



How to bet on Rugby Union

Why Bet on Rugby Union?

Often regarded as a 'thugs game played by gentlemen', there are very few sports as contact heavy as Rugby. The best bit about it for fans of the game, or aspire to be, is it can provide better value opportunities than football. This is because by comparison rugby attracts a much smaller following, and with that, much less readily available information for bookmakers. It's that component that can give us punters a little more of an edge and we'll explore the ways of doing this below.

The Main Markets

Outright, Handicaps, Winning Margin, Totals & Tryscorer

The Outright

The outright is the simplest market you can bet on and although it's very popular in football betting, because of the heightened chances of any of the three outcomes occurring, in rugby it's not always the most popular. This is because the percentage of draws is often below a 5% chance (2.25% in Six Nations since 2000), so you can expect to see odds above the 20/1 mark for that outcome and as a consequence the price for either side to win reduces. Furthermore, rugby tends to throw up fewer upsets such is the nature of the scoring system and the mechanics of the game, with the stronger teams more often than not getting over the line, so to speak, and so the combination of these two factors can make some very short-priced favourites. However, that doesn't rule out any opportunity for finding some value as markets can overreact to recent results or underreact to certain player absentees.

The Handicap

Our favourite market to bet on in rugby. Due to the aforementioned reasons for some likely poorly priced sides in the 1X2 market, this effectively puts every side on a level playing field and can present us with multiple betting opportunities based on where we think the value might be. Teams will be given a set number of points as a 'head-start' and from here you can then bet either with the points on the underdog or against the points on the favourite.

The key factors we look for before placing our bet:

1. *Recent Form*
2. *Team News (key players, top try scorers, weak players to exploit)*
3. *Playing Styles / Other Factors (free flowing & extravagant to keeping it tight & percentage plays / weather or referee etc)*
4. *Historic Results (espn rugby have a good database - <https://www.espn.co.uk/rugby/>)*

We've used the 2020 Six Nations clash between Scotland and England at Murrayfield as our example. The bookies put the handicap line at eight points in Scotland's favour.

1. **Recent Form** – *England looked very lacklustre in their opening round clash at Stade de France, conceding 17 unanswered points in the first half, while Scotland very nearly upset Ireland in Dublin in their respective opening round fixture.*
2. **Team News:**
 - *England: Billy Vunipola out & George Furbank (youngster) in at fullback*
 - o *England have always struggled without their big number eight Vunipola and to make matters worse they opted not to play an out and out replacement in his absence, moving Curry out of position to cover. Furbank lacked experience and quality for us and so could be exploited.*
 - *Scotland: Finn Russell out*
 - o *Scotland have an admirable replacement in Adam Hastings to replace their star flyhalf Russell.*
3. **Playing Styles & Other Factors**

Scotland are probably the more attacking minded of the two, but they've been known to enjoy a scrap in the rain. With the weather being very wet and windy the scores were always going to be a little tighter.

4. **Historic Results**

The Red Roses have only once covered the eight-point handicap line at Murrayfield from their seven clashes there since 2006, going an even W3-D1-L3 across them all.

Considering the above, the bet certainly looks to be backing Scotland +8 on the handicap. Indeed, the game finished 13-6, so it proved to be a profitable option.

The Winning Margin

This market typically overlaps with the handicap line process and also a favourite for us when betting on this sport. Had you looked a little closer at England's fixtures in Scotland you would have also seen that all but one of the seven head-to-heads in Edinburgh saw a maximum of 12 points separate the sides. Therefore, a 1-12 point winning margin for the Red Roses would've also been a good option.

The Total Points

In this market you're deciding on whether you think the overall points from both teams will be under or over a set amount. Historic results can have less of a weighting in this market as it depends on the here and now, though it wouldn't hurt to look back on head-to-heads for a gauge. Therefore, recent performances can account for a lot more as does the weather, referee, playing styles and any returning/missing players.

Tryscorer

This is obviously heavily weighted with the wingers and outside backs leading the betting here, and correctly so given a winger is likely to score once every other game, depending on the team, but there can be value to be made elsewhere with those players taking up the head of the market. For instance, in the 2019 World Cup England were known for their strong forward pack and driving lineouts. This brings the two England hookers into play as try Scorers off the back of driving mauls and in fact given the second half tends to have more tries in it than the first, replacement Luke Cowan-Dickie caught our attention as a last try scorer. Scoring in both the 77th minute and 80th minute against Tonga and Argentina, he returned a huge profit for the tournament should you have bet on him to score last in every match.

Conclusion

Information is the key to success when betting on any sport and coupled with some research into the different teams like their playing style, you'll no doubt be able to turnaround a profit. It's also paramount that you consider all the different parameters before making a bet from the team news to the weather forecast and location of the game, so take your time and start with small stakes.