



President's Report
2009 FRU Winter AGM
January 11th, FAU Boca Raton

Presidents review 2009 for AGM January 24 2010

Last January at the last AGM I set some priorities for the last 2 years of my Presidency Taking each one, I can update you on progress during the penultimate year.

1 Continue allocate the lions share of funding to the development of the collegiate and high school/youth game

You voted to continue this "investment" strategy and we have seen the benefits and returns of that decision.

At the collegiate level

- USF advanced to the last 8 in the country at Division 2 level.
- Lynn reemerged after several years and Ave Maria University played on a regular basis. We welcomed FIU back into the fold also.
- Our collegiate select side retained its place in the south championship with a 1 -1 record too improve its seed.
- Total player numbers grew by 10 % reflecting perhaps the arrival of High School players and the growth of the game which should translate into more club players in years to come.
- Our U 20 team emerged with a good combination of collegiate, club and school players

At the high school level

- We are able to finally welcome the high school body into membership of the Union and look forward to growing the game together
- We were acknowledged as a level 3 SBRO by USA rugby and attended the inaugural meeting of the 12 SBRO recognized states. Martin Gardner will explain the implications and opportunities created by this
- Sebastian River became the first varsity Girls rugby team in the country
- 6 of our girls played for the South in the National Territorial u 19 championships with one player selected as MVP for the tournament
- The select sides with the help of the Academy were able to play in a number of showcase games giving our players exposure to National selectors
- 3 of our players made the Eagles U 20 squads, one captained the national team at the world cup and 2 are part of the U 18 squad
- Two of our former high school players have gone to Life College to study and be part of their elite rugby program

At the youth level



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- Through the efforts of Mark van Trees (Tampa) and his son Tommy, the USF rugby teacher/coaches and with the financial and human assistance of USA Rugby we expanded the rookie rugby program to include the whole county of Hillsborough which is taking the flag rugby game to over 30,000 kids and hundreds of teachers. This made national news, and our model and the 'Florida approach' has now been used to start programs in Texas Colorado and shortly Nevada.
- We were able to showcase rookie rugby at the Uruguay Eagles game

Observation

The game is growing fast both in in numbers and quality, and as a Union we must ensure that young payers are given a platform to develop their talents as part of the "rugby continuum" that takes a players through HS to college and club and on to greater things. This means watching their progress, ensuring that playing opportunities are always available and coaching standards continue to add value and learning.

2 Raise the standards and number of coaches in the game at all levels leading to improved playing standards

This was a stellar year for progress towards our objective of having certified coaches at every college club and school. Two coaching courses were held at the Sebastian River School facility which they made available to the union for free for which we thank them. This resulted in over 40 certified coaches emerging at all levels of the game (tripling our numbers of certified coaches) and the Union was able to subsidize these programs.

3 Continue to recruit referees and ensure that the talent we have already is coached to higher levels

A further 20 budding referees attended and passed the excellent level 1 courses put on by FRRA. This translated into 10 active referees working their way up. To match the growth of the game and offset retirements we need this number of new referees every year!

3 of our referees attended the level 2 course in Atlanta, one of our youngest Scotty Lawrence has been recognized by the territorial panel and our own David Metcalf is now **the** National referee Assessor ! Congratulations to all and in particular Terry and Gerry for developing the programs and matching all our needs as a Union, we are very lucky to have such talent and dedication.

4 Fully embrace the youth/high school game and nurture it.

This is fully covered under section 1



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5 Create close links between clubs and schools and clubs and colleges, creating the rugby continuum and search for a way to incentivize clubs that are prepared to take on this role and reinvest in the game for its future.

Although there were some small steps made here particularly between clubs and colleges the club/school links I sense went nowhere. If we are to grow the game at high school level we really need to build bridges with more schools via adoption mentoring and coaching. Disappointingly the number of schools regressed for the first time for lack of coaches and mentors.

Where are the retired players who can put something back into the game?

I really would like us to explore, during 2010 for 2011 season, the possibility of reduced dues for those clubs who do reach out to schools and colleges and increased dues for those who just want to concentrate on club rugby. Contentious I know but we do need to grow the game.

5 Create more select opportunities at all levels for players self improvement

During 2010 we made progress on a collegiate, U 18 and U 20 level with the academy and through U 19 and U 23 with the women's games. I believe it is now time to set aside funds to provide select opportunities for the men and I will discuss a couple of opportunities at the AGM.

6 Always be promoting the ethos of the game in all we do.

7 GROW THE GAME

8 HAVE FUN

These are ever present values that should be embraced by all involved at all times.

Finally, some personal thanks and acknowledgements

- to Ken Simmons (UF) for standing up for VP Collegiate when Greg van der Griff's job took him out of Florida.



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- Kudos to Lisa, Martin, Frank, Jessica and Raelyn for all their tireless help and support at Board level and beyond and for putting up with me.
- To the distant but not forgotten James Gladen for continuing with the disciplinary chair
- To everyone who came to support the Uruguay Eagles game to put us on the map big time in national rugby terms
- To all coaches, referees and club officials without whom we would not have the game and the fun we have

Last but not least, I am in my last year as President as I shall be termed out. The search is on for my replacement so if you think you would like to dedicate some of your time to a great cause call me and let me or my colleagues on the Board know of your interest and we can let you know what is involved.

Yours in rugby
John Devonport