



Starting Youth Rugby Programs

A Guide for Starting a Junior or Youth Rugby Program in Pennsylvania

Introduction

Rugby is a fast paced, fun, safe and exciting sport. Legendary founder of the sport, William Webb Ellis, was a student at England's Rugby School. He created the game when breaking the rules of soccer by picking up the ball and running with it. Rugby's ultimate prize, The World Cup trophy, now bears his name. In fact,

Today, rugby is played in more than 90 countries, making it one of the most popular sports in the world and the Rugby World Cup is the third most watched sporting event in the world. Rugby in the USA has been growing steadily and there are now over 60,000 registered players in America.

Rugby Pennsylvania (RugbyPA) is the governing body for school aged rugby in Pennsylvania. RugbyPA is committed to the development of the game at youth and high school levels. This manual is designed by RugbyPA as a starting point for a rugby enthusiast interested in creating a youth contact rugby program. Most information needed to start your program is here in the manual. More information is available at the RugbyPA website; www.rugbypa.org or by email at competition@rugbypa.org

Go for It.

Congratulations on your decision to start a youth rugby program in your community. Rugby for schooled aged athletes is one of the fastest growing sports in the USA and we need to bring youth rugby to the Allentown area and give boys and girls the opportunity to learn and play the great game of Rugby Union - to bond with teammates, to challenge themselves and most importantly to have fun.

We need your help to grow rugby in Pennsylvania. We need dedicated individuals that can give back to the game of rugby and to the school aged athletes in our communities and build a youth program. The work is challenging but very rewarding. You get to teach the game of rugby and watch your players come together as a team and play high quality rugby. The following is a guide to starting a program. RugbyPA is committed to helping you start a program and also to maintain and grow rugby in your community

RugbyPA Competition Structure and Eligibility Requirements

The following is the competition structure governing all RugbyPA teams for the year 2015

High School Rugby:

- Grade Levels: 10th through 12th
- Must be enrolled in accredited High School, GED Program or approved home school program
- 16 to 18 years of age as of September 1 of the current school year

Junior Rugby:

- Grade Levels: 8th and 9th
- 15 years of age and under as of September 1 of the current school year

Youth Rugby:

- Grade Levels: 5th through 7th
- 13 years of age and under as of September 1 of the current school year

9th Grade Players & JV Rugby

Organizations with High School programs allowing 9th-grade players on their rosters are encouraged to participate in JV Rugby without being required to start Junior Rugby programs for 2015.

JV Rugby provides organizations with a functional transition opportunity into the next Level of Competition as an optional addition to the formal RugbyPA competition structure. This allows teams to continue to develop 9th-grade players in a safe, transitional Level of Competition.

JV Rugby may develop into a formal Level of Competition option, either in line with or in parallel to, the current levels of progression. Currently, teams elect to compete in the pre-season and play mid-week matches. Coaches either provide referee coverage or work on assignment and payment with the Referee Society.

Season of Play

The RugbyPA season for Junior and Youth levels will consist of six league matches and the RugbyPA State Championship Tournament. Teams are permitted to schedule non-league matches independently as long as they do not interfere with the scheduled league matches

2015 RugbyPA Competition Match Dates (tentative)

February 23, 2015	Pre Season Date 1
March 2, 2015	Pre Season Date 2
March 9, 2015	Pre Season Date 3
March 16, 2015	League Match Date 1
March 23, 2015	League Match Date 2
March 30, 2015	League Match Date 3
April 6, 2015	Easter
April 13, 2015	League Match Date 4
April 20, 2015	League Match Date 5
April 27, 2015	League Match Date 6
May 4, 2015	State Championships - Qtr Finals - Junior / Youth
May 11, 2015	State Championships - Semi Finals - Junior / Youth Sat/Sun
May 18, 2015	State Championships - Finals - Junior / Youth

Club Structure and Alliance

All teams in the RugbyPA Junior and Youth divisions must be committed to playing a full schedule independent of any high school or adult club team. Although not a requirement you may consider an administrative relationship with an existing High School or adult club team. These teams can assist in logistical requirements such as field, coaches and player recruiting.

Start Up Costs

Starting a youth rugby program involves minimal costs. Items a new program should consider purchasing:

- Rugby balls (necessary)
- Cones (necessary)
- Ball bag (necessary)
- Medical kit (necessary)
- Jerseys (necessary)
- Tackle/rucking pads (optional but nice to have)
- Goal post pads (necessary)
- Field paint (necessary)
- Field flags (necessary)
- Scrum machine (optional)

Coaches should contact RugbyPA, USA Rugby or other organization to see what kind of financial assistance is available. Local senior clubs may be able to provide sponsorship including donating balls and cones or lending goal post pads and flags. At the very minimum, coaches will need balls, cones, ball bag, and a fully stocked medical kit to get started. Jerseys will be necessary when games start.

Other potential costs may include:

- Field rental
- EMT/trainer fees
- Referee fees (see below)
- Tournament entry fees
- Medical kits re-stocking
- Transportation to and from games
- Team water bottles

Overall, the start up costs are minimal. As a program grows, additional costs will most likely be incurred. Teams can look to the community; high school sports boosters, local rugby clubs, and internal fund-raising efforts to support their growing team.

Grants: Potential grants may be available from
US Rugby Foundation - www.usrugbyfoundation.org
RugbyPA – competition@rugbypa.org

Field Availability

Securing a field for practice and games is often times the most difficult piece of starting a rugby program. Coaches should look into obtaining fields with a high school, the local parks and recreation organization, a local rugby club, or a sporting complex. In most cases, the appropriate permits will be needed to use the fields.

When looking at potential fields, coaches should consider the following:

- Is the field big enough?
- Can it be used as a practice field and a game field?
- Is it lined or do coaches have to line it?
- Is it free of hazards such as holes, barriers, etc.?
- Is it in a safe area?
- Is there parking?
- Are there other groups using it at the same time?
- Are there goal posts?
- Can coaches reserve specific times or does the team just show up?
- Are teams allowed to play/practice on the field in the rain or in muddy conditions?

Remember, coaches and teams are representing the entire sport of rugby to other organizations including other youth sports. Field space is often a contested issue among youth sports so it is important to solidify field times/reservations and to keep a copy of the schedule on hand. It may also be helpful to introduce yourself to the other youth coaches. As a group with a common goal—to provide youth with an opportunity to participate in sports—you'll be better able to come to an agreeable solution on field space.

Player Equipment

Rugby requires minimal equipment. To start, each player must have:

- A mouth guard (required)
- Cleats (soccer cleats are fine; cleats with a toe cleat are not fine, the toe cleat must be cut off

As players advance and become more familiar with the game, they may want to invest in:

- A scrum cap
- Shoulder pads

Recruiting

Web Site

Set up a web site for your team. The awareness of youth rugby is growing and people are looking for opportunities to play.

Local Schools - School Posters and Fliers

Some school districts allow nonprofit sports organizations to display posters in schools. Additionally, some allow fliers to be inserted in the information packets that are periodically sent home to parents. Virtually all school districts require that such materials be approved in advance by the building principal or at the district level. Therefore, decide which schools in the community should be targeted for recruiting.

USA Rugby offers material this is professional in appearance and easily located on the USA Rugby Website. If homemade materials are to be created, they should look as professional as possible. If this is the case, be sure to include all necessary contact information, and an action photo or graphic. Find out who is in charge of poster approval, and submit a poster along with a short letter of introduction.

Youth Sports Associations

Contact local youth and school organization and request to do a brief presentation to the team about rugby. Target sports such as football, wrestling, basketball as well as other youth organizations such as YMCA, Boy Scouts, church groups and community groups. Some may allow for you to give a flyer to the players. Administrators of these organizations will be much more receptive to this idea if it is explained that rugby is not "competing" with them for members and field space.

Registration Event & Meeting

Hold an informational meeting and registration event in your community.

Rugby Clinic

Hold a youth rugby clinic in your area. This should be a non contact event allowing kids to get an introduction to rugby. Put players through some easy drills and play some mini games. Emphasize that all players get to run with the ball and play defense.

Other local teams

Contact local high school and adult teams to let them know youth rugby is available for family members and friends.

Don't get discouraged with low numbers of players at the beginning of your team. Once kids start to experience rugby word will spread they will start bringing our friends and players. Stay the course and your team will grow.

In most cases, the initial group of athletes may have parents who either have played rugby or are at least familiar with the sport. More likely, the parents will know nothing about rugby. Worse yet, they may harbor the old “football without pads” perception. The most difficult part of the job as a youth rugby organizer will be to dispel the myths about rugby, and convince parents that the game is safe for their children. Be ready to explain the differences between American football and rugby. Contact RugbyPA for articles and other resources to help promote youth rugby.

Marketing a Youth Rugby Program

Press Release

Generally, a release should be very concise, and should follow the “who, what, where and when” for-mat. Be sure to provide a name and contact information. Emphasize what the program offers. Include the website address. Indicate exactly when the information should appear in the newspaper. Develop a list of the newspapers.

Newspaper Article

Ask the local newspaper to publish an article on youth rugby, the growth of our sport and the benefits of playing rugby, include a photo and information on your team. This is a great way to get free newspaper coverage

Web Site

A website is essential in marketing your team, the awareness of youth rugby is growing and kids and parents looking for teams and they are searching the internet. A simple website can be set up cheaply, and can be operated for less than \$10.00 per month. This is a very powerful tool for marketing a program. The site does not have to be elaborate. A site with basic contact information, a calendar of events, directions and a photo or two will suffice. If it is decided to have a website created, then include the web address on all printed material created for marketing the program

Social Media

Develop a Facebook page for addition exposure to your team and for players to share.

RugbyPA Registration Forms and Required Paperwork

All teams, players, coaches and administrators need to be CIPP registered with USA Rugby and RugbyPA. RugbyPA in partnership with USA Rugby has built a new CIPP registration system that will make it easier for everyone to register and get started playing rugby faster and with all of the same protections provided under the old USA Rugby procedures.

Under the new system, Rugby PA will collect all of the information and fees required and coordinate each CIPP with USA Rugby. This should eliminate most of the guesswork and give you one less thing to worry about while you plan for a successful rugby team and season.

More information can be found at www.rugbypa.org/membership

Teams should register before any Players, Coaches, or Administrators/Volunteers for that Team. This will help make sure that your registrations are processed properly by Rugby PA and USA Rugby.

Player liability forms are required as part of the registration. You should keep all players information, insurance and liability forms with you at all team functions.

Coach development

Recruiting Coaches:

Beyond the rugby mom or dad to serve as coach or in an administrative role, there are other prime pockets from which potential youth coaches can be identified. First, identify the local teams/clubs in your community.

Clubs

Players from clubs can serve as an excellent rugby resource, and this will be their time to give back to the sport they so love. Many times players, who are on the verge of retirement, seek other avenues to remain with the sport, and this is a perfect outlet. Typically, each club will have a president and a captain. Approach these individuals in a professional organized manner and present the program. If the program is well organized and presented professionally, the club may even want to adopt the program as their youth component. This is encouraged and appropriate.

Collegiate Players

Another avenue of recruitment is current collegiate rugby players. Collegiate rugby is the largest club sport in the United States. This is a prime recruiting tool for assistant coaches and referees. RugbyPA does not recommend collegiate rugby players to serve as head coaches, however they are valuable assistant coaches.

Parents

Just like any other youth sport in the United States, one major recruiting ground for coaches is parents of youth players. A number of players will be children of former or active adult players. This form of participation has both positive and negative connotations.

The obvious plus in having mom and dad coach their children's teams is parental involvement and making the sport a family affair. The caution is to avoid the parent's emotional need to see their kids succeed on the fields. Program administrators need to be very aware of this aspect and insure that if a parent does coach their children's team, that they have a complete understanding that youth rugby is for the kids, not the adults.

Coach Development Program

USA Rugby has revamped the Coach Development Program (CDP) over the last year. The program includes a new format for the workshops, online modules, IRB equivalency and Positive Coaching Alliance and National Center for Sports Safety certifications. All of these have added credibility to the program. RugbyPA requires at least one coach be certified per team and all coaches need to be registered at www.rugbypa.org/membership/coach-rugby

Medical

Medical Kits:

Every coach should be prepared to handle emergency situations during practice or at games. It is essential that coaches have at least one fully stocked first aid kit on hand whenever athletes are playing. The medical kit should be checked and restocked on a regular basis. The National Center for Sports Safety (www.sportssafety.org) has compiled a list of items that should be included in every coach's first aid kit:

- Non-powdered barrier gloves
- Resuscitation mask/face shield
- Instant ice cold pack
- Elastic fabric flexible bandages standard size
- Strip bandages (band-aids)
- Triangular bandage for sling
- 2" x 2" sterile gauze pads
- 2" king roller gauze
- 3" x 3" sterile gauze pads
- non stick pads
- Large patch bandage
- Eye patch kit (eye patch and clear tape)
- Adhesive tape
- Alcohol swabs
- Disinfectant pads
- Insect sting swabs
- Antiseptic pads
- Hydrocortisone cream
- Q-tip swabs

- Sun block (30) SPF
- Insect repellent
- Splint
- Tape cutter
- Scissors
- Tape

Trainer/EMT:

A certified trainer or EMT should be present at all home matches

Emergency Action Plan:

Every coach should have emergency action plans (EAP) for practices and home matches. These plans include the following:

- Address, directions, and location of nearest exits for their practice field
- Address, directions, and location of nearest exits for their home game field
- Address, directions, and location of nearest exits for their away game fields
- Location of closest hospital to all venues
- Chain of command (who calls 9-1-1, who stays with injured person, who remains with team, who contacts parents/guardians, who handles the media)

A sample EAP can be obtained from RugbyPA at competition@rugbypa.org

Coaches should carry a charged cell phone at all times or have quick access to a phone.

Referee

The EPRRS will assign certified referees for all league games. The home team is responsible for confirming match details with the assigned referee (3) three days prior to match. RugbyPA will compensate the referee for the official league match for the Junior and Youth matches. Any secondary match will be paid by the home team.

In the event the EPRRS cannot assign a referee, the home team is responsible to provide a certified referee for the match. If the home team is unable to provide a certified referee the visiting team may provide a certified referee. A match may not be played without a certified referee.

Insurance

USA Rugby offers its members two forms of insurance: liability insurance and accident insurance. These insurance policies are aimed at providing USA Rugby members with peace of mind and insurance coverage so that they can enjoy the sport without having to worry. Below is a summary of the liability and accident insurance policies automatically provided to USA Rugby members.

Liability Insurance

- Covers accident and bodily injury to third parties
- Reduces liability for registered members
- Enables members to use facilities that require third party liability insurance coverage

Accident Insurance

- Covers rugby-related accidents for registered members at sanctioned events. Practice, matches and tournaments where all participants are registered.
- Must be registered member prior to time of injury
- This is secondary coverage, but will serve as primary coverage in the absence of other medical coverage

For more information on insurance visit www.usarugby.org/insurance-2