



Major League Rugby Commissioner Killebrew Steps Down

DALLAS (February 24, 2023) -- Major League Rugby (MLR) announced today its League Commissioner, George Killebrew, is stepping down, after serving in the role since 2019. Under Killebrew's leadership, MLR has grown, recently adding Chicago for the 2023 season and the Miami Sharks announced to compete in 2024. In his post, Killebrew helped successfully lead the campaign to bring the 2031 Men's Rugby World Cup and the Women's Rugby World Cup to North America, setting the budding league up for unparalleled, mainstream growth in the years to come.

"Our collective accomplishments to pave the way for rugby's popularity in the United States have proven incredibly rewarding," said Killebrew. "Looking to replicate the advance of Major League Soccer in its ability to grow the sport in America, we've focused on youth athletics and growing rugby from the ground up. Our success in securing Rugby's World Cups gives us an eight-year runway to continue growing the game and its audiences, making rugby more of a household brand."

Nic Benson, former Deputy Commissioner, has stepped in as league CEO ahead of the 2023 season and will assume the responsibilities previously held by Killebrew. Benson was a key member of the team that developed and launched MLR. He spent four years as Deputy Commissioner before going on to serve as Chief Business Officer at Willow TV and COO for the Utah Warriors. Since the summer he has been in a board advisory role, working with Killebrew and the league office to lead strategic initiatives. His in-depth understanding of the league, media expertise, and knowledge of the professional rugby ecosystem will ensure a smooth transition and continued growth in 2023.

Under Killebrew's leadership the MLR entered into a national television contract with FOX Sports, launched the first-ever collegiate rugby draft for the league and developed its first live-streaming platform, The Rugby Network (TRN). The platform was recognized by the National Sports Award in the categories of "Best New Platform," "Best Platform" and won a silver medal for "Best Marketing of a New Platform."

Killebrew leaves the league in excellent position for continued growth. In-stadium attendance has doubled in recent years, with 75,000 new fans enjoying the action in person in 2022. TRN viewership has grown 144% year over year, league-wide sponsorships have increased by seven figures and FOX viewership spiked 62% in 2022.

"Since joining MLR, Killebrew has worked tirelessly to build a strong media presence, increase ticket sales and sponsorship revenues and foster rugby participation across North America," said Ryan Patterson, Chairman of the MLR Board of Directors. "We're incredibly grateful for his leadership and the runway he has skillfully created for rugby's future success as we continue to move forward."

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About Major League Rugby:

Major League Rugby is a professional sports league entering its sixth season that represents the highest level of rugby competition in North America. The League evolved from seven teams in 2018 to 12 teams in 2023, featuring 11 from the United States and one from Canada. Matches are televised on Fox Sports, 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 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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