FACILITATING TRANSITIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF RUGBY PLAYERS IN THE UNITED STATES

USA RUGBY REPORT TO CONGRESS
29 JULY 2017
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE
## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:

**ANNUAL YEAR-TO-YEAR RETENTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth/HS Stay</strong></td>
<td>39.52%</td>
<td>42.12%</td>
<td>37.33%</td>
<td>39.05%</td>
<td>38.72%</td>
<td>40.39%</td>
<td>41.16%</td>
<td>39.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth/HS to College</strong></td>
<td>4.01%</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>3.65%</td>
<td>4.54%</td>
<td>4.39%</td>
<td>4.12%</td>
<td>4.15%</td>
<td>4.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth/HS to Senior Club</strong></td>
<td>1.30%</td>
<td>0.89%</td>
<td>1.17%</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
<td>1.15%</td>
<td>1.22%</td>
<td>1.16%</td>
<td>1.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth/HS Leave</strong></td>
<td><strong>55.17%</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.30%</strong></td>
<td><strong>57.85%</strong></td>
<td><strong>55.31%</strong></td>
<td><strong>55.73%</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.27%</strong></td>
<td><strong>53.52%</strong></td>
<td><strong>55.01%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YOUTH/HIGH SCHOOL</strong></td>
<td>17,297</td>
<td>19,510</td>
<td>21,699</td>
<td>25,138</td>
<td>28,268</td>
<td>32,002</td>
<td>36,549</td>
<td>180,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College Stay</strong></td>
<td>48.97%</td>
<td>44.00%</td>
<td>38.65%</td>
<td>45.52%</td>
<td>43.65%</td>
<td>43.03%</td>
<td>43.43%</td>
<td>43.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College to Senior Club</strong></td>
<td>3.05%</td>
<td>2.61%</td>
<td>4.23%</td>
<td>5.69%</td>
<td>4.59%</td>
<td>5.19%</td>
<td>4.40%</td>
<td>4.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College Leave</strong></td>
<td><strong>47.97%</strong></td>
<td><strong>53.39%</strong></td>
<td><strong>57.12%</strong></td>
<td><strong>63.67%</strong></td>
<td><strong>51.76%</strong></td>
<td><strong>51.78%</strong></td>
<td><strong>52.17%</strong></td>
<td><strong>53.98%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COLLEGE</strong></td>
<td>24,852</td>
<td>25,653</td>
<td>17,983</td>
<td>22,895</td>
<td>28,366</td>
<td>30,487</td>
<td>31,847</td>
<td>182,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senior Club Stay</strong></td>
<td>57.83%</td>
<td>53.62%</td>
<td>48.61%</td>
<td>57.20%</td>
<td>57.25%</td>
<td>56.38%</td>
<td>56.52%</td>
<td>55.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senior Club Leave</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.17%</strong></td>
<td><strong>46.38%</strong></td>
<td><strong>51.39%</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.80%</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.75%</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.62%</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.48%</strong></td>
<td><strong>44.66%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SENIOR CLUB</strong></td>
<td>19,118</td>
<td>20,101</td>
<td>17,266</td>
<td>18,231</td>
<td>21,468</td>
<td>23,304</td>
<td>24,616</td>
<td>144,104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Recruit and Retain Study, Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>High School Ever</th>
<th>College Ever</th>
<th>Senior Club Ever</th>
<th>High School to College to Senior Club</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>17.55%</td>
<td>9.90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>18.36%</td>
<td>7.04%</td>
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<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>21.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>6.68%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>19.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>15.45%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>4.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Club</td>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>7.68%</td>
<td>25.45%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Club</td>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>9.34%</td>
<td>26.82%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:**
**LONG TERM RETENTION / TRANSITION BETWEEN LEVELS**
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:
RECENT TRENDS IN RRT: EXAMINATION OF 2013-2014
PLAYER MEMBERSHIPS

HIGH SCHOOL
- 38.79% returned to HS rugby the next year
- 40.55% played HS rugby again by 2016-2017
- 12.87% made it to college by 2016-2017
- 4.35% made it to senior club by 2016-2017

HIGH SCHOOL AGE GUESS
- 6.67% returned to HS rugby the next year
- 16.33% made it to college by 2016-2017
- 6.44% made it to senior club by 2016-2017

Source: USA Rugby Senior Club and Membership Departments
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:
RECENT TRENDS IN RRT: EXAMINATION OF 2013-2014 PLAYER MEMBERSHIPS

COLLEGE

- 43.5% returned to college the next year
- 46.66% played college again by 2016-2017
- 15.09% made it to senior club by 2016-2017

COLLEGE AGE GUESS

- 25.08% returned to college the next year
- 22.59% made it to senior club by 2016-2017

Source: USA Rugby Senior Club and Membership Departments
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:
RECENT TRENDS IN RRT: EXAMINATION OF 2013-2014 PLAYER MEMBERSHIPS

SENIOR CLUB

- 54.28% returned to senior club the next year
- 61.02% played senior club again by 2016-2017

Source: USA Rugby Senior Club and Membership Departments
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:
INVESTIGATION OF SENIOR CLUB PARTICIPATION RATES

Number of registered players to senior clubs who were rostered for NO competitive games exceeds 11,000
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:
INVESTIGATION OF SENIOR CLUB PARTICIPATION RATES

Source: USA Rugby Senior Club Department and USA Rugby Competition Management System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Games Played</th>
<th>Number of Players</th>
<th>Percent of Players on Rosters</th>
<th>Percent of Total Senior Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15+</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0.42%</td>
<td>0.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>5.14%</td>
<td>3.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7+</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>26.60%</td>
<td>16.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>8,628</td>
<td>44.14%</td>
<td>27.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>12,615</td>
<td>64.54%</td>
<td>40.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1+</td>
<td>17,862</td>
<td>91.38%</td>
<td>57.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0+ (Rostered)</td>
<td>19,547</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>63.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHY DO WE PLAY? WHY DO WE STOP PLAYING?
WHY DO WE PLAY? WHY DO WE STOP PLAYING?

VARIABLES KNOWN TO AFFECT ATHLETE RETENTION

- Perceived competence
- Constraints on participation (intrapersonal, interpersonal, structural)
- Sense of community
- Social ties to rugby (friend influence/participation; family influence/participation)
- Identity
- Motivation to play rugby (intellectual, social, mastery, escape)
- Club commitment
- Subcultural fit
- Social infrastructure
- Interest in alternative game forms
- Satisfaction with competition structures
WHY DO WE PLAY?

THE SPORT ITSELF

- The sport itself
  - Physical nature of the sport
  - A ‘Game for All’
    - Accepts players of ‘all shapes and sizes’
  - Unique subculture
  - Social, intellectual, mastery, escape
- Social ties and sense of community
- Friend of family influence
Often a combination of factors

- Other time commitments and life priorities
- Injury and recovery time
- Non-fit with subculture
- Expectations of participation

WHY DO WE STOP PLAYING?

THE SPORT ITSELF
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Stayers</th>
<th>Leavers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td><strong>1.25</strong></td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rugby Identity</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.10</strong></td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Competence</strong> ^1</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td><strong>1.00</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Constraints</strong></td>
<td>How often a concern?^2</td>
<td>How important in decision to quit?^3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of injury</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovery time</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td><strong>2.40</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team takes too much time</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td><strong>3.80</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many other things to do</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td><strong>4.20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor skills</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends don’t play</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant other doesn’t support</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td><strong>2.20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to play</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club not convenient</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td><strong>2.60</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much travel</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td><strong>2.80</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t fit in</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t enjoy off-field activities</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^1 Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree
^2 Scale: 0=never; 1=rarely; 2=occasionally; 3=somewhat often; 4=often; 5=very often; 6=always
^3 Scale: 0=not at all important; 3= neither important nor unimportant; 6=extremely important

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Stayers</th>
<th>Leavers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rugby Identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Competence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Constraints</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of injury</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovery time</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team takes too much time</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many other things to do</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor skills</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends don’t play</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant other doesn’t support</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to play</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club not convenient</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much travel</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t fit in</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t enjoy off-field activities</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree
2Scale: 0=never; 1=rarely; 2=occasionally; 3=somewhat often; 4=often; 5=very often; 6=always
3Scale: 0=not at all important; 3= neither important nor unimportant; 6=extremely important
Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
High School Players

Importance of Social Infrastructure

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree
Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
## COLLEGE PLAYERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Stayers</th>
<th>Leavers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rugby Identity</strong></td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Competence</strong></td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Constraints</th>
<th>How often a concern?</th>
<th>How important in decision to quit?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of injury</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovery time</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team takes too much time</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many other things to do</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor skills</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends don’t play</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant other doesn’t support</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost to play</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club not convenient</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much travel</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t fit in</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t enjoy off-field activities</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3Scale: 0=not at all important; 3= neither important nor unimportant; 6=extremely important
Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITIONED HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>HS to College</th>
<th>HS to Senior Club</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby Identity&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Competence&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Constraints</th>
<th>How often a concern?&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of injury</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovery time</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team takes too much time</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many other things to do</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor skills</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends don’t play</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant other doesn’t support</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to play</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club not convenient</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much travel</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t fit in</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t enjoy off-field activities</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup>Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree
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<sup>3</sup>Scale: 0=not at all important; 3= neither important nor unimportant; 6=extremely important

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
Importance of Social Infrastructure

- **Time w/rugby players**: strongly agree
- **Drinking**: neutral
- **Party Atmosphere**: neutral
- **Clubhouse**: neutral

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>CURRENT PLAYERS</th>
<th></th>
<th>LEAVERS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Club Only</td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Club Only</td>
<td>Career</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>0.71 1.11</td>
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</table>

1 Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree
2 Scale: 0=never; 1=rarely; 2=occasionally; 3=somewhat often; 4=often; 5=very often; 6=always
3 Scale: 0=not at all important; 3= neither important nor unimportant; 6=extremely important
Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITIONED COLLEGE PLAYERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>First Time Movers (CL-CB)</th>
<th>Career Movers (HS-CL-CB)</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Escape</td>
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<td>Rugby Identity(^1)</td>
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Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
SENIOR CLUB PLAYERS

Reasons for Leaving

- Injury: 46%
- Age: 18%
- Work/career: 16%
- Family: 11%
- Moved: 9%
- Time: 0.01%

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
Overall, there are four major perceived constraints that are consistent with every level:

- Fear of injury
- ‘Too many other things to do’
- ‘Team takes up too much time’
- Recovery time
Where do we see major differences between those who stay to play and those that leave?

- Players who stay are more likely to say their friends play
- At higher levels, ‘fear of injury’ is a bigger concern for those leaving than those staying
- ‘Cost to play’ is a bigger concern for those that stay than those that leave
- There are four perceived constraints (fear of injury, recovery time, team takes up too much time, too many other things to do) that tend to be larger for those that leave than those that stay; additionally, for women, clubs not being convenient and travel also tend to become concerns – particularly at the adult level

WHY DO WE PLAY? WHY DO WE STOP PLAYING?
GENERAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THOSE WHO PLAY AND THOSE WHO STOP PLAYING
CHALLENGES TO THE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND TRANSITION OF RUGBY PLAYERS
OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING, RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

- Traditional players who transition through the levels, and those that stop playing, sometimes have different preferences, motivations, and perceived constraints
- Players have different motivations and perceived constraints at different levels
- There are connectivity issues between levels
- Variation of club cultures
- The game is changing and some aren’t reacting
- We are forgetting, or failing to execute, the simple basics of recruiting
- Player development opportunities
- Physical preparedness and player welfare
OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING, RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ‘STAYERS’ AND ‘LEAVERS’

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
### OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING, RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEVELS

Example table, recovery time constraint and escape motivation

1. Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree
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Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>HS ‘Stayers’</th>
<th>HS ‘Leavers’</th>
<th>College ‘Stayers’</th>
<th>Senior Club (Club-Only)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Motivation¹</td>
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<td>How important in decision to quit?³</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recovery time</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING, RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

- Connectivity issues between levels
  - Partly an educational piece; 71.5% of senior clubs believe they make regular contact with high school clubs
- Variation of club cultures
- The game is changing and some aren’t reacting
  - Players look for opportunities afforded them at previous clubs
OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING, RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

**Current Players' Interest in Touch**

- **Interested**
  - Current males (club only): 40.9%
  - Current females (club only): 39.2%
  - Current males (career): 33.3%
  - Current females (career): 43.5%

- **Neutral**
  - Current males (club only): 19.4%
  - Current females (club only): 30.4%
  - Current males (career): 26.7%
  - Current females (career): 14.1%

- **Not Interested**
  - Current males (club only): 40.9%
  - Current females (club only): 30.3%
  - Current males (career): 40.1%
  - Current females (career): 42.4%

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
Leavers' Interest in Touch

OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING, RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING, RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

- Forgetting or failing to execute the basics of recruiting
- Player development opportunities
  - Playing time and opportunities
- Physical preparedness and player welfare
  - Age-grade differences and rest/recovery
OVERALL CHALLENGES FOR RUGBY IN THE UNITED STATES

- Injuries & safety concerns
- Reputation (drinking/sexist/rowdy)
- Lack of cooperation between levels
- Personnel
- Coaches (training)
- Referees (quantity and quality)
- Administrators
- Availability of facilities (fields & clubhouses)
- Other sports competing for players/sponsors/facilities
- Other life commitments
- Travel/time commitment required
- Lack of family/friend support
- Lack of visibility in the mainstream media
- Attitude of “old boys”
- Lack of competitive opportunities/structure
- Variance in commitment levels of player
- Lack of communication (especially at transitions)

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
OVERALL STRENGTHS OF RUGBY IN THE UNITED STATES

- Culture of belonging/social group/camaraderie
- Opportunities for all physique/skill levels
- Gender equal
- All ages/levels/commitment
- Adaptability of game type
- Low cost resources required / affordable
- Organization/championships/programs are in place nationally
- Can enter sport at anytime
- International game
- High level of fitness provided & transferable skills to other sports
- Accommodates multisport athletes
- Unique, novel sport in the US
- Attractive athlete image

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RUGBY IN THE UNITED STATES

- Rugby World Cups and the Olympics
- Parents spending too much on youth sport ($/time)
- Project Play initiative
- ADM/LTAD/physical literacy/appropriate development
- Other sports in same position
- Need to improve physical opportunities for youth/teams/adults
- Loss of personal social interaction
- For-profit sport clubs in most cities
- Municipal/State Youth Sport Summits
- Football is killing itself (concussions)
- International support – World Rugby
- People want to belong to groups
- For support
- For friendship
- Networking

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
USA Rugby has an overall retention issue, in that over 50% of registered members do not return to the organization the following year.

- An indeterminate percentage of this turnover is due to insurance requirements to participate in the United States (e.g. players must be registered to participate even once).

- Youth and Adult rugby players have different influences and experiences.

- Players rarely quit due to not liking rugby.

- Injuries and other life choices are the largest reasons players quit playing, often in combination with one another.

**IMPORTANT THEMES**
SUCCESES:

- Multi-side initiative at the senior club level
- Youth and high school minutes-played caps
- Cost is not as serious a concern as some think
- Many solutions are low-cost and/or not time-intensive to implement

OBSTACLES:

- Player welfare challenges (multi-match weekends; short windows between matches)
- Opportunities for non-collegiate adult athletes
- The ‘usual suspects’: Seasonality, Eligibility, Scheduling, Coaching/Admin availability
- Club density to reduce travel/cost, particularly for women
STRATEGIES FOR ATTRACTING / RECRUITING / RETAINING PLAYERS
FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING/RETAINING/TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

- Nail the basics
- Offer multiple divisions and/or competitive types of play
- Offer multiple types of play
- Foster an inclusive culture
- Spread out time commitments
- Assist with life transitions
STRATEGIES FOR ATTRACTING / RECRUITING / RETAINING PLAYERS

- Fundamental of recruiting/retaining/transitioning players
- Organizational structuring for fostering of recruitment and retention
- Retention of existing players
FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING / RETAINING / TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

NAIL THE BASICS

- Direct contact
  - Presence at matches, tournaments, trainings, etc.
- Low-cost and often-overlooked recruiting principles
  - Flyers, fairs, interest forms, etc.
- Need to end reliance on passive recruiting
- Need to stop only relying on ‘gatekeepers’
- Generally not advisable to play against those you’re recruiting
  - Sometimes successful; sometimes disastrous
  - Shouldn’t play across levels in many instances
• More divisions/types of play, more opportunities
  • Skill gap and physicality
• Transitioning players often look for club ‘like mine’
• For women, this interacts with density issues
• Success of multi-side initiative at senior club level
  • Over 15% of senior clubs run multiple sides competitively
• 7s more popular at youth levels; needs more offering at senior club level

FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING / RETAINING / TRANSITIONING PLAYERS
OFFER MULTIPLE DIVISIONS AND/OR COMPETITIVE TYPES OF PLAY
Clubs should engage in non-contact opportunities to the extent that is operationally possible
- Separation of skill levels
- Social / motley participation opportunities
Rugby is a ‘game for all’

Social infrastructure and sub-culture of rugby

Inclusive cultures have positive impact on life transitions

Differing time commitments

Don’t split up teams at training

‘Time spent with rugby players’ is very important

FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING / RETAINING / TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE
Players struggle with time commitments
  ▶ Especially those going through life transitions
Club operations should be spread out
Newer players shouldn’t be saddled with operations
Veteran players may have trouble believing lower time commitments are okay

FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING / RETAINING / TRANSITIONING PLAYERS
SPREAD OUT TIME COMMITMENTS
- Often takes 1-3 years to fully integrate into a club’s organization and culture
- Roles for players change over time
- Major life transitions affect player availability
  - Family, work, relocation, physical changes, aging, graduation, etc.
- Be mindful of players’ lives outside of rugby

FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING / RETAINING / TRANSITIONING PLAYERS
ASSIST WITH LIFE TRANSITIONS
▪ Understand what direct contact is
▪ Have an organizational plan for direct contact
  ▪ Short-term and long-term planning needed
  ▪ Opportunities to be in front of people
  ▪ Pitch strategy and pitch materials
  ▪ Opportunities for follow-up
  ▪ Volunteer plan

ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION
NAIL THE BASICS
» Involve former players and identify key influencers
  » Players enjoy spending time with other rugby players, and alumni networks are strong methods of recruiting
» Activate alumni in areas living outside of your location
» Offer low-time-commitment administrative and operational opportunities
» Have updated, modern, and current media platforms

ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION
NAIL THE BASICS
ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION

NAIL THE BASICS

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION

NAIL THE BASICS

Importance of Social Infrastructure for transitioning High School players

- clubhouse
- drinking
- party atmosphere
- time with rugby players

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION

NAIL THE BASICS

Recruitment into Club

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
- Partnership opportunities with clubs of the opposite sex
- Clubs from other sports and other community organizations
- ‘More like Madison’ – Madison United as a powerful example of cooperation
- Acknowledge partnerships in writing and communication
- Curtain raisers, joint social and community events, cross-club non-contact, sponsored workshops/camps, etc.
Mentorship of new players

Formal affiliations with organizations to assist with common areas of need

Operating mentality that life transitions are important part of individuals’ journeys

Check in on players with outside commitments
ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION
FORM PARTNERSHIPS TO ASSIST WITH LIFE TRANSITIONS

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

College Player Interest in Playing Again

Play next season

Play again

Current Uni only
Current U18+Uni
Former Uni only
Former U18+Uni
Uni Sampler

College Player Interest in Playing Again

College Player Interest in Playing Again

College Player Interest in Playing Again

College Player Interest in Playing Again
ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION
CREATE A DYNAMIC, MULTI-ROLE ORGANIZATION

- Create additional roles
  - Differing levels of time commitments
- Includes multiple opportunities for participation & support staff
- Low-commitment opportunities off the pitch
  - Scoreboard operators, defined training interactions, etc.
- Opportunities for coaching and officiating
Organizational Restructuring for the Fostering of Recruitment and Transition

Build a Financial Plan

- Identify what club should look like, and build a plan accordingly
- Don’t be afraid to seriously address costs related to player dues
  - Models must have a value proposition
- Don’t just ‘do enough to get by’
- Player ROI is part of fostering attachment
¬ Programs such as age-grade teams require cooperation between levels
¬ Maintain positive relationship with competition organizers
  ▶ Assists with scheduling of multi-side clubs
¬ Partnerships with schools and community/sports groups
  ▶ Activities leagues, intramurals depts., P.E. programs

ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION
PARTNER WITH OTHERS TO FOSTER MULTIPLE PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES
Injury and ‘fear of injury’ are major perceived constraints
Clubs should monitor participation and have periodization plan
Having trainers/doctors/etc. present at matches & trainings
Health assessments and screenings of players
Standards for rest at tournaments
Adherence to World Rugby player welfare guidelines
▶ Sell success off the field as much or more than success on it
▶ Celebrate non-rugby success
   ▶ GPA average, work accomplishments, etc.
▶ Philanthropic involvement
▶ Sell uniqueness of club and/or location
   ▶ Value of living in city, academic credentials of school, etc.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION
DON’T FORGET TO SELL YOURSELF; DEVELOP AND CELEBRATE A
POSITIVE RUGBY CULTURE
Increase value of participation

Make trainings meaningful
  - Don’t repeat the same drills repeatedly
  - Should be skill-acquisition-oriented

Reminder that players enjoy spending time with other rugby players

ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION
MAKING RUGBY EXPERIENCES MEANINGFUL
While it’s important to offer new opportunities to create stronger linkages and not lose those that ‘leave,’ it’s important to remember what those who stay value as well:

- 75% of ‘stayers’ prefer 15s over other formats
- Don’t organizationally branch out so recklessly that you forget your core
- New opportunities should not be a burden on top of core operations

**RETENTION OF EXISTING PLAYERS**

Recognize differences between existing players and new/transitioning players.
Proactively anticipate all trainings, matches, social events, and other activities prior to a season beginning

- Assists with ability to create low time-commitment operational opportunities
- Also assists players with lifestyles and outside time commitments
- Stick to the plan!

RETENTION OF EXISTING PLAYERS
CREATE AND MAINTAIN AN ACTIVE OPERATIONAL PLAN
- Identify transitional roles
- Identify players and members encountering typical transition points
- Be proactive in guiding members through their options
  - Focus on retention and filling an organizational need
  - Play to member interests. If someone enjoys lining the field, play to that interest – but don’t forget to keep them integrated socially!
- Identify transitional roles
- Identify players and members encountering typical transition points
- Be proactive in guiding members through their options
  - Focus on retention and filling an organizational need
  - Play to member interests. If someone enjoys lining the field, play to that interest – but don’t forget to keep them integrated socially!

RE T E N T I O N  O F  E X I S T I N G  P L A Y E R S
IDENTIFY NON-PLAYING AND/OR LESS TIME-CONSUMING ROLES
LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS
Nail down the basics of recruiting (interest forms, club fairs, flyers, direct contact)

Use existing players/personnel as influencers (multi-school)
  - find out where existing players come from; recruit there

Resources into coaching and education

Offer multiple types of play
  - non-competitive and competitive
    - 15s and 7s
    - non-contact

Offer multiple divisions of play

Active alumni engagement facilitates more roles for all

Focus on mastery of skills over wins & losses

Relentlessly promote rugby’s values and positive imagery of the game

Incorporate activities to socialize players into rugby values

LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

OVERALL THEMES AND SOLUTIONS
Physical presence at youth events
  - tournaments (RCTs, States)
  - training and matches
Non-contact rugby at P.E. and in local camps/organizations
Flyers:
  - recreation centers
  - schools
Strategies should focus on selling parents and faculty on benefits of playing

Actively work with student-athletes about grades and life choices; engage school and team regarding successes
Engage parents
  - key to enrollment and learning about sport and its subculture
Create an alumni/supporter culture
Host curtain-raisers for youth programs; do not play against youth programs
Actively ‘push’ players to college or senior club rugby

LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS
YOUTH AND HIGH SCHOOL
LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS
YOUTH AND HIGH SCHOOL

- Specific targeting to middle school athletic events and other HS athletic events, regardless of active rugby at those levels
- Take advantage of ‘captive audience’ that schools provide
  - Opportunities for athlete pools, areas to post flyers, etc.
- Family influence is far more important than friend influence at younger levels of rugby
“More than 53% of Youth Only players were recruited into rugby by family members, with 16.3% recruited by friends, 9.3% by coaches, and the rest by various others.”

“Few Movers agreed that they had family in the sport. In fact, Youth-to-Club and Youth-to-Uni Movers actively disagreed. Yet nearly half of Youth-to-HS Movers reported that family members were instrumental in their recruitment into rugby. This percentage decreases as the transitions become less traditional. For example, only 31% of Movers going from Youth to University claimed that family recruited them, and only 10% of Youth-to-Club Movers had family as their primary entry into the sport.”

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby
LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

COLLEGE

- Physical presence at HS events
  - tournaments (States, RCTs)
  - training and matches
- Non-contact rugby as part of intramurals/sports clubs
- Flyers:
  - student recreation area
  - dormitories
- Actively work with student-athletes about grades and life choices; engage school and team regarding successes (States, RCTs)
  - training and matches
- Strategies should focus on selling faculty, parents, and alumni on benefits of playing
- Engage friendship networks
- Create an alumni/supporter culture
- Host curtain-raisers for high schools; do not play against high schools
- Actively ‘push’ players to senior club rugby
- Facilitate assistance with life transition from HS to College
- Start a U20 team
  - critical to development of younger players
Initial Recruitment into College Rugby

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

COLLEGE
College is a key level to begin paying attention to life transitions

- Take advantage of long histories on campus (if they exist)
  - Alumni networks as well

- Lots of direct contact opportunities given the current size of HS rugby

- Consider adoption of U20 team

- College is a key source of linkage

LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

COLLEGE
Physical presence at Collegiate events
  - tournaments (Conf. POs; 7s)
  - training and matches
Non-contact rugby as part of local meet-up group/league
Flyers:
  - local gyms
  - local recreation centers
Strategies should focus on selling employers and families on benefits of playing
Actively work with players regarding normal life transitions in their 20s and 30s; celebrate successes as a club
Engage friendship networks

Create a supporter/old boys/old girls culture
Host curtain-raisers for colleges and high schools; do not play against colleges or high schools
Facilitate assistance with life transition from College to being a working professional
Start a U20 team
Use 7s as a pathway to connect with college players and their social networks during the summer Club 7s season
Create a family culture
Use media recruitment, which is more important than at other levels
Take advantage of shifting competition formats in lower levels
  - Summer 7s as key time to capture players transitioning levels, or within levels during the summer

Adoption of U20 programs

Facilitate life transitions

Create a community/family culture