



MAJOR LEAGUE RUGBY SEES SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN FIFTH SEASON

Upward Trajectory Continues for Highest Level of Rugby Competition in North America

BY THE NUMBERS: MAJOR LEAGUE RUGBY GROWTH



DALLAS (July 25, 2022) -- Major League Rugby (MLR) saw significant growth in its fifth season, continuing an upward trend since the league's inception in 2017. More fans are following and discovering the sport, as in-stadium attendance was up 40 percent while overall viewership on The Rugby Network (TRN) grew by 55 percent. Launched just 16 months ago, TRN now serves more than 100,000 subscribers, a growth metric of 144 percent from the beginning of the 2022 MLR season.

"The growth of Major League Rugby has been immense," said MLR Commissioner George Killebrew. "Finishing our 2022 season live on FOX at Red Bull Arena was the perfect showcase event to another successful year where we achieved strong growth in every key metric. We will continue to build on our success in 2023 and beyond. The 'Rise of Rugby' is literally taking shape in front of our eyes."

MLR prioritized the importance of community and spreading the mantra of "rugby is for everyone" in 2022. The league's social media platforms grew nearly 40 percent and the individual teams' social media followings continued to gain traction, amassing nearly 600,000 total followers. Along the way, the Dallas Jackals became MLR's newest expansion team and a new champion was crowned in Rugby New York in June.

In addition to the growth of the streaming focused Rugby network, after signing an exclusive linear broadcast deal with FOX/Fox Sports MLR saw significant increased viewership for games featured on Fox Sports 1.

Off the pitch, MLR was featured in some of the most prominent news outlets in the country, including *The Guardian*, *the New York Post*, and *Yahoo! Sports*. The league was covered nationally by some of the largest sports media websites including *Front Office Sports*, *Sports Business Journal*, *Barstool Sports*, and *SportsTechie*.

The rise of rugby coincided with the May announcement that the Rugby World Cup will come to the United States for the first time, with the men's event in 2031 and the women's tournament two years later.

With a focus on fan engagement and innovation, notable partnerships for the league in 2022 included:

PumpJack Dataworks

In February, MLR announced a partnership with PumpJack Dataworks, the world's leading fan data specialists, to develop a databank built entirely around fan engagement. This ground-breaking database allows MLR to strengthen the fan experience and provide outstanding value to fans across the country and globe by personalizing marketing offers

TAPPP

"The Rugby Network Pick & Go" was unveiled, a free game of skill for prizes that tests the rugby knowledge of viewers. The fan-focused game was introduced through a multi-year national partnership with TAPPP, a New York-based technology and marketing company, allowing fans to engage in live, on-screen gaming and betting transactions on TRN.

This summer, MLR named NuArca Labs, a trailblazing non-fungible token (NFT) platform, its official digital platform partner with a focus on digital trading cards. NuArca and MLR will launch an online digital trading card marketplace for the 2023 season where fans can purchase “player packs” and other digital experiences that they can collect and trade.

Prioritizing the Fan Experience

MLR continues to display an array of forward-thinking innovation as the league continues to grow and gain prominence. Innovative rule changes have been implemented to ensure matches move quickly to produce a compelling game presentation. Fans get live statistics and video feeds for all teams courtesy of an innovative partnership with Mobii Systems, which also ensures a TMO (video replay official) for every game.

Rugby Now, the U.S.-based parent company of The Rugby Shop UK, has partnered with MLR to offer fans a premium rugby ecommerce platform to enhance the ShopMLR.com retail experience, catering to all rugby apparel and equipment needs for players and fans.

Grassroots Efforts

MLR’s Grassroots Development Incentive (GDI) program continues to nurture future rugby players. Introduced in 2021, teams aggressively promoted rugby participation within their respective markets, solidifying local player pathways and building further community engagement. The GDI program provides additional salary cap for teams that invest in the long-term future of the game. Teams were encouraged to grow rugby youth participation, create a high school academy, and form a development academy. All teams were encouraged to start developmental academy teams that would serve as a pathway into MLR squads.

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About Major League Rugby:

Major League Rugby is a professional sports league in its fifth season and represents the highest level of rugby competition in North America. The League evolved from seven teams in 2018, to 13 teams in 2022, featuring 12 from the United States and one from Canada. Matches are televised on Fox Sports 1 and Fox Sports 2, among other national and local market platforms. Select matches are available to stream live in North America on The Rugby Network, and all matches are available to stream live on The Rugby Network for international fans. MLR prides itself in fostering intense and high-stakes competition, while bringing together a passionate community built on the values of Respect, Inclusivity, and Tradition. For more information about MLR, visit www.MajorLeague.Rugby.

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