

MAJOR LEAGUE RUGBY

PRESS RELEASE



World Rugby Grants First-Ever Funding to U.S. Youth Rugby Initiative, Rookie Rugby, to Grow Game Ahead of 2031 Rugby World Cup



DALLAS (June 8, 2023) -- Funding by World Rugby to Imagine Rugby will support the Rookie Rugby program, a national educational program allowing teachers to introduce rugby in physical education programs to North American youth for free by covering costs for all Fall 2023 equipment needs, including Rugby 101 curriculum, 750 bag kits, and 6,000 rugby balls to youth nationwide.

Imagine Rugby, the umbrella organization administering Rookie Rugby, strives to make rugby available to North American youth by providing programs for young athletes to learn leadership development, mentorship, and the importance of healthy lifestyles through the power of sport.

World Rugby funds for the Rookie Rugby program will support the introduction of rugby to a quarter of a million North American youth this year, intending to create further interest in joining after-school flag rugby programs, leading to increased participation in local youth clubs.

David Pool, President of USA Youth and High School Rugby commented – “*Rookie Rugby is non-contact and a fun, safe way to get rugby balls in the hands of kids across the country. Our objective is to build the base of rugby players and have them fall in love with the game of rugby and its unique culture*”.

“One key strategy to unlocking rugby in the United States is to get the sport into our existing infrastructure. This funding allows for rugby to be incorporated into the PE curriculum at hundreds of schools across the country, thereby creating awareness and opening the door for the creation of new youth rugby clubs” said Guy Hagen, Director of Youth Development for Major League Rugby.

Major League Rugby relaunched the Rookie Rugby Program in partnership with USA Rugby and USA Youth & High School Rugby (YHS), and State Youth Rugby Organizations with the goal to increase Youth Rugby participation in North America to 1 million active youth by 2030 in support of the 2031 and 2033 World Cups in the United

States.

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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