

COVID-19 - Fall 2020 Decision



Members of the Minnesota Rugby Union, Supporters, and Friends,

I am writing with a heavy heart to update and inform all of you regarding the Minnesota Rugby Union's decisions regarding our Fall 2020 season, and to provide you with the rationale for these decisions.

Background:

Shortly after the COVID-19 crisis developed, USA Rugby released Return to Play Guidelines designed to minimize health risks to players, referees and spectators. These guidelines are based on local health mandates regarding gathering size – which in Minnesota is less than 25 individuals (including spectators, administrators/referees, and participants). This places MN Rugby under “Stage Three” in the USAR guidelines, which prohibits competition and contact activities.

The Midwest Rugby Football Union, which is the Territorial Union Minnesota is a part of, later released their own Return to Play Handbook that further outlines the guidelines and requirements for a return to sanctioned play in our region – restricting any competition until gatherings of 50+ are allowed by the State.

Return to Play Decision:

With our fall season quickly approaching, the Minnesota Union has made the decision to suspend the start of our fall season for Men's Club, Women's Club, and Collegiate Rugby, as well as any sanctioned activities, until all of the states represented by our union meet USA Rugby's "Stage Four" guidelines for returning to play, and gatherings of 50+ are allowed for all of our member organizations.

Any practices or gatherings sponsored by Men's or Women's Club teams during this time will be considered unsanctioned by our Union, and may be subject to disciplinary action from the Midwest Rugby Football Union if found to be in violation of their guidelines.

Collegiate teams must adhere to all guidelines of their institution regarding team or other student activities.

We are hopeful that our region will be successful in its fight against the spread of the COVID-19 virus, and that local gathering restrictions will be eased prior to the end of the traditional fall season. In the event of this easing, the Minnesota Rugby Union will reevaluate our decision in order to allow a safe return to play which falls in-line with the mandates of the Midwest Rugby Football Union's guidelines for sanctioning. Union Secretary **Rebecca Fritz** (secretary@mnrfu.org) has been appointed as our Compliance Officer to the Midwest, and will lead this effort when the opportunity presents itself.

Dues:

We are evaluating our dues structure given the reduction in Union services caused by the pandemic. If there is no meaningful return to play this Fall, dues for this year will be reduced to reflect only services offered by the Union in the Spring and Summer. The Union will not seek to collect any monies previously invoiced until a return to play has been authorized, and any money already collected will be held as a credit towards future dues and services offered. Please feel free to contact our Union Treasurer **Billy McDonald** (treasurer@mnrfu.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

Plan:

These decisions did not come easily for any member of the Minnesota Rugby Union Board. This is an unhappy start to what, for many of us, is the best part of our year. We recognize that in the absence of a season, we still have a responsibility to lead and continue the sustainment and growth of our game. To this end, we are developing a series of webinars and other resources which we hope will be useful for players, coaches, and administrators as you all work to maintain your community, continue engagement, and grow your games. Please contact our Technical Director **Josey Fog** (technicaldirector@mnrfu.org) if you would like to share your expertise or contribute to this effort.

We will continue to meet regularly in order to reassess our situation and allow a meaningful return to rugby as soon as possible. I will also begin to host quarterly virtual open forums for our membership, where you can come to ask questions, provide feedback, and offer suggestions on how we may use this time to improve our organization and keep our game thriving throughout this crisis and after it has resolved.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

With you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Greg White
President, Minnesota Rugby Union
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