



MAJOR LEAGUE RUGBY TEAMS UP WITH USA RUGBY AND USA YOUTH & HIGH SCHOOL RUGBY TO GROW THE GAME THROUGH THE RELAUNCH OF ROOKIE RUGBY AND ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS ACROSS AMERICA



DALLAS (April 3, 2023) – Major League Rugby announced a partnership with USA Rugby and USA Youth & High School Rugby (YHS) to relaunch the Rookie Rugby Program, a complete educational program allowing teachers to introduce rugby in physical education programs to North American youth for free.

Set to reach 50,000 schools by the 2031 Rugby World Cup, the Rookie Rugby program includes the creation of an integrated pathway beginning with an introduction to the game in school physical education courses, creating further interest to join afterschool flag rugby programs, leading to increased participation in local youth clubs.

Rookie Rugby has already launched in select markets across the US through a pilot program deployed in August 2021 through June 2022. The program involved eight states, and 175 schools, reaching over 27,000 students across America.

“The Rookie Rugby program is the most comprehensive commitment ever made in the US market to give kids a chance to learn about our great game. We could not do this without the dedication of MLR owners, USA Rugby, US Youth and High School Rugby, the participating State Youth Rugby Organizations (SYRO), and the thousands of youth club volunteers at the grassroots level” said MLR Director of Youth Rugby, Guy Hagen.

David Pool, President of USA Youth & High School Rugby commented “One of the key goals of the relaunch of Rookie Rugby is to increase the visibility of rugby to potential players and their families. We are aligned with SYRO’s across the country and the fantastic volunteer coaches, administrators and referees in providing mechanisms to capitalize on the interest created by the program to convert Rookie Rugby players to Club touch and contact players. These new players will contribute greatly to the growth of the game and development of rugby’s unique culture in America.”

Every Major League Rugby team is making a significant impact on future athletes through their individual pathway programs, starting with Rookie Rugby, developing through high school and senior academies, and eventually into MLR teams. These pathways provide the infrastructure and coaching necessary to develop high-performance athletes with the ultimate goal of representing their national team. With the expansion of the League to 12 teams, soon to be 13, this impact will only continue to multiply. In addition, Major League Rugby has advanced the growth of the collegiate game through support and partnerships with College Programs and the College Rugby

Association of America.

"Major League Rugby is committed to the growth of the game from the first time they are introduced to the game until they put on an Eagles kit and represent their country or put on the MLR jersey", said Nic Bensen, CEO of Major League Rugby. "We have a great game, and we will continue to share it across the US."

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.

About USA Rugby

Founded in 1975, USA Rugby is the national governing body for the sport of rugby in America, and a Full Sport Member of the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) and World Rugby. Currently headquartered in Glendale, Colorado, USA Rugby is charged with developing the game on all levels and has over 110,000 active members. USA Rugby oversees four national teams, multiple Junior National Teams and an emerging Olympic development pathway for elite athletes. For more information visit: <https://usa.rugby/>

About USA Youth & High School Rugby (YHS)

USA Youth & High School Rugby is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, an affiliate of USA Rugby, and the Sanctioned Governing Body for all youth rugby in the United States. Catered towards players aged 5-18, USA Youth & High School Rugby's key initiatives are to: provide a fun and safe environment for the advancement of rugby in the United States, develop well-rounded rugby community members both on and off the pitch, and be the conduit to connect the game at all levels to promote a lifelong love of the sport of rugby. For more information visit: <https://usayhsrugby.org/>

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