GAME DAY CHECKLIST

This checklist is a tool for you to use prior to and on game days to ensure that all details have been taken care of to provide a positive experience for your club and all visiting teams. You should add any items that are specific to your college or university, LAU, and/or TU to make sure all aspects are covered.

This list may not cover all applicable items specific to your situation. Please keep in mind that there may be other important items that are not listed:

I. Pre-Game Planning
   a. Venue
      __ Field use permit(s) acquired
      __ Certificate of liability insurance (requested from USA Rugby website) acquired
      __ Permission/permits acquired from college or university
      __ Field checked for debris or harmful areas
      __ Field lined and roped
      __ Adequate parking available and well marked
   b. Medical Personnel
      *Please note: Should be organized with applicable policies/resources at your college or university.
      __ Confirm CAT/EMT coverage
      __ Confirm ambulance coverage
      __ Detail emergency plan with medical support personnel
      __ Confirm medical histories of players
   c. Team CIPP Registration Compliance
      __ Print roster from USA Rugby website
      __ Confirm that all players and coaches are listed and CIPP is current
      __ Print out match rosters for referee
   d. Media/Promotion
      __ Contact college or university and local newspaper
      __ Make sure media have a contact number on game day
      __ Post fliers/posters advertising game
      __ Call local/school radio stations and provide match details
      __ Develop game day programs w/rosters, ads, etc.

II. Pre-Game Communication
   a. Opposing match secretary
      __ Confirm kickoff time(s)
      __ Confirm match length(s)
      __ Confirm travel time to pitch
      __ Confirm second/third side match (if applicable)
      __ Provide clear directions to pitch
      __ Review emergency medical plan
      __ Review EMT/CAT (Certified Athletic Trainer) support
      __ Confirm jersey colors in case of conflict
      __ Review locker room availability
III. Game Day
   - Ensure proper field markings
   - Set up field
   - Flag markers
   - Goal post pads
   - Field ropes
   - Set up warm-up area (cones, balls, etc.)
   - Distribute game day programs to spectators
   - Captain/match secretary to greet opposing team, referee, and touch judges
   - Confirm starting lineup
   - Confirm/identify team captain
   - Review plays and confirm game plan

IV. Post Game Procedure
__ Confirm final score with head referee
__ Collect jerseys
__ Collect equipment – balls, cones, other
__ Break down field
__ Pick up all trash/debris
__ Follow up with score report to local/university media
__ Follow up with score report to radio/other media outlets
__ Follow up with score/match report to LAU/TU
__ Confirm compliance with university policy on break down and clean up of field & facilities
As the game grows at all levels, many rugby programs struggle to recruit and retain a consistent number of players. The lack of athletes makes development difficult as there are never enough players at practice to work on certain aspects of the game. At best it is an inconvenience, at worst it can lead to unsafe players taking the field.

This guide is designed to help everyone recruit and retain players to grow their teams. It is a collection of best practice from coaches that have found ways to grow the game. There are no magic bullets, but there are approaches anyone can take that will increase the number of players on their team.

Recruiting vs. Retention
Rugby is a growing sport in the USA, and as such, has barriers that we must overcome. However many problems that rugby teams encounter are actually of their own accord. With the growth of the game at high school and college level, recruiting is often not the issue. Over the course of a season many rugby teams have plenty of players come out to try the sport. However, for some reason, they do not commit to the game. **RETENTION** is often the issue, and not recruitment.

Retention is absolutely within the program’s control. A coach should reflect on early season practices and make sure that a new player will have a great experience that will encourage them to return to the next practice. So what is a brand new player looking for at practice? Here is a suggested list, but everyone should develop their own:

- **Organized** – many athletes come to rugby because they are looking for another sport to play. They may be familiar with varsity level practices. Early season practices need to be the best run of the year.
- **Learning** – Players want to feel like they have learned and improved during a practice. This is true for all players, but especially those that are new to the game.
- **Context** – Most of the athletes that attend their first practice have never seen a rugby ball before. Using skill drills only fails to provide context. Try to come up with competitive games similar to rugby match situations to help players understand why they need to learn certain skills.
- **Active** – All players want to feel like their practice was physically challenging. If you have a large group of new players, make sure you have multiple stations/grids to avoid inactivity.
- **Successful** – This is probably the most difficult achievement for new players because we tend to mix them in with experienced players which can be intimidating (see rookie day below). Early in the season it may be more important to focus on new players than those who already grasp an understanding of the game.
- **Attention** – Assistant coaches serve as the best retention tool any team can have. Players that are given focused attention by coaches will feel valued and will learn at an accelerated pace.

If a coach has a team that struggles with numbers, the coach should reflect on what takes place at practice and ask if the objectives are aimed at retaining players to the next practice.
Other tips for retention include:

- **Dues** - Give players a grace period before dues must be paid. This can be a significant financial barrier.
- **Mentoring** – pair up a new player with an experienced player. The experienced player’s job is to make sure the recruit comes back and commits to the sport. You can even offer reduced dues when their recruit pays dues.
- **Names** – Learn player’s names. It makes a huge difference to new players for everyone to call them by their name.
- **Parents** – Catching the interest of parents is critical to new player commitment. Check out the Parent Network Guide on the USA Rugby website for more information.

**Recruiting**

Your best recruiters are your current players. They play rugby for many reasons which should be shared with others in a positive and respectful manner. One of the most difficult challenges we have is the brand that rugby often has within the general community. It takes a lot of work for a rugby program to create a positive image of the sport, but the payoff is immeasurable. Often this image forms a brand identity, and creating a good rugby brand on campus is an important part of recruiting.

Tips on improving the rugby brand:

- **Player behavior** – Rugby is on constant probation because of past negative branding, most of which is due to poor behavior from former players. Current players must take on the role of rugby ambassadors. They must behave better than other athletes on campus.
- **Positive clothing** – A branding expert once said that the best thing rugby could do would be to take every negative t-shirt (ex. “give blood, play rugby”) and burn them. Require your players to wear clothing featuring positive, team branded rugby slogans and images.
- **Posters and Brochures** – Using professional posters and brochures gains recognition for rugby as an attractive option in the world of sport choices. USA Rugby has professional print quality posters and spectator guides available for download and use towards gaining new players and fans.

Generally, you want the rugby program’s interactions with community members to inspire an interest in supporting the game as a whole.

One way to look at how to improve your recruiting is to try and identify the barriers that prevent athletes from participating. Rugby players always say “I wish I would have started playing earlier” and the rugby community needs to address why they did not. A common example of a barrier is the unknown nature of the sport. Often athletes hesitate to try something new for fear they will not understand and nor have the right skills. One way to overcome that is to host a “Rookie Day” and make it for players that have never played before. It will be less intimidating for a new player to learn about the game with others in the same position. You should introduce enough information so each new player feels comfortable. Check out the appendix for a suggested schedule.

**Selling Rugby**

The best way to get an athlete to try rugby is to have current players sell the game. Telling their rugby story personalizes the approach and helps attract new players. It is often best for everyone to develop their own sales pitch script, although one is included in the appendix as a guide.

To help current players understand how to talk to athletes about rugby have them answer three questions:

1. What does a regular student think of when you say the word “rugby”? These should create positive and negative terms and can be a good starting point. How do we enhance the positives and reduce the impact of the negatives?
2. Why do you play rugby? These become the key talking points for the players when they sell the game to their fellow students.
3. What prevents someone from trying rugby? This will bring up tough questions that students will ask and you can discuss appropriate answers.
Once you have this information you can even have team members role play as current players and potential recruits. The experience should enable the player to be more comfortable talking to other students about the game.

Preparing to Play
Once you have the new players out at practice it is important in terms of retention to think about how you are going to prepare them to play. This is always a tough balance because players are likely to commit to the sport if they have an opportunity to play the game. This is also where players learn the most; however, first priority is the player’s safety, which has two components:

1. The player’s physical capacity to participate
2. The player’s skills

New player’s physical capacity is always up to the coach’s discretion. Is the player fit and strong enough to participate safely in a game? USA Rugby recommends that all players meet the Center for Disease Control’s fitness standards as a basic requirement for participation in a game. Those standards are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max Push Up</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Min. Sit Up</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 Yard Sprint</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.5-8.4</td>
<td>8.5+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Mile Run</td>
<td>&lt;12:30</td>
<td>14:30</td>
<td>16:55+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Fitness Standards for High School Boys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max Push Up</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Min. Sit Up</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 Yard Sprint</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.5-6.9</td>
<td>7.0+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Mile Run</td>
<td>&lt;9:40</td>
<td>10:48</td>
<td>12:11+</td>
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As for the player’s skill, it is vital that a player has experience in the contact aspects of the game including the tackle (tackling and being tackled), continuity, and scrums/lineouts. USA Rugby recommends that a player be allowed to play in a game when they have completed the following sessions in practice:

- Two technical tackle sessions
- Two full-contact games (not necessarily full sided games)
- Two live scrum sessions

All requirements can be completed in four practice sessions. A sample program is included the appendix.

Philosophy
An old South African coaching manual states that the coach’s role in rugby is to recruit and retain players to the sport. The competitive aspect of the game is important for our players, but all coaches must understand that how they coach their team has a dramatic effect on the growth and development of rugby in the US.
CLUB RECRUITMENT GUIDE

The Future of [CLUB NAME HERE] is in your Hands!

You are the best recruitment tool we have. As a player, you choose to experience Rugby, so it is up to you to share why you play and all other aspects of your experience with others.

Remember this is an athletic opportunity for every recruit – hundreds of people would make great rugby players if they only knew about the game! Remember it is an opportunity they have to take and it is OK if it is not their first choice.

Wear rugby gear. Recruit in pairs, target athletes, be excited to meet new people, and sell the opportunity rugby provides.

Explain how rugby:
- Challenges you mentally and physically – develops you as a person
- Keeps you fit
- Has a place for athletes of all sizes
- Is a full-contact sport – different from football
- Includes a unique International sporting culture and experience
- Is the 3rd most watched sport in the world short of the Olympics and Soccer
- Makes you part of something larger than yourself – ultimate team experience (pass backwards to go forwards)
- Is a cool game and players take great pride in sharing it with others

About your rugby team:
- Very closely bonded, build friendships for life
- Opportunities to compete in a league
- Potential to travel around the country and even other nations
- Always have friends at school
- Most fun you have ever had!

Trying rugby for the first time?
- No experience necessary
- No cuts – everyone gets to play
- Accepting team, welcomes new players, no cliques
- Varying level of commitment accepted – up to you how much time you give
- Take up a new sport and rise to the top fast! (All-American and National Teams)
- Rugby can help you get accepted to the college of your choice
Introduction to Rugby
Practice Guide

Pete Steinberg
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Guidelines for Practice
Model of Skilled Performance

Traditional rugby coaches only focus on execution. That is not usually the problem.

Practice should be focused on developing skilled players.
We Need To Develop Players To:

☞ see try scoring opportunities
☞ create try scoring / stopping opportunities
☞ execute try scoring / stopping opportunities
A Coaching Session Should Develop Our Players To:

- Recognize opposition defensive alignment?
- Act collectively to overcome the defense?
- Recognize the role of the ball carrier?
- Recognize where the support is?
- Make efficient & effective choices?
- Understand and improve the skills required for each choice?
Accelerated Skill Development

Games-based approach is based around on recent research that shows:

• Skills learnt under game conditions are retained better
• Develops “game sense” – instinctive reactions
• More intense practice because of competition
• More fun
Whole-Part-Whole

This does not mean there is no technical coaching. The process is:

1. Introduce game to test players skills
2. Identify areas of technical weakness
3. Address technical deficiencies
4. Re-introduce game

Player centered, focuses on what the players needs to improve.
Developing Game Sense

PLAY GAME or Modified Activity

Coach Observe. But rather than telling players how to correct the errors the coach uses questions to draw answers and understanding from the players.

TACTICAL & SKILLS FEEDBACK (Questioning)

Coach can ‘condition’ or manipulate the rules etc …… To create the learning outcome required.

RETURN TO GAME
Sessions should be

• Opposed if possible
• Delivered in the context of the game
  Player centered – allow players to solve problems by asking questions
• Progressive, building into a full game.
Rookie Day

Session 1
- Max pass
- Round the corner
- 1v1 driving
- Handling
- Introducing rugby

Session 2
- Introducing Rugby
- Tackling from knees
- 3v3 no ball defense
- 4v4

You can hold a video session during lunch between the sessions
Week 1

Practice 1
- 20 passes
- Round the corner
- 1v1 Driving body position
- Tackling from knees
- Side on tackle
- 8v1 full contact

Practice 2
- Introducing Rugby
- 1v1 Driving position
- Head on tackle
- Tackle decision
- Continuity drill
- Channel game
Week 2

Practice 1
• 3v3 defense
• Support game
• Designer game
• Split
  – Forwards - scrums
  – Backs – 4v4

Practice 2
• Canterbury Game
• 1v1 Driving
• Designer game
• Split
  – Forwards – scrum and lineouts
  – Backs – Kicking and back defense

• Team play
Game/Drill Structures

- Key to symbols:
  - Defender
  - Attacker
  - Cone
  - Direction of run
  - Direction of pass
  - Tryline
  - Ball
Round the Corner

Variations:
• Length of the grid manages intensity of drill
• Widen the grid to reduce difficulty
• Can have multiple levels of defense with more cones on defense
• Start can be:
  • Defender hands ball to attackers
  • SH pass to attackers once they are around the cone
  • Ball can be kicked (pop or grubber) and attackers must recover and attack
Round the Corner B

Variations:
• Same as round the corner A
Handling

There are two lines of 4 or 5 and a SH at each cone. The lines alternate attack and defense. The defense is only their to give the sense of pressure. Once a line attacks it and moves the ball across to the other cone, it retreats and sets up as a defensive line, while the defending line sets up to attack. Need to change direction of pass.
“8v1”

Does not need to be 8v1. Can be touch, grab or full contact.

Width is normally about 20m (can be the 22). Length determines intensity.

First defender kicks ball to Attackers and stays still until ball is fielded. The “8” attack and score on other end of grid. When the ball is touched down another player must pick up and attack the other way and another defender is added. This repeats until the coach decides the attacking team has failed to score.
Channel Game

This is a small sided game with limited numbers and space. Variations:
• Set up different defenses
• Change how the game is started – throw the ball behind, roll it in front, kick etc
• Manipulate starting position of offense and defense (lying on floor etc)
Designer Game

Attack has to go around the cone pick up a ball and attack. The defense does the same. The attack continues until the coach calls the end of play or a try is scored and then both go through the “gate” and repeat. Number of balls and length of grid manages the intensity. Width and numbers determines the skills that will be practiced.
The coach rolls the ball out into the grid. The first attacker goes directly to the ball, the supporters must run around the end cone. The defenders may come up when the ball carrier has fielded the ball. If the ball is close to defenders the BC must buy some time. If the ball is far then the BC has support and can play.
Cycle Drill

1. First player runs out and puts the ball down

2. After he puts the ball down he runs on turns and becomes the defender. Next player picks up the ball

3. The ball carrier engages the defender and the attackers beat the defender using the skill as designated by the coach.

4. Whomever ends up with the ball runs on, puts the ball down and becomes the next defender. Cycle repeats

You can ask the BC to execute a particular technique or you can give the BC freedom and have the support react. More than one defender also will work with larger groups.
Continuity Drill

1. ▼ ② ① → 3
   First BC runs towards the defender with one supporter

3. 4 ← ② ③ ①
   The supporter gets the ball and turns and engages on other defender

5. ② ④ ③ → ②
   Step 1 repeated

2. ▼ ④ → ② ① ③
   He engages the defender and uses the technique as determined by the coach. The Other defender follows to reduce distance and intensity.

4. ▼ ② ③ ← ①
   Step 2 is repeated.

You can build so there are 3 or 4 people rucking or mauling against 2 defenders.
The coach rolls the ball out into the grid. The first attacker goes directly to the ball, the supporters must run around the end cone. The defenders may come up when the ball carrier has fielded the ball. If the ball is close to defenders the BC must buy some time. If the ball is far then the BC has support and can play.
3v3 No Ball Defense

There is no ball for this drill, so the focus is one defender one tackle. The offense tries to run through the defensive line without being touched (2 hands below the waist. Defenders can only touch one attacker. Defense moves when offense starts. Offense is not allowed to discuss plays. Key points are: come up together, communicate, one person one tackle. Slide as attackers loop.
Side-On Tackle A

Attacker and defender leave at the same time. Attacker must run across the grid towards the opposite cone to create side on tackle.
Defender stands in the middle of the grid. Attackers are lined up on the cones. First attacker runs across the edge of the grid. Defender closes and executes a side on tackle. Once that tackle is complete a second attacker leaves from the other side – the defender has to get up and go across the grid to make a second tackle. Then the 3rd attacker leaves etc.
Head-On Tackle Game

One on one in a very small field. Manage the length and width to manage the intensity. Few quality repetitions are good. 2m by 5m are good dimensions.
Tackle Decision Drill

Coach stands behind the defenders and attackers to go left, right or straight ahead. Defenders have to react and execute either a side on or head on tackle.
“20 Passes”

The group is split into two teams (they don’t need to know who is on their team). The ball is turned over if they step in touch, the ball is dropped or knocked down in the air. The defense cannot knock the ball out of the hands of the offense and they cannot call for the ball if they are not on their team. The team wins if it gets to 20 passes.
There are teams of 4 or 5. They can run and pass in any direction. The goal is to make passes without dropping the ball or stepping out of bounds. If they “lose” the ball, 1st is 5 push ups, 2nd time 10 sit-ups and 3rd time is 5 squat jumps.

Progression:
• All 4 teams pass with no defense
• The teams can knock the ball down
• One team plays defense only – time a minute and the teams count the number of passes they can make.

“Max Pass”
Introducing Rugby

Goal is to introduce rugby. Teams play in teams of 10 across 22. Goal is to score a try.

Progression:

• Pass in any direction with turn over when ball is dropped or they are touched with 2 hands below waist. Kicking allowed.

• Pass immediately when you are touched

• Pass backwards, when touched have to pass straight away

• Kicking allowed.