



USA RUGBY AND MAJOR LEAGUE RUGBY PARTNER TO ASSEMBLE PROFESSIONAL GAME ADVISORY BOARD

GLENDALE, CO (June 27, 2023) – As a key growth market and future Rugby World Cup host, the advancement of professional rugby in the United States continues to be a focus for USA Rugby and Major League Rugby. USA Rugby and Major League Rugby announced today the development of a Professional Game Advisory Board (PGAB), a two-party agreement to establish a framework for future collaboration. The creation of the Board is a fundamental step in further professionalizing American rugby in a collective effort.

Fully aligned between MLR and USA Rugby, the leadership group is critical if American rugby is to reach its potential during Rugby World Cup 2031 and beyond. The PGAB, a panel World Rugby will be invited to be a part of, will serve as an advisory group to represent and advise each organization as they work together to advance development pathways, improve the player experience, and create opportunities for USA qualified players in Major League Rugby.

“We have been in proactive workshops with MLR in recent months, including some input from World Rugby, where all parties are supportive in raising the standard and profile of the game through this important leadership group,” said USA Rugby CEO, Ross Young, “Alongside advisory of the professional game, the PGAB will also require a focus on investment at the youth level, ensuring there are cohesive pathways to the professional game.”

“Strategic alignment between our organizations is critical if we are going to drive growth for our game,” said Major League Rugby CEO, Nic Benson, “The PGAB is the culmination of extensive discussions and a critical first step as we work together towards our shared goals of a successful National Team and vibrant player pathways that benefit the community, MLR and USA Rugby alike.”

The USA Hawks program, launched in the spring of 2023 as a partnership between USA Rugby and Major League Rugby, marked the initial phase of the new collaboration. Major League Rugby provided funding as well as players for selection into the program. Those players were subsequently released back into their MLR teams at the conclusion of the season with up to eight games of additional international experience.

“When you look at the global rugby landscape, successful national teams are built on the base of vibrant, domestic professional leagues. USA Rugby and Major League Rugby have always had a strong working relationship, but this agreement is crucial for the future success of the Men’s Eagles,” said USA Rugby Chief Operating Officer, Johnathan Atkeison. “Working together to get the Hawks program up and running gave USA Rugby and MLR the opportunity to focus on developing an integrated performance plan. The goal is to create a system that not only supports the development of USA Rugby national team players, but also supports Major League Rugby by preparing more American players for the rigors of the professional environment. Establishing the program was one of the initial recommendations from the review of our high-performance structures that began in December. In the future, the PGAB will help us in operationalizing the remaining recommendations of that process.”

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