



Men's Report  
2010 FRU Winter AGM  
January 24<sup>th</sup>, UCF Orlando

My year-end report will summarize Senior Men activities and issues which have occurred from June 2009 through January 15, 2010.

### **USAR National Competition**

Prior to our Florida Cup competition in September, we ask each club to formally declare their entry into the USA Rugby National Club Championships. For the 2010 season we have started scheduling in November 2009 so that our teams could finish competition with enough time to advance out of Florida and begin the true "national competition". The entry to this competition is **voluntary**; however, if a club elects to participate, the club and its players are required to follow any and all of the rules and regulations found in the **USA RUGBY-SOUTH BY-LAWS**.

The primary requirement for all player-participants in the **National Competition** is to join USA Rugby, sign USA Rugby's Liability Waiver and acknowledge that you (the player) have \$100,000.00 in MEDICAL COVERAGE with no sport restrictions in the policy. To further clarify, CIPP remains a simple waiver from liability against USA Rugby and any person, place or thing involved in any happening which in any way leads to a nationally held Event where USAR is involved.

USA RUGBY SOUTH remains a "management" organization for USAR. All of its powers and duties can be found in their USARS Handbook.

### Games played in Florida

If there is a game of rugby played in the state of Florida and that game **does not** lead to a National Competition, the **ONLY** requirement presently stipulated in FRU Minutes is that any player wishing to play rugby must be enrolled in the USA Rugby CIPP program.

The language in the waiver has absolutely nothing in the way of protection for the FRU, its officers, club officers, club players, referees or spectators. Perhaps the Florida Rugby Union **should use a similar waiver** for non-USA Rugby sanctioned events?

With regard to **jurisdiction** and **authority** over non-USA Rugby sanctioned events, games, or behavior on or off the field by FRU members or any of their affiliates. There is a common misconception about which rugby organization has the authority to discipline rugby clubs, rugby players or even rugby referees.

As stated before, if any club volunteers to enter any USA Rugby sanctioned event, then without any exception - clubs, its players and referees are required to follow any and all of



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the competition rules and regulations found in the **USA RUGBY-SOUTH HANDBOOK and BY-LAWS.**

If however there is a **non-USA Rugby** sanctioned game of rugby being played in Florida, then the only rules and regulations that would apply would be those found in our FRU HANDBOOK.

As far as **competition** is concerned and until the FRU Handbook is completely up to date, the FRU has adopted appropriate **competition rules** found in the USAR South Handbook which could be used in Florida events, tournaments and games.

***There is no language found anywhere within any USA Rugby or USA Rugby South Handbook, that gives any rights or oversight privilege to USAR or USARS over LAU non-USAR sanctioned events, tournaments or games. Further, there is no language found mandating how an LAU administers its members for breaching Union voted minutes, handbook rules, referee policies & procedures or any other competition rules specifically pertaining to LAU events, tournaments or games.***

In my sole opinion and without legal consultation or confirmation, all of this translates to the following: "if you play rugby in Florida, and you breach any rule printed in our FRU Handbook, FRU Minutes or any competition policy transmitted to member clubs through the FRU Website, you can be disciplined OUTSIDE of any USAR or USARS jurisdiction."

Before disagreeing, it is probably a very good idea to actually read all rules and regulations published by USA Rugby, USA Rugby South ('07 edition only) and then ask yourself why either of the aforementioned organizations would be involved in **LAU Membership issues**? If the "issue" is not connected to a USAR sanctioned event tournament or game, why would they (USAR, USARS or anyone) involve themselves in Union Administration?

The position of a Discipline Chair is an appointed position made by the FRU President and is a requirement of all LAU's participating in National Competitions. All of his/her duties are outlined in the '07 USARS Handbook along with a guide describing sanctions a player could face should they breach any rule dealing with actions taken on or off the field in conjunction with a sanctioned event.

The basic job description and the duties of the **FRU Discipline Chair** can be found written in the FRU Handbook and apply to any and all Florida sanctioned games.



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When our General Meetings are held, we as Members discuss various matters which affect us all. When necessary, we vote on By Law or Handbook Rules that we believe will help rugby participants in Florida. *When voted on these new rules should be immediately incorporated into our Handbook!*

The Florida Membership has given Your Board the authority to establish playing and behavior standards not yet printed in our FRU Handbook. The **FRU HANDBOOK** is meant to be used in two basic ways.

When Florida Members are participating in any Nationally Sanctioned Event, they would first look to the USARS HANDBOOK for any and all COMPETITION issues; however, in the event an **action** occurs which is **not related to** National Competition, such as a friendly game or scrimmage, email

abuse, non-payment of dues or unresolved monetary debts or an action which brings a negative image to rugby, the FRU Handbook would be used to administer appropriate direction, penalties or suspensions.

When Florida Members are participating in any Nationally Sanctioned Event, they would first look to the USARS HANDBOOK for any and all COMPETITION issues. During a Nationally Sanctioned Event the FRU Handbook would be used for guidance or administration when:

- there is a friendly game or scrimmage being played
- there has been a complaint lodged against a player, club, referee or non-member
- there has been non-payment of dues
- there is an unresolved dispute
- an action has occurred which brings a negative image to rugby
- any Member breaches any of the FRU By Laws
- any Member breaches and of the FRU Handbook Rules

When Florida Members are participating in any Florida Sanctioned Game, Event or Tournament,

they would first look to the FRU Handbook for guidance in any and all competition issues, any and all administrative issues or any of the following actions:

- there is a friendly game or scrimmage being played
- there has been a complaint lodged against a player, club, referee or non-member
- there has been non-payment of dues
- there is an unresolved dispute



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**Cancellations, Re-scheduling, Withdrawals, Financial Commitment, Suspension of Benefits as a Member, Lost Expenses of Host Club**

During this past half of the year we had many changes to the Florida Cup Schedule. I think everyone started out with all good intentions; but as it is with life in general – things happen.

We had rescheduling, we had teams withdraw, we had smooth cancellations, last minute cancellations and we had fines levied against offending clubs.

The idea behind drafting rules regarding game-playing is avoid forfeitures. Forfeits occur several ways – playing a game but breaching a rule or simply not playing a game. Either way they forfeits never help grow our sport.

For those newer members who may be unfamiliar with game preparation and game cancellation, here is a brief situation for your consideration:

**Game Preparation:**

You're the point guard of your club. You have arranged and paid for the field for Saturday, you called and confirmed the ref and touch judges, you have assigned players/volunteers to line the field early Saturday morning, you make sure someone brings the jerseys and game ball and you have called everyone who was not at the last practice so that a second game could be played.

**Situation Occurs:**

On Friday evening around 9:00PM you receive a call from the "other team" and you are told that they are not coming because they can not field a full side. You try and make a game by offering players but they will not travel.

**Immediate Actions Needed:**



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Now **you** (or you have to get up Saturday at 8:00 and make phone calls) have to cancel the refs, stop the lining of the field if you can reach the players in time and now you have to make phone calls telling the 27 players that there is no game and **you have to explain why!**

Members Rights:

When a team changes a scheduled game there are provisions in our FRU Handbook as well as "voted on" minutes which have remedies in place to help stop teams from changing their Saturday obligations. While these rules help they do not prevent last minute changes as evidenced by the 10 or 11 broken obligations of this past season.

Is there any difference between a cancellation and a withdrawal? What happens when a team wants to re-schedule? What financial fallout occurs when there is a change to a scheduled game? If the FRU Treasurer levies a fine against a club and they can not or will not pay immediately, what happens? Can the FRU suspend games for non-payment?

How tight are we going to make the rules in our handbook and how are we going to enforce them?

**If a club fails to meet any obligations found written in the FRU By-Laws or the FRU Handbook, they are considered "a club not in good standing".** It is that simple.

A club not in good standing can have all of its playing privileges suspended and in severe cases that club can be removed from the FRU membership.

### **FINANCIAL COMMITMENT BY MEMBER CLUBS**

The Florida Rugby Union has as its membership, member clubs which have very diverse management styles and individual members who are strictly volunteers. This presents many issues for our Union when mistakes happen – namely problems with "money obligations". At the present time there are no minimum standards for the management of member clubs. The only requirement asked of members is that they pay their dues when asked for and that members present a positive

image of rugby and grow the sport. A very simple request but with this request member clubs need to commit to games, dues and **remedies**.



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If a club enters the National Competition in January they must commit to not only “playing the games” but they must commit financially to the possibility of travel outside of Florida. Simply stating when the time comes that “we can not make the travel commitment” is unacceptable and if enforced, USARS can impose fines on the Florida Rugby Union for this schedule breach. Before you “enter the race” be sure you can finish!

### **Member Club Obligations**

As with most businesses when there is a personnel change it takes time before the new employees have their emails and telephone contacts advised of their company. **The Florida Membership is required to have up to date information provided to the FRU Administration at all times.** Several times this past season there were “debates” initiated because club officers “didn’t know”. Again, if your club has a website please be sure it is kept up to date at all times. If your club does not have a website you are required to notify our FRU Secretary so that your club info appears on the FRU Website.

### **Game Scheduling**

One of the members suggested that the FRU look into **buying a scheduling software package** that can be used year to year for the scheduling of games. The suggestion was made because there were some redundant back to back games which could have been spread out over the season a little better. Again, each season your volunteers do the best they can to accommodate all concerned so if someone has such a software package, let’s see it perform and I am sure it can be phased into our program with little difficulty.

### **The Administering of FRU Rules and Regulations**

I would assume there will be some very positive announcements to be made at this meeting that will increase membership, add revenue to the Union and create tremendous opportunities for our membership.

**The success or not of these different programs depends on the unyielding commitment from our Membership to foster the growth of rugby, promote a positive image of rugby at all times and participate in Florida events, tournaments and competitions.**

Member clubs are free to play rugby in Florida and hold certain membership statuses depending on their commitments. Being considered as a Full Member “in good standing” carries with it a plethora of Member Obligations found in the FRU Handbook.



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**In Conclusion**

The race out of Florida has just begun with Boca and Miami in a close race in Men's D-I, Gainesville and Krewe very close in D-II and Krewe's second side holds the lead in D-III. Best of luck to all!

As more and more youngsters begin to play rugby, our Union grows proportionately with successful programs and events. With this added growth and revenue there will be greater responsibility placed upon all of us to view the FRU as a BUSINESS ENTITY which, if used properly, can yield high revenues to anyone who chooses to participate in our success.

*Frank Williams*