Competition Format and Rules

Format et règlement des compétitions

As of WED 21 OCT 2026

Youth Olympic Competition Format

The Rugby Sevens competition at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games consists of Women's and Men's events. Each event consists of two phases, the pool round and the knock out round. The eight competing teams in each event are placed into two pools of four teams each, with a round robin format. Match points are awarded to both teams after each pool match according to the following criteria:

- Win = 3 points
- Draw = 2 points
- Loss = 0 points
- Bonus point for a loss by 7 points or less = 1 point

Following the completion of the pool round, the following rules are used to populate the knock out round brackets:

- Teams are ranked in their pool according to their total number of match points
  - If two teams have equal total match points, the winner of the match between those two teams will be ranked higher
  - If three or four teams have equal total match points, the following criteria will determine the pool ranking:
    - Points margin
    - Tries margin
    - Points for
    - Tries for
    - Games Seeding
- The teams in each pool are placed in pre-determined slots in the knock out round brackets based on their rank in the pool round (A1, B1, A2, B2, A3, B3, A4, B4)
- The semi-finals brackets are set as follows:
  - A1 vs B2
  - B1 vs A2
- The placing 5-8 brackets are set as follows:
  - A3 vs B4
  - B3 vs A4

Differences between HSBC SVNS 2024-2025 and the Summer Youth Olympic Games

There are three pools of four teams in the HSBC SVNS tournaments and there are more placing brackets and matches.

There is no extra time in the pool stage for the Summer Youth Olympic Games.

Changes since Buenos Aires 2018 Summer Youth Olympic Games

There are two more teams competing in Dakar 2026 than in Buenos Aires 2018 with the teams split into two pools of four teams rather than all six teams in one pool. The placing 5-8 matches, semi-finals and finals matches for all places are played in the knock out round.

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Sport Rules and Procedures

The Olympic Rugby Sevens competition is conducted in accordance with the World Rugby Laws of the Game Incorporating the Playing Charter and Seven-a-Side Variations.

Team Composition

Each team consists of 12 players; 7 players on the field of play and 5 on the bench.

Game Description

Rugby Sevens is a fast and exciting team sport where the objective of the game is that two teams should, by carrying, passing, kicking and grounding the ball, score as many points as possible.

Scoring:
A try is worth five points and is awarded when a player touches the ball down on or beyond the opposing team's Try Line. After a try is scored, the team also has a chance to register an additional two points with a conversion kick which is completed by kicking the ball over a bar between two goal posts.
A penalty try is worth seven points and is awarded between the goal posts if foul play by the opposing team prevents a probable try from being scored, or scored in a more advantageous position. No conversion is taken.
If the opposition commits an offence, a penalty may be awarded. A team can then choose to drop-kick at the goal which, if successful, is worth three points.

During open play, a team may also attempt to drop-kick the ball through the posts for a drop goal which is also worth three points. Play stops at the discretion of the match referee who is the sole judge of fact and law including time. The referee is assisted by the assistant referees and team match officials during a match. The match referee may choose not to stop the play at an infringement if the non-offending team gains an advantage.
A match is played with no more than seven players in each team on the field of play.

A player may be replaced on account of injury or for tactical purposes. A team may nominate and use up to five replacements. A rolling tactical replacement system will be implemented for the tournament. A tactically replaced player may return to the match, as long as no more than five replacement interchanges are made in total.
If a match goes to extra time, each team is allowed a sixth replacement.
Temporary replacements for blood injury are permitted. A player who has been replaced through injury may not resume play in the same match except if temporarily replaced (i.e. for blood injury).
No replacement may be made except with the permission of the referee, and only during a stoppage in play.

In line with the World Rugby Laws and Regulations, all matches are officiated by five officials (referee, two assistant referees and two in-goal judges) together with the World Rugby appointed Citing Commissioner and Judicial Officers. Assistant referees may communicate and advise the referee about acts of foul play, or for things such as knock forwards', offsides etc during play.

Match Description

The duration of all matches is 14 minutes; two halves of seven minutes each, counting down to zero, with a two minute half-time interval.

Extra time is required only for the knock out rounds if matches end in a draw. After a break of two minutes, during which the referee organises a toss with the Team Managers to decide which team will kick off from which end, the extra time is played in periods of five minutes. The team which scores first in extra time will immediately be declared the winner without further play. If additional periods of extra time are required, teams change ends without an interval.

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Tie Break Rules

Pool round

- A match in the pool round can end in a draw
- If two or more teams are equal on match points then the following criteria will be used in this order to determine the ranking:
  1. The team that won the match between those teams will be ranked higher in the pool (only applicable if only two teams are tied)
  2. The margin of points scored for and against a team in all pool matches will be considered. The team with the highest positive margin of points will be ranked higher in the pool.
  3. The margin of tries scored for and against a team in all pool matches will be considered. The team with the highest positive margin of tries will be ranked higher in the pool.
  4. The team that has scored the highest number of points in the pool matches will be ranked higher in the pool
  5. The team that has scored the highest number of tries in the pool matches will be ranked higher in the pool
  6. The team with the better Games team seeding will be ranked higher in the pool

  For clarification, if after the highest ranked team has been determined following the above criteria the tie remains unresolved between two or more teams, the next higher ranked team will be determined by repeating the process starting at the first criterion.

Knock out round

- For all matches in the knock out round, if teams are tied at full time, then the winner is determined by sudden death extra time

Penalties / Disqualification Rules

Penalties can be awarded for many reasons in Rugby Sevens. Some of the most common are: High tackle, not rolling away at a tackle or ruck (a player on the ground must not interfere with play), being offside, etc. A severe or cynical offence may result in a yellow card, at which time the player spends two minutes in the sin bin and the team plays the ensuing period a player down. For very serious offences, the referee can issue a red card, which means the offending player is sent off for the remainder of the match. A player receiving a second yellow card in the same match results in a red card.

Protests / Appeals

The protests and appeals process will be according to World Rugby Rules and Regulations.

- The Referee will manage all matches and any incident on the field of play during a match not seen to be properly dealt with by the Referee will be reviewed by the Citing Commissioner; the Citing Commissioner will decide whether or not to issue a report for further action to be taken and must issue this report within one hour following the completion of the match.
- A team may refer an incident to the Citing Commissioner; the Citing Commissioner will decide whether or not the referral will be upheld.
- A Judicial Officer will conduct a hearing as quickly as possible once the Citing Commissioner's report has been issued and will decide whether or not to uphold the Citing Commissioner's Report and if so, will issue a sanction in line with the World Rugby's Disciplinary Guidelines.
- A team may appeal the decision of the Judicial Officer but the player will not be permitted to play again in the competition until the appeal is heard.

Any dispute not related to the playing of the match will be dealt with by the Technical Delegate appointed by World Rugby in accordance with the tournament dispute resolution guidelines.

Note:
For further information please consult: www.world.rugby