this handbook, Falcons Rugby Club should confirm that program-specific league, state, USA Youth & High School Rugby, USA Rugby, SafeSport and applicable North Carolina legal requirements are satisfied.

Member Acknowledgement

By signing below, the player and parent/guardian acknowledge receipt of the Falcons Rugby Club Policies & Member Handbook and agree to make reasonable efforts to follow Club policies, applicable competition rules, safeguarding requirements, and reasonable instructions of Club officials.

Player Name

Player Signature

Parent/Guardian Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Program / Team

THE FALCONS STANDARD

Player welfare before winning. Develop the person as well as the player. Respect the game. Protect the culture. Leave rugby better than you found it.