Recruit and Retain Study
Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

Report Submitted to:

    USA Rugby
    World Rugby

Report Submitted by:

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Introduction

Gaining possession, retaining control and moving forward are key elements in a rugby match. They are also critical when it comes to growing the sport of rugby in the US and throughout the world. One of the top priorities of USA Rugby is to "to grow and develop the game of rugby at all levels across the USA." To this end USA Rugby has been vigorously developing programs from the youth to elite levels that make participation in the game attractive and accessible to more and more players and fans. Programs such as the award-winning "Rookie Rugby" and "Try on Rugby" have introduced tens of thousands of young boys and girls into the sport. Enhanced programs and policies at the youth, college and senior levels have provided more and more opportunities for players to continue playing and participating for many years. This report is the next step in the evolution of those efforts in that it seeks to determine how we can improve those programs, create new ones and increase the pace of the growth of the sport in the USA.

In 2014 USA Rugby was making great strides in attracting new players to the game at the youth level. As a result of a dedicated Youth Rugby department and the Rookie Rugby initiative begun several years earlier, thousands of young people were trying the game and participating on teams in leagues throughout the country. The interesting point was that this growth at the youth level was not being translated into similar explosive growth at the college and senior levels. Although more participants were going in the pipeline at the youth level, they obviously weren't continuing on into the college ranks or senior game. For some reason there was a "leak" somewhere in the pipeline where players were dropping out and leaving the game. Cursory examinations of the membership data indicated that only about 7% of high school players continued on to play college or club rugby. All of the effort and resources being spent at the youth and high school level were not resulting in the respective increase in growth at the following levels.

In order to address this problem USA Rugby contacted the International Rugby Board, IRB (now World Rugby) in April of 2014 with a proposal to determine what was really happening to players as they progressed through the development system. They sought to find out why they weren't continuing playing and what steps and programs could be implemented to improve the retention of players, especially as the transitioned from youth/high school to college and club programs. As noted by USA Rugby CEO Nigel Melville, "If we cannot address the issue, development will merely become a conveyor process, a kid jumps on and then jumps off…"

The IRB agreed with this idea and saw the merit of undertaking a comprehensive academic research based study to address this "retention" problem. The findings of this report although focused on the USA, were seen as having beneficial effects on other new and growing rugby unions throughout the world. In December of 2014, USA Rugby, with the support of World Rugby commissioned the firm Sport Development Concepts LLC, to undertake "The Recruit and Retain Study." Sport Development Concepts LLC,

retained the research team at the Sport Development Lab from the Department of Recreation, Sport and Recreation, at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana to assist in the study.

The stated objective of the study was to:
"Develop strategies, tools, materials and pilot programs that will enable USA Rugby to recruit and retain more players in the critical high school to college to club age ranges"
The study began in January, 2015 and was divided into 4 stages:

Stage 1 – Project Initiation:
Included the organization of the study team and responsibilities, detailed budgeting and timeline.
The membership data was collected and organized in order to allow for in depth analysis. Members were identified to take part in the survey and interview portions of the research.

Stage 2 – Primary Market Research
Survey and interview questions were developed and approved. Surveys were sent out and the results compiled. Phone and in-person interviews with past and present members were conducted and coded. Interviews were done with Geographic Union leaders and the results assembled.

Stage 3 - Key Participation Factors Analysis
Survey and interview results were analyzed and key factors were identified. Results were quantified and graphed. The expert panel was organized and a two-day meeting held to review the data results and get additional input and understanding of the problems and potential solutions. Presentations and reports on research methodology and the initial results were provided to USA Rugby Congress and World Rugby.

Stage 4 – Pilot Program Creation and Launch
A comprehensive literature review was completed and was included in the preparation of the final report. The final report contains all the information collected in the data collection, an in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis of that data and recommendations on the development of future programs and policies. Based on the analysis and feedback from USA Rugby and World Rugby, six potential pilot programs were developed and provided for review. Two pilots were selected and the implementation process for them was implemented including the assembly of required resources, the selection and approval of participating clubs and geographic unions, and the determination of the evaluation methods to be used.

The value of the study will be seen on two fronts. First is the actual results that the implementation of the pilot programs, policies and resources. The evaluation of their effectiveness will give USA Rugby and World Rugby valuable insight on how to improve the retention of players as they progress through the development pipeline and bridge the transitions that occur. The second major impact the study will have is in demonstrating how such an extensive study can be replicated and the methodology used in other national ruby unions. It is interesting to note that when other national sports

organizations were contacted and asked if they had conducted similar studies they were amazed at the scope of what we were doing, as well as the commitment on behalf of USA Rugby and World Rugby to address this issue. The following report represents not only an extremely impressive level and degree of expert analysis and sport development insight, but also just a lot of "hard work" on behalf of the study team, USA Rugby and World Rugby. We believe that the result of this report and its findings will have long-term benefits to the game of rugby in the USA and throughout the world.

BACKGROUND and LITERATURE REVIEW

The study that follows is built from models of sport development that envision sport participation as a combination of processes (Green, 2005). These are: recruitment into the sport, retention of participants in the sport, and transitions among levels and/or organizations during one's time in the sport. Recruitment, retention, and transitions each rely on processes of socialization through which participants learn and come to value the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that are inherent in the sport and the particular organization and level in which they are participating.

The following study of rugby players is the most comprehensive ever undertaken to address matters of recruitment, retention, and transition. These three aspects have not previously been studied together, and have not been studied in large representative samples, as they are here. Nevertheless, there has been substantial research on particular facets of the process. That research is reviewed here to elucidate the framework that guides this study. The following review considers each facet – recruitment, retention, and transition – in turn. The effect of constraints and gender are also given separate consideration, as there is substantial research demonstrating their importance for understanding sport participation.

The review that follows indicates the variables that have been found to be most important when examining recruitment, retention, and transition. It describes the conceptual underpinnings for measures used here. It thereby provides a framework for interpreting effects and between-group differences identified in this study.

Recruitment and Socialization

Recruitment into a sport is the first step toward socialization into that sport. Recruitment is rarely self-initiated, but is instead driven by people (Nixon, 1993) – family, friends, teachers, and/or coaches. At young ages, parents play a pivotal role in recruitment and socialization (Woolger & Power, 1993). Although fathers typically become more involved in their children's sport as children age, mothers most often make the initial decision to enroll young children in sport programs (Howard & Madrigal, 1990). Parental encouragement during childhood can have downstream effects as it enhances the likelihood that the child will later participate as an adult, particularly if the adult athlete's spouse is supportive (Sprietzer & Snyder, 1976). Teachers and coaches can also have a downstream effect on adults (Deflandre, Lorant, & Falgairette, 2004). Although the effect of friends becomes elevated by adolescence, parents continue to play a central role in recruitment and socialization throughout adolescence (Garcia, 2015), particularly when they help their children and adolescents to learn about a sport and its subculture – a matter that has become increasingly important in recent years (Wheeler & Green, 2014). Siblings, particularly older brothers, can also affect recruitment and socialization of both males and females if their participation in sport makes them a role model to younger siblings or if they help their sibling learn the sport (Blazo, Czech, Carson, & Dees, 2014).

Although family members typically play vital roles in sport recruitment and socialization, particularly among children and adolescents, friends become more important in adolescence and beyond. Friends play a role in recruitment as they can introduce each other to sports with which they are otherwise unfamiliar (Lai, 1999). Friends also play a role in sport socialization and consequent satisfaction with the sport experience, particularly when they play the sport and when they promote a climate that values mastery of sport skills (Papaioannou, Ampatzoglou, Kalogiannis, & Sagovits, 2008). Peers foster an attractive climate in the sport organization when a focus on mastery is complemented by a sense of cooperation (Albert, 1991) and community (Jones, 2011) among participants.

The impact of peers and coaches becomes elevated because they can affect the degree to which the participant feels sufficiently competent to begin and to participate (Horn, 2015). Among young people, an orientation on improving sport skills, rather than beating the competition, fosters a perception of competence, which enhance the sport's attractiveness and the participant's engagement with processes of socialization into it (Dudley, Okely, Pearson, & Peat, 2010; McCarthy, Jones, & Clark-Carter, 2008). A general sense of athletic competence also encourages young athletes to try new sports (Butcher, Sallis, McKenzie, & Alcaraz, 2001). The effects can be long-lived as they ultimately affect the participant's general sense of sport competence, which has a demonstrable impact on the likelihood that they will take-up a sport in adulthood (Spreitzer & Snyder, 1976). Indeed, a core source of satisfaction for those who enter or re-enter sport in middle-to-late of adulthood is the realization that they can (still) do it (Diongi, Baker, & Horton, 2011).

Socialization into sport is a learning process. It requires a degree of commitment even at the outset. Commitment is created and sustained through the social interactions obtained with teammates and coaches and the perceived competence that is engendered (Stevenson, 1990). If the commitment is sustained, identification with the sport and its subculture is fostered (Donnelly & Young, 1988).

Although research has demonstrated repeatedly that recruitment and socialization are social processes, it is commonly held that the individual must be motivated to begin and then commit. As the research reviewed so far demonstrates, the learning and mastery that are intrinsic to well-designed programs are vital for recruitment and commitment. Effective sport socialization is a process during which learning about a sport and mastering its skills come to be valued. Research suggests two other motives that often become manifest: escape from everyday life and appreciation of opportunities to socialize with others who share an identification with the subculture (Funk, Toohey, & Bruun, 2007; Kruger, Saayman, & Ellis, 2011). Although the profile these four motives – learning, mastery, socializing, and escape – may vary among participants, the higher each is, the more highly motivated the participant has become.

Retention and Exit

Although early socialization into a sport is essential for subsequent retention, it is not sufficient in-and-of itself. The retention of athletes is multifaceted. Continued and ongoing socialization into the sport through family, friends, and coaches is essential, as the sport experience remains one that if fundamentally social. Among young athletes, parents and siblings can help sustain participation by providing practical support for ongoing participation, serving as role models, and by helping young athletes interpret their experiences in the sport (Dixon, Warner, & Bruening, 2008). Indeed, during childhood and adolescence, families can help to establish attitudes, values, and beliefs that sustain participation into adulthood (Haycock & Smith, 2014).

The children, spouses, and romantic partners of adults also play a role in whether athletes continue or discontinue participation, although the effects can be mixed. Adult participation is enhanced when children and spouses support an adult family member's participation – an effect that is furthered if the adult participant trains with children and/or their spouse (Dionigi, Fraser-Thomas, & Logan, 2012). Conversely, it is difficult to sustain participation when it is not supported by the family, and particularly when it conflicts with the demands of family or a romantic partner (Jowett & Cramer, 2012).

Friends become increasingly important as the participant remains in sport. Dropouts can be distinguished from participants of the same age and geographic location on the basis of whether or not they have friends who are also competing in the same sport (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2008). Having friends in the sport helps to sustain participation. Indeed, making and building friendships is a core reason that adult recreational (Dong, Zhang, Choe, & Pugh, 2013) and elite (Migliaccio & Berg, 2007) athletes continue to participate. The effect of friendships on athlete retention is amplified and sustained when the club, team, or league fosters a sense of community among athletes (Chalip, Lin, Green, & Dixon, 2013; Warner, Dixon, & Chalip, 2012).

The community that is the club, team, and/or league plays a vital role in retention through its effects on identity (Wheaton, 2000). As a consequence, the "athlete" identity becomes stronger as athletes move from childhood to adolescence and then into adulthood, but it declines rapidly if they discontinue sport participation (Houle, Brewer, & Kluck, 2010). Similarly, among older adults who take up a sport and remain in it, the club, team, and/or league provide the necessary social interaction through which their identity as an athlete is forged (Stevenson, 2002). As athletes specialize in a particular sport, their identity becomes tied to that sport and its distinctive subculture (Chen, Snyder, & Magner, 2010). Forging a sport-based identify is important because the stronger that identity, the more fully the athlete will engage with the sport through training, competing, and socializing (Hagiwara & Isogai, 2014), and the less attractive it is to discontinue (Warriner & Lavallee, 2008).

Nevertheless, the effect of identity is not absolute. Athletes and non-athletes have multiple identities that are associated with their other roles, such as worker, family member, friend, and/or community resident. The expectations and required time and energy for those roles can conflict with expectations and requirements for their role as an athlete. Consequently, remaining an athlete, especially during adulthood, requires the

participant to negotiate conflicts among disparate roles (Jun & Kyle, 2011), and a failure to do so can cause the athlete to re-evaluate the mix of identities so that it becomes easier to give-up the athlete identity and leave the sport (Stier, 2007). Taken together, the work on athlete identity demonstrates the value of helping participants come to identify with the sport and its subculture, and to negotiate their sport identity with those outside of sport.

Retention and identity also depend on the degree to which the participant feels capable. Dropout is significantly predicted by the participant's self-perceived competence as a player (Feltz & Petichkoff, 1983). Low self-perceived competence undermines enjoyment, which leads to a loss of commitment (Scanlan, Russell, Magyar, & Scanlan, 2009) that ultimately engenders dropout (Guillet et al., 2002). Conversely, higher perceived competence is associated with higher levels of enjoyment and an elevated sense that participating is a satisfying experience (Boiché & Sarrazin, 2009), which then fosters commitment (Weiss & Weiss, 2007) and enduring involvement in the sport (Green & Chalip, 1997).

Once again, the social climate of the sport program plays a pivotal role in the degree to which participants develop positive perceptions of their competence. Sport skills develop through effective coaching and ongoing practice. A social climate that is focused on mastery, rather than simply competition and victories, nurtures perceived competence and a consequent sense of enjoyment (McCarthy, Jones, & Clark-Carter, 2008). However, mastery-driven climates are challenging to maintain because the contingencies associated with competition can shift the focus to the short-term competitive victories rather than long-term athlete development (Le Bars, Gernigon, & Ninot, 2009). When that occurs, athletes whose skills are earlier in development will perceive their competency less favorably than their more well-skilled counterparts, and will therefore be more likely to quit. In that instance, it become challenging, if not impossible, to retain newer recruits or those whose skills are developing less quickly than those of their peers. If retention is a goal, then retaining a focus on mastery becomes an ongoing challenge.

The core motives for participation become evident from the review so far. Socializing with others in the subculture, learning about it, and mastering the skills associated with it are each entailed (also see Thedin Jakobsson, 2014). Since the sport world is a place outside of everyday life, it can also be a venue for escape, which becomes an additional motive for ongoing participation (Green & Chalip, 1998; Kerr & Houge Mackenzie, 2012). Thus, social motivation, mastery motivation, intellectual motivation, and escape motivation can each undergird ongoing participation, especially if those motives are being served by the sport organization. Since the profiles of different participants can vary (Kruger, Saayman, & Ellis, 2011), retention is served to the degree that each of those motives is accommodated by program design and delivery, as so doing provides for differences in the degree to which participants value each of the potential motives.

Sport experiences are not merely social; nor are they driven simply by the motives, identities, and perceived competencies of participants. Sport requires tangible support.

Social events, equipment, and competitions must also be provided. These can also affect participant satisfaction and ongoing commitment (Fine, 1989).

Transition

If they are to remain in a sport, athletes typically find it necessary to transition to new settings as they age. This occurs as their skills improve, when they move to live in a new community, when they choose to leave recreational competition to engage in intensive training and competition, or when they leave intensive participation but choose to participate recreationally. Transition points are particularly challenging because they require a new adjustment by the athlete. It is not unlike being recruited into a new setting and then being re-socialized in order to fit into it. Transitions are where athletes are most likely to be lost from the sport, because athletes either choose not to undertake the transition (Ralbovsky, 1974) or because they cannot make the adjustment (Green, 2005). The adjustment to a new level or setting in the sport requires the athlete to cope with new demands for training, competition, social interactions, and lifestyle (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007). European research over a five year period find that, on average, only 17% of elite junior athletes successfully transition to senior levels in their sport (Vanden Auweele et al., 2004).

The majority of research has focused on adjustments to the transition out of sport, although there is increasing interest in transitions within sport. There have been a number of models that consider the lifespan of athletes, and that divide their development into multiple stages having to do with (1) initiation, (2) development, (3) mastery, and (4) discontinuation (e.g., Wylleman & Reints, 2010). Initiation refers to recruitment into the sport, and development refers to socialization and commitment into the sport. The transition to mastery has been of particular concern to researchers, because it has been seen to be the most challenging and the one at which there is the greatest loss of athletes, as the European research cited above has demonstrated. Retrospective studies of athletes and former athletes find that they found the transition to be stressful due to the greater demands, the need to adapt to a new setting, reformulation of their sport identity, and the need to accommodate their personal lives to the intensified demands of their new sport setting (Bruner, Munroe-Chandler, & Spink, 2008; Debois, Ledon, & Wylleman, 2015; Pummell, Harwood, & Lavallee, 2008; Stambulova, 2009). This work finds that it takes from one to three years to make a successful transition, and that successful transition is associated with social support from family, friends, teammates, and coaches. As a result, there has been some interest in designing psychological interventions to assist athletes through the transition process (Larsen, Henriksen, Alfermann, & Christensen, 2014). Interventions have focused on the individual rather than the social world of the athlete, despite the significance of social support and socialization in the process. The efficacy of Interventions remains to be fully evaluated.

The shift from high school to university is considered particularly challenging because it is associated with new personal challenges, as well as the challenge of adapting to a new sport setting. Successful transition to the new sport setting is associated with positive support from teammates (Falls & Wilson, 2013) accompanied by strong perceived

competence and a sense that there are good personal benefits for participating (Dyck, Bourdeaudhuij, Deliens, & Deforche, 2015). Again, the effects of the social environment on the athlete's adaptation is clear. This seems to be particularly true when athletes transition to new national settings, as successful transition requires not merely that they adapt to the new cultural setting, but also that they build a transnational social network (Agergaard & Ryba, 2014). It has been argued that transitions of this type will benefit from interventions designed to aid the transition process (Richardson, Littlewood, Nesti, & Benstead, 2012). Again, however, suitable interventions have not yet been formulated, implemented, or tested.

Constraints

As the review so far demonstrates the psychological, social, and workaday world of the athlete play significant roles in recruitment, retention, and transition of athletes. When those elements are facilitative, their effects can be positive. But when those elements are not, the effects may be less so.

In the early stages of work on these matters, negative psychological, social, and/or workaday aspects of the athlete's world were conceived as barriers. However, a great deal of work has found that these are not barriers because they do not necessarily determine whether or not people participate. Rather, they are better understood as constraints because they are challenges to be negotiated. (In this realm of research, constraints are examined with reference to the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural worlds of participants. This is a different use of the word "constraints" than is sometimes found in the coaching literature where it refers to ways that training tasks or modified game environments are "constrained" in order to elicit practice of particular sport skills.) Whether or not an intrapersonal, interpersonal, or structural constraint affects participation depends on whether or not it can be negotiated by the participant (Jackson, 2005). Thus, the challenge is not to remove barriers; rather, it is to help athletes negotiate the constraints that they face.

To do so requires some understanding of what those constraints may be. Social constraints are the demands and expectations of family, friends, and colleagues. The Sport Commitment Model, which was introduced over twenty years ago, posited social constraints as a potentially limiting factor on sport commitment (Scanlan et al., 1993). Consequently, there has been substantial work in sport psychology demonstrating that social constraints can affect sport commitment (e.g., Chu & Wang, 2012; Scanlan, Russell, Beals, & Scanlan, 2003; Weiss, 2015; Young & Medic, 2011). That work has not examined the ways that athletes successfully (or unsuccessfully) negotiate those constraints. In fact, social constraints shift across the lifespan, thus requiring athletes to find new ways to negotiate those constraints as new life challenges emerge (McQuarrie & Jackson, 1996).

One particular challenge is that social constraints are often accompanied by structural constraints (e.g., costs, demands on time, other things to do, requisite travel and commuting to participate, and the convenience and quality of opportunities to participate)

and intrapersonal constraints (e.g., identity, injury, low perceived competence). These also have an effect. Structural constraints may be more readily negotiated than social or intrapersonal constraints (Crane & Temple, 2015), although costs and transportation seem to be the most difficult structural constraints to negotiate (Backman, 1991; Haycock & Smith, 2014). Social and structural constraints intertwine particularly when work commitments interfere with training (Hicks, Basu, & Sappy, 2011) and when the politics of the sport take time or energy away from participation (Lavallee, Grove, & Gordono, 1997).

Intrapersonal factors like perceived competence have a social component (Horn, 2015). Similarly, competing demands can cause the sport identity to clash with identities associated with family, community, other activities, or work/school (Jun & Kyle, 2011). In the case of injury, constraints vary with severity, as their effect depends, in part, on the athlete's consequent time lost from the sport and concerns about potential future injury (Arden, Webster, Taylor, & Feller, 2011; Covassin et al., 2015). Social conditions may help athletes to negotiate these constraints if they are provided support that reduces their concerns about time lost and possible future injury (Podlog, Dimmock, & Miller, 2011).

Gender

Research consistently finds differences between male and female athletes and the social conditions of their participation (Appleby & Foster, 2013). Historically, women have had fewer opportunities to play sport, and have had to overcome substantial constraints to do so. Those constraints include fewer opportunities to play, stereotypes that deem sport to be unfeminine, and consequent gender-role socialization that is inconsistent with being an athlete.

Differences between male and female athletes are particularly pronounced in contact sports, as these are most commonly deemed unfeminine. Female athletes may find this to be an attraction to a contact sport, because it allows them to engage in behaviors that would be considered unfeminine in other contexts (Green & Chalip, 1998), but they also find it necessary to negotiate the negative reactions their participation elicits from people outside the sport (Migliaccio & Berg, 2007). Further, women who deem particular sport skills to be inconsistent with their gender also find it harder to learn those skills than do women who do not deem those skills to be inconsistent with their gender (Heidrich & Chiviacowsky, 2015). These findings suggest that some female participants in rugby may be attracted by its macho character, but may also benefit from social environments where female rugby players celebrate their identities as rugby players with each other, and where rugby skills are modeled by other women during training.

Implications for This Study

The foregoing review of the literature notes a substantial number of variables that can affect recruitment, retention, and transition. Among those are identity, commitment, satisfaction, perceived competence, sense of community, social ties to the sport, the sport organization's' social infrastructure, and personal sense of fit with the sport's subculture.

There are also multiple motives in the forms of intellectual motivation, mastery motivation, social motivation, and escape motivation. Constraints that are intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural need to be identified. Finally, gender differences need to be considered. All of these are built into the study that follows, and the interpretation of their meaning and significance is informed by the research reviewed.

METHOD

MEMBER DATABASE ANALYSIS

Initial data were provided in the form of eight USA Rugby membership databases from 2005 through 2012. Data from the databases were first combined into a single data set. The initial data set consisted of 326,360 data lines, each representing a player active in a single year. A player active in 2005, 2006, and 2007, for example, would be represented by three distinct lines of data. These data were next condensed such that each line represented a unique player's playing history. In this way, a single line now included the years that the player was a member of USA Rugby, as well as the division in which the player competed in each year (i.e., youth, university, club). It is important to note that the division codes for youth and high school were not consistent throughout all eight years. Consequently, all under 18 play was labeled, 'youth' in this dataset. Next, data were partitioned by transition. Three transition types were identified: (1) Stayers (players that stayed within their division from one year to the next); (2) Leavers (players that played in a year, but did not play the next year); and (3) Movers (players that moved from one division to the next). These transitions were identified on a year-to-year basis. Table 1 shows the percentage of players transitioning each year by transition type.

Table 1: Year-by-Year Transitions

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	AVG
Youth Stay	39.52%	42.12%	37.33%	39.05%	38.72%	40.39%	41.16%	39.83%
Youth to Uni	4.01%	2.70%	3.65%	4.54%	4.39%	4.12%	4.15%	4.01%
Youth to Club	1.30%	0.89%	1.17%	1.10%	1.15%	1.22%	1.16%	1.15%
Youth Leave	55.17%	54.3%	57.85%	55.31%	55.73%	54.27%	53.52%	55.01%
YOUTH	17,297	19,510	21,699	25,138	28,268	32,002	36,549	180,463
Uni Stay	48.97%	44.00%	38.65%	45.52%	43.65%	43.03%	43.43%	43.89%
Uni to Club	3.05%	2.61%	4.23%	5.69%	4.59%	5.19%	4.40%	4.25%
Uni Leave	47.97%	53.39%	57.12%	63.67%	51.76%	51.78%	52.17%	53.98%
UNI	24852	25653	17983	22895	28366	30487	31847	182,083
Club Stay	57.83%	53.62%	48.61%	57.20%	57.25%	56.38%	56.52%	55.34%
Club Leave	42.17%	46.38%	51.39%	42.80%	42.75%	43.62%	43.48%	44.66%
CLUB	19118	20101	17266	18231	21468	23304	24616	144,104

Communication and data collection were limited to individuals with email addresses included in the member database. The initial pool of respondents with active email addresses consisted of 44,852 individuals. The vast majority of these players had stopped playing at some point between 2005 and 2012. Three thousand four hundred and ninety-one players in the database had successfully transitioned from one level to another.

PLAYER SURVEY

Measures

The survey consisted of three sections. The first measured factors know to affect athlete retention, the second measured aspects of respondents' rugby careers, and the third collected demographic information. Each is described in the following sections. Active players responded to questions in the present tense, while Leavers responded to similar questions using the past tense. All survey items appear in Appendix D.

Factors Known to Affect Athlete Retention
This section measured eleven variables known to affect athlete retention.

Perceived competence is a measure of the athlete's perceptions of their own competence as a rugby player. It is a composite measure taken as an average of the athlete's perceptions of how good they think they are, combined with how good they think their coach and teammates think they are at rugby. The three items are measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (terrible) to 5 (great), and averaged to form an overall score of perceived competence.

Constraints on participation typically fall into one of three categories: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. Twelve items were used to measure a range of potentially contraining factors. Leavers were asked, "How important were each of the following in your decision to stop playing rugby?" Items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (very important). Stayers were asked, "How often has each of the following been a concern for you during your time in rugby?" Items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (very often).

Sense of Community is a measure of the degree to which players feel that they belong, feel part of, and have a voice in their rugby club. This construct has been shown to be a reliable and valid predictor of continued sport participation. Eight items were used to measure sense of community. Each was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Scores on the 8 items were averaged to provide an overall score for the sense of community players feel with their rugby club.

Social ties to Rugby captures the broader social milieu by measuring the degree to which a player's friends and family are (or have been in the past) a part of the sport.

Four items, two measuring friends' participation in rugby and two measuring family participation, were included. Each was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The two measures of family participation in rugby were averaged to create a measure of family ties to rugby. The two measures of friends' participation were averaged to create a measure of friendship ties to rugby.

Identity has been shown to be strongly associated with continued participation in a wide range of sport and leisure activities. Two forms of identity as a rugby player were measured in this study: self-identity and social identity. These are often very closely related, as one's own sense of one's self as a rugby player is communicated to others in a variety of ways such that others also identify the individual as a rugby player. Both measures were included in the survey. Three items measured self-identity using semantic differential scales. Respondents responded to the prompt, "Being a rugby player..." by choosing a point on a scale balanced with the following end points: (a) Describes me/does not describe me; (b) Affirms my values / doesn't affirm my values; and (c) Have strong feelings about / do not have strong feelings about. Social identity was measured via three items rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The items were averaged to provide an overall score of identity as a rugby player.

Motivation to Play Rugby was measured via four subscales. Three items were used to measure intellectual reasons to participate in rugby, three to measure mastery motives, three to measure social motives, and four to measure escape motives. These four motivations have been robust measures of sport motivation across a wide range of sport and leisure domains, and show strong capacity to predict ongoing participation. The escape subscale was modified for this study to better represent the physical nature of the sport. Ergo two items were retained from the original subscale, "to get away from everyday life" and "to relax mentally". Two new items were included to better capture the way in which rugby gets one away from everyday life by providing a place to enjoy the physical contact inherent in the sport. These two new items were included, "Because I like the physical contact that is part of rugby," and "Because I like hitting people." All items were rated using 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Items within each subscale were averaged to provide overall measures of Intellectual Motivation, Mastery Motivation, Social Motivation, and Escape Motivation.

Club Commitment is an important part of the rugby culture, as the club is the central organizing structure for participants. Research in sport development has shown that club commitment is a key predictor of continued involvement in the sport. Five items were used to measure club commitment. Each was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The five items were averaged to provide an overall measure of club commitment.

Subcultural Fit is a measure of the degree to which an individual feels an affinity with the values, lifestyle and overall culture of rugby. Items were measured using a

7-point LIkert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The three items were then averaged to provide an overall measure of subcultural fit.

Social Infrastructure includes the components of the sport that facilitate social interaction. The importance of these components was measured via five items using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The five items were averaged to provide an overall measure of the importance of social infrastructure.

Players' *interest* in two alternative game forms was measured via two items, interest in "Non-contact versions of rugby such as touch or flag," and interest in "1-off competitions as part of a Motley team." Level of interest was measured via the following 5-point scale: 1=not interested at all; 2=somewhat interested; 3= interested; 4=very interested; 5=definitely want to do this.

Satisfaction with competition structures was measured with four items, each measuring a different aspect of the competition structure: frequency, quality, access, and seriousness. Respondents rated their satisfaction using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied).

Rugby Career

This section of the survey was designed to obtain information about the variations in respondents' rugby experiences. Respondents provided information about their current membership status with USA Rugby, current and former membership divisions (i.e., youth, high school, university, club), and types of competitions. All respondents were asked to indicate the likelihood of playing next season. Leavers were asked to provide the reason that they stopped playing, and to indicate whether they would consider playing again. All respondents were asked to indicate the person that first got them involved in rugby.

In addition to their playing history, respondents were asked about their fanship and consumption of rugby as a spectator. Items included in this section included: level of fanship for the sport of rugby, level of fanship for a specific rugby team, frequency of attendance at rugby matches, television viewing, internet use, and travel. Lastly, respondents were asked to indicate how far (in minutes) it is to the nearest rugby club.

Demographics

Basic demographic information was obtained in the final portion of the survey. Respondents indicated their age, zipcode, gender, level of education, family income, and membership status with USA Rugby.

Sample

Three distinct groups were surveyed: Stayers, Leavers, and Movers. Stayers are defined as current USA Rugby members that have played for more than one year.

USA Rugby contacted this group via their current member database. The survey link was sent to all current members (see Appendix E). A total of 1243 current members completed the survey. Leavers and Movers were identified via the 2005-2012 database provided to the research team by USA Rugby. Leavers were defined as players that were registered in one year and not the next. Movers were defined as players registered in one division in one year, and another in the next (e.g., high school and then university or university and then club). Emails were sent to 41,361 Leavers, and 3,491 successful Movers. Of the original emails, 9,530 bounced back. Slightly more than 1400 surveys were at least opened (1300 Leavers, 141 Movers), and 1021 were completed (930 Leavers, 91 Movers). Reminder emails were sent to all Leavers and Movers one and two weeks after the initial survey link was emailed. Specific email scripts are available in Appendix E. The overall completion rate for all groups was calculated at 62% (number completed / number opened). The distribution of respondents by gender and membership status appears in Table 2.

Table 2: Survey Respondents by Gender and Member Status

	Male	Female
Current Members	73.5%	26.5%
Former Members	74.6%	25.4%

PLAYER INTERVIEWS

Players and former players were interviewed to better understand the experiences in rugby. In particular, we sought to better understand the similarities and differences of players choosing to continue and discontinue their participation in the sport. To this end, Leavers and Stayers from the original membership database were contacted via email and asked to participate in a short telephone interview about their rugby experiences. Emails were sent individually in order to avoid spam filters. It is not possible to obtain accurate response data, as we do not know how many emails were received. However, we were able to conduct forty-five phone interviews with respondents from the database. Nineteen of these interviews were with current players, and 26 with former players. Thirteen of the 45 phone interviews were with females. Email response to the interview requests was minimal, and was lacking responses from current players. Further, the original dataset included very few youth players, and no interviews had been conducted with high school players. Consequently, we decided to conduct face-to-face interviews at tournaments within driving distance of the University. Thirty-three interviews were conducted with high school players (25 males, 8 females) at the Midwest Challenge Cup outside of Chicago. A further 41 interviews (25 males, 16 females) occurred at a 7s tournament, also outside of Chicago. In total, 119 interviews were conducted with 90 currently active players and 29 non-active players.

All interviews were semi-structured. The basic outline of the interviews appear in Appendix F. Data from all interviews was coded line by line in order to identify common themes in the data. Once all interview data have been coded, themes will be compared across groups.

INTERVIEWS WITH LEADERS of GEOGRAPHIC UNIONS

Input was sought from the leadership of the Geographic Unions across the country. In April 2015 USA Rugby issued a press release and posted an article on its website announcing the study (Appendix A). Leaders of the Geographic Unions were informed as part of the Competitive Management System update communication that they would be contacted in order to request their participation in the study.

In May 2015, fifteen Geographic Unions were contacted by e-mail (Appendix B) to request that they engage in a 20-minute phone or Skype interview to provide their views and opinions on issues relating to the recruitment and retention of players and members at the Senior Club level. Subsequent phone calls resulted in six interviews being conducted with the GU leaders.
The interview questions were developed by the research team and vetted by USA Rugby and World Rugby. The interviews were semi-structures and based on the questions in Appendix C.

The responses were recorded on interview survey sheets and 8 major themes were identified as described later in this report.

EXPERT PANEL WORKSHOP

The purpose of the expert workshop was to brainstorm potential actions and recommendations for improving player retention and easing transitions in rugby based on information deriving from the database analysis, survey, and interviews. Two types of experts were recruited for the workshop: rugby experts and sport management/marketing/development experts. Rugby experts brought a deep understanding of the sport and its implementation in the United States. Experts from outside of rugby brought knowledge and expertise of other sports, and practical and theoretical understanding of underlying functional areas pertinent to sport development. This latter group of experts included persons from academia and from the American Olympic Movement. In total, 13 experts participated. Dialectical decision making techniques were used to break existing frames of thinking and generate a broader and deeper array of ideas.

Procedures
Three sets of sessions formed the expert panel workshop. Each session began by communicating results, which was followed by discussion by type (i.e., youth, university, club), a break, recombination of groups to include experts from each of the earlier discussions, and finally a whole group integrative discussion. Session 1 focused on positives, session 2 on challenges, and session 3 on transitions. Each is discussed briefly.

Session 1

All experts were assigned to one of three tables for the first session. All tables had both rugby and non-rugby experts. Research team members served as facilitators at each table. The first session began by reporting results from the survey and interviews that highlighted rugby's strengths as a sport. Experts at each table were then asked to discuss ways in which we could capitalize on these strengths. Specific prompts for this session included the following:

- How do we assure that these positives are retained?
- How can we capitalize on these positives to recruit?
- How can we capitalize on these positives to retain players?

One table focused on youth/high school rugby, one on university rugby, and one on club rugby. The facilitator at each table recorded all ideas on butcher paper, and facilitated further discussion when necessary. All participants were then given a break, after which the groups were re-assigned to include participants from each of the groups from the first session. In session 1B, experts reconsidered the same prompts, but from a perspective that integrated youth, university and club perspectives from session 1A. This session was also facilitated by the project team. A final integrative (i.e., whole group) session completed the discussion of strengths.

Session 2
Session 2 began with a presentation of challenges identified through the interviews and surveys. As before, experts were assigned to one of three tables, each focused on either youth, university, or club challenges. Specific prompts for this session included:

- What may be causing these challenges?
- What can we do to improve the situation in order to enhance recruitment?
- What can we do to improve the situation in order to enhance player retention?

One table focused on youth/high school rugby, one on university rugby, and one on club rugby. The facilitator at each table recorded all ideas on butcher paper, and facilitated further discussion when necessary. All participants were then given a break, after which the groups were re-assigned to include participants from each of the groups from the first session. In session 2B, experts reconsidered the same prompts, but from a perspective that integrated youth, university and club perspectives from session 2A. This session was also facilitated by the project team. A final integrative (i.e., whole group) session completed the discussion of challenges.

Session 3
Session 3 began with a presentation of transition issues identified through the interviews and surveys. As before, experts were assigned to one of three tables, each focused on either transitions from youth rugby to university or club settings; transitions to and from university settings; or transitions into club settings. Specific prompts for this session included:

- What is causing transition point attrition?
- How can we ease athletes' transitions?
- How can we enhance the attractiveness of transitions?

The facilitator at each table recorded all ideas on butcher paper, and facilitated further discussion when necessary. All participants were then given a break, after which the groups were re-assigned to include participants from each of the groups from the first session. In session 3B, experts reconsidered the same prompts, but from a perspective that integrated youth, university and club perspectives from session 3A. This session was also facilitated by the project team. A final integrative (i.e., whole group) session completed the discussion of challenges.

Nearly one hundred flip-chart pages were generated by the workshop. All data emerging from the workshop was coded and incorporated in the team's discussion of recommendations and potential pilot projects.

INTERVIEWS WITH LEADERS of GEOGRAPHIC UNIONS

Input was sought from the leadership of the Geographic Unions across the country. In April 2015 USA Rugby issued a press release and posted an article on its website announcing the study (Appendix A). Leaders of the Geographic Unions were informed as part of the Competitive Management System update communication that they would be contacted in order to request their participation in the study.

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The interview questions were developed by the research team and vetted by USA Rugby and World Rugby. The interviews were semi-structures and based on the questions in Appendix C.

There were three distinct themes identified in talking with the leaders of the Geographic Unions:
1. Interpersonal Issues
2. Perceived Image
3. Structural Challenges

Interpersonal Issues

The GU Leaders observed that young players coming out of high school and college s struggle with interpersonal issues such as the differences in physical development and playing experience and ability). There was a high perception on behalf of many players of potential injuries due to wider differences in physical size and ability. There is a wide range of talent/abilities/experience of kids coming out of high school and different level of college programs. Players from smaller colleges want to play but are not good enough or don't have the experience to compete at the club level. The consequences of getting injured when one was early in their work career was a significant deterrent. It was recommended that clubs need to have B-sides for development.

There was also a great change in the financial and organizational expectations of younger people joining clubs. This can be the first time they are asked to pay for their kit, and travel. And many of them expressed that registration fees, travel, insurance too much a burden. They also had to adapt to a completely new and different social organization from college or high school. Younger players who found this difficult need a support system to help with the transition.

An interesting point was made by several GU leaders that there was resentment from older players about losing spots to younger players. There is a lack of desire for these

club members to recruit younger players. Younger players may not get appropriate playing time, thus they don't develop or get bored.

With this shift in lifestyle young players have other priorities/opportunities after high school or university such as jobs, social opportunities, starting a family. They are also presented with other athletic/physical activities and sports provide options. Many young people don't have traditional 9 – 5 jobs, thus making it hard to coordinate schedules. Many players drop out after their school playing days because they don't see the opportunities to stay involved in other capacities.

One area that the clubs should be promoting is the international nature of the sport, and potential ability to travel as part of the club or select sides, and the international camaraderie amongst rugby players throughout the world (you always a have a place to sleep if you are a rugby player).

Perceived Image

The second major theme noted by the GU leaders that affected the transition of younger player from schools to clubs was the problem of the perceived image of the clubs. Players have difficulty distinguishing recreational from competitive clubs. This was further exacerbated by the perception that the type of club and competition can vary from year to year from serious to social. Teams playing 7s seem much more social/recreational, and non-contact forms of rugby looked down upon

It was also noted that there was often a poor perception of clubs related to drinking, coaching, and/or facilities. Parents, friends, siblings may have had a bad experience at the clubs. The incidences where post-game events can exclude younger players if drinking is involved, was seen as a challenge to developing a unified social culture in the clubs. Also the perception is that money and resources and time spent on coach development is limited, and the club facilities like clubhouses may be a step down from college and high school. Need a variety of events and activities to bolster the clubs purpose and benefits

It was mentioned that lifestyle choices of players on the team can be seen as a deterrent to new players in that women players may get stigmatized if playing with lesbian players. The perception is that there are other sports offer "cooler" opportunities to socialize such as cross-fit. The fact that there was a lack of concrete development path after college, in that there is no professional league in U.S.

Structural Challenges

One of the most frustrating aspects of the problem that clubs have in recruiting younger players from high school and college is that they are not set up to do so. The GU leaders noted that most regions and clubs have no strategy or guidelines on how to contact and connect with high school or college players. The main reason given is that clubs have not been focused or concerned with trying to grow the game, or improve their organizations.

For the most part they have had a limited perspective with the majority of members just there to play. Clubs need to become involved in youth, high school and college programs (facilities, coaching, refereeing). They need to help facilitate the transition from the schools to the clubs through involvement, communication and funding.

There is a lack of club communication strategies to be able to contact graduating players. Because of USA Rugby registration and privacy regulations clubs can't get access to contact information for players graduating from college and high school. Without hands on association with the community they are limited in the degree they can directly facilitate the transition of younger players.

Concerning the women's game, one of the key problems is the lack of B-sides that could facilitate younger women coming into the clubs. If the girls perceive themselves as not physically strong as some of the older women they think they will not able to compete safely they don't join. There is also the problem of quality coaches thus the call for more educational opportunities for coaches of adult players

It was also noted that the national competitive structure is seen as limiting the appeal of the game at the club level. Some GU leaders and club directors would like to be able to have U-23 club players play against college teams. At present USA Rugby rules and registration prohibit this. Leaders would also like see a focus on development in the spring, with more competitions in the fall, or have 7s in spring, 15s in fall.

YOUTH TRANSITIONS

This section profiles the transitions of current and former youth rugby participants. Of the overall sample of respondents, 7.9% (n=246) reported having played at the youth level at some time in their rugby career. The figure below shows the transitions made by youth players as a percentage of youth players in the sample.
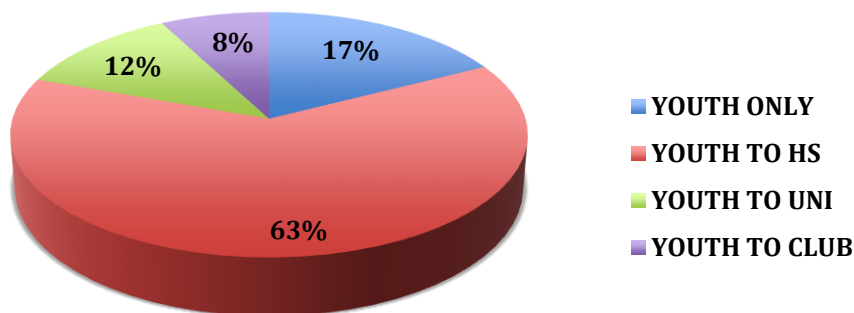
Youth Only (Stayers v Leavers - no transition)

Demographics. Only 43 respondents reported only playing youth rugby. Of these, 38 were currently playing. The vast majority (92%) were male. Thirty-two indicated that they would "probably not" play next season, with five indicating that they would "definitely not" play next season. It is important to note that only one of the five would not consider playing again in the future. On average, respondents reported playing for three years. They played in a variety of formats, with the most common (and most popular) format being an ongoing 15s league. Types of participation are reported in the figure below. Although half of the respondents in this group were not interested in non-contact versions of the sport, more than a third were interested, and only 15% were neutral (perhaps because they were not familiar with touch or flag versions of the game). More than 53% of Youth Only players were recruited into rugby by family members, with 16.3% recruited by friends, 9.3% by coaches, and the rest by various others.

Playing Format
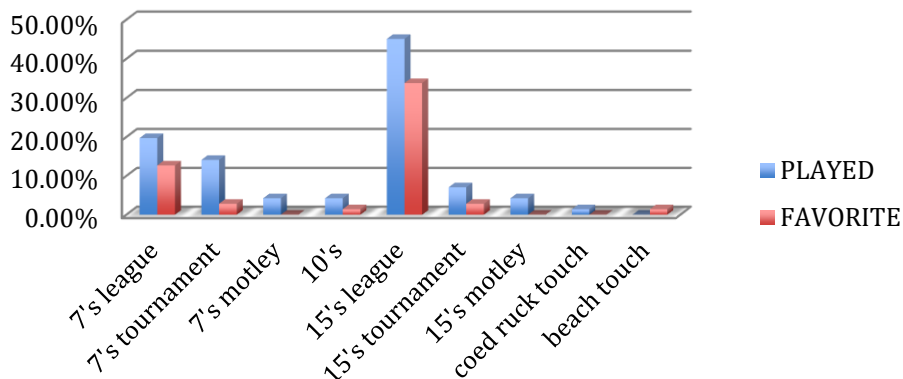
Intrapersonal Characteristics. Four types of motivation to play rugby were measured: (1) intellectual, (2) social, (3) mastery, and (4) escape from everyday life. Stayers and Leavers were fairly similar in their motives to play rugby, with the exception of their mastery motivation. Stayers were more motivated than Leavers to obtain a sense of achievement, to test their abilities, and to compete against others. They also perceived themselves to be more competent than did Leavers. Not surprisingly, Stayers were also more highly identified with the sport than were Leavers. In other words, Stayers saw themselves as rugby players and felt that others also saw them as rugby players. This was not the case for Leavers.

> **RECOMMENDATION**: Structure training and competitions in ways that provide players with opportunities to gain a sense of mastery (i.e., improve skills, test themselves against others, and demonstrate their achievements) and embrace their identity as a rugby player.

Both Leavers and Stayers face constraints to participating. Stayers have overcome their constraints to continue playing. However, that does not mean that they no longer face constraints. Consequently, Stayers were asked to report how often each constraint had been a concern for them. Constraints were almost never a concern for Stayers. On average, Stayers reported constraints less than 'rarely'. It is interesting to note that the constraint faced most often was 'fear of injury', although even this constraint was rarely a factor. Leavers, on the other hand, were not able to overcome their constraints and therefore discontinued participation. Consequently, they were asked to specify the importance of each constraint in their decision to stop playing. On average, Leavers only agreed that two of the constraints were important in their decision to quit: (1) they had too many other things to do (mean=4.2), and (2) the team takes too much time (mean=3.80). None of the other constraints were important. Time is a common, but relative, constraint. It is only seen as 'too much' when the benefits of participating fail to compete with the benefits of participating in other activities. Thus, it is difficult to say whether the actual time required to play youth rugby is too much or the benefits don't

measure up to the time investment. It is possible that the recommendation above would alleviate the time issue by providing a better return on players' investment of time.

Variable	Stayers (n=38)	Leavers (n=5)
Motivation[1]		
Intellectual	1.20	1.20
Social	1.23	1.00
Mastery	1.25	0.73
Escape	0.78	0.75
Rugby Identity[1]	1.10	0.37
Perceived Competence[1]	1.32	1.00
Perceived Constraints	**How often a concern?[2]**	**How important in decision to quit?[3]**
Fear of injury	0.82	1.60
Recovery time	0.55	2.40
Team takes too much time	0.37	3.80
Too many other things to do	0.53	4.20
Poor skills	0.42	1.00
Friends don't play	0.74	1.80
Significant other doesn't support	0.32	2.20
Cost to play	0.34	1.80
Club not convenient	0.47	2.60
Too much travel	0.29	2.80
Don't fit in	0.11	1.60
Don't enjoy off-field activities	0.21	1.00

[1]Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree
[2]Scale: 0=never; 1=rarely; 2=occasionally; 3=somewhat often; 4=often; 5=very often; 6=always
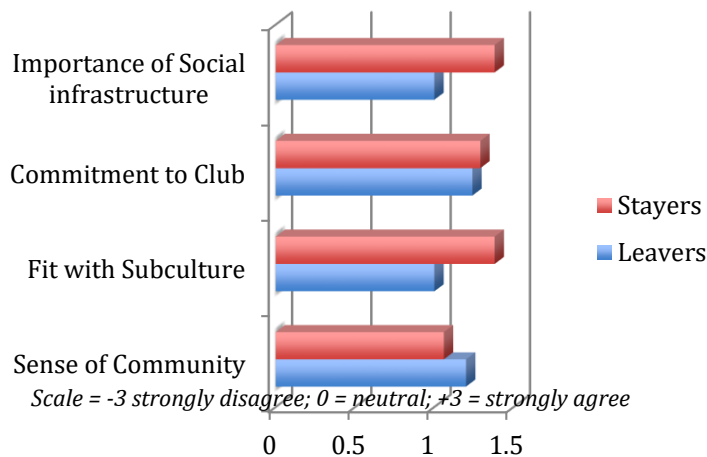[3]Scale: 0=not at all important; 3= neither important nor unimportant; 6=extremely important

Interpersonal Characteristics. Five aspects of players' interactions with the rugby community were measured: (a) social ties to rugby, (b) sense of community players feel within their club, (c) player's fit with the rugby subculture, (d) their commitment to their club, and (e) the importance they place on elements of the social infrastructure of the sport.

Participants were asked to indicate whether they had friends or family who had played or currently play rugby. Social ties are typically a key factor in retention. However, Leavers somewhat agreed that they had both friends and family in the sport, while Stayers neither agreed nor disagreed. Since 70% of all youth participants were introduced to rugby by a friend or family member, at first glance this finding seems anomalous. Yet it is possible, and even likely, that friends and family members introduced youth to rugby without ever playing the sport themselves. Although a family tradition of rugby can be a powerful tool for recruitment and retention in the sport, it is encouraging that it is not a necessary component for player retention. Rugby is still a fairly young sport in the American sport landscape. As such, it cannot depend solely on family tradition for players. Like more traditional American sports, family members (particularly parents), can have a significant impact on players' initial choice to

participate as well as their intention to continue playing *without having played themselves*. Although it was not the focus of this study, it would be useful to understand the reasons that parents put their children into rugby rather than other sports.

Stayers and Leavers reported very similar responses to queries of the social experience within their club, and their resulting commitment to that club (see the figure below and inset). Both groups experience a strong sense of community within their club or team. Perhaps as a result, they are committed to their club. There are small but significant differences between Leavers and Stayers in their perceptions of fit with the rugby subculture, and the importance of the social infrastructure around the sport. Stayers are more likely to feel attracted to and comfortable with the rugby lifestyle, however they define it, than are Leavers. The social infrastructure surrounding the sport can play an important role in supporting and communicating that lifestyle. Not surprisingly, Stayers also feel that these elements are more important than do Leavers.

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

The figure to the right examines differences for each element of the social infrastructure. It is encouraging to note that the most important aspect of the social experience, by far, is the time spent with other rugby players. This is true for both Leavers and Stayers, but even more important for Stayers.

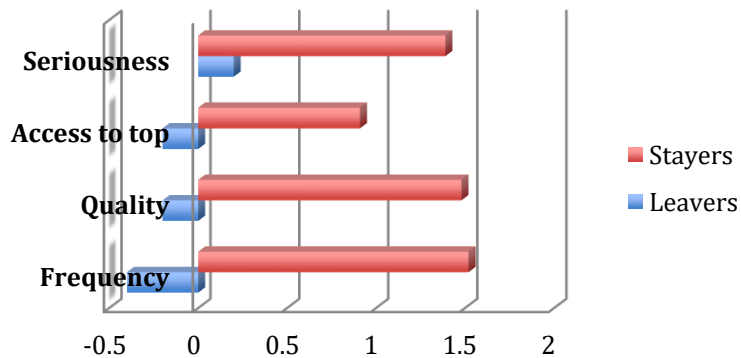*Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree*
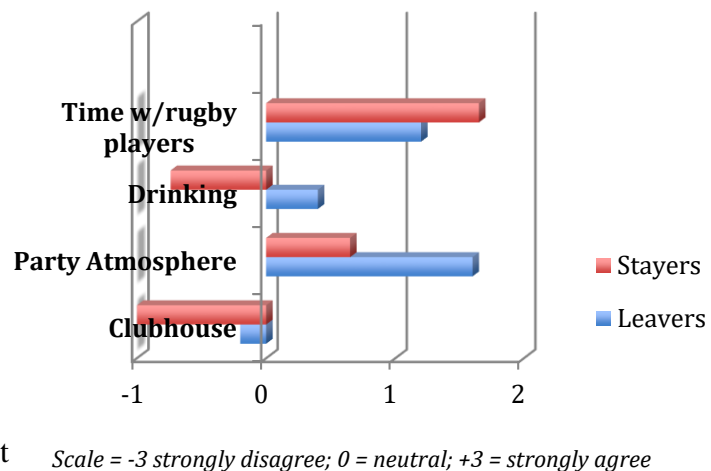
Although Youth players are not yet of drinking age, these data suggest that the image of rugby is, at least for some, associated with drinking and a party atmosphere. The degree to which young players see these as important elements of the social infrastructure of the sport is strongly associated with their choice to continue or discontinue participation. Leavers don't feel that they fit with the subculture. Yet, what they value about the subculture (drinking and partying) is a myth at this level. Players that continue to participate feel that drinking is avowedly unimportant, and that a party atmosphere is only slightly important to their participation. These players have successfully integrated into the actual subculture.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**   Incorporate activities to socialize players into rugby values early in their participation in order to maintain their participation.

The clubhouse has traditionally been a key avenue for socializing and socialization for rugby clubs throughout the world. Yet sport clubs like those throughout Europe and Australasia do not exist in the United States. In essence, Youth players (unless they come from other countries) don't expect to have a clubhouse, thus rate it as unimportant. Nevertheless, a clubhouse can provide a place for formal and informal socialization to occur.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**   Consider ways to create opportunities for socialization and socializing through temporary or permanent club facilities.

Four questions about players' satisfaction with the competitive structures were asked. Respondents reported their satisfaction with: (a) frequency of competitions, (b) quality of competitions, (c) access to top competitions, and (d) seriousness of competitions. On average, Stayers were satisfied with competitive structures, and Leavers were not (see Figure 1.X). Interviews were not conducted with Youth participants, therefore it is difficult to know whether competitions were seen as too frequent or not frequent enough. Similarly, it is difficult to determine whether competitions were perceived as too serious or not serious enough. In any case, Stayers were much happier with existing competitive structures than were Leavers. It may be necessary to adjust the competitive structures to retain more Youth players. More data would be needed to determine the types and frequency of competitions desired.


Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

**Youth Movers (successful transition)**

Demographics. Of the 246 survey respondents that played youth rugby, 203 (82.5%) continued to play beyond the youth setting. This may be a function of survey bias, as youth players from the past three seasons were not included in the databases used for the survey. Consequently, the vast majority of youth players responding to the survey had also played at another level. The most common transition from the youth setting was to the high school setting (n=155; 76%). This is the most natural playing transition as appropriate competition among players of similar age and maturity levels. More extensive differences in age, physical maturity, social needs, and experiences make it more difficult for players from youth settings to fit in with players at the university and club levels. Since high school programs are not available in all area, it is instructive to examine the profile of youth players that have successfully transitioned straight to the university level (n=29; 14%) or to the club level (n=19; 0.9%). Players starting out at the youth level tended to report long playing careers (see the figure below). The importance of an early start in the sport is clear.

Playing Career (in years)
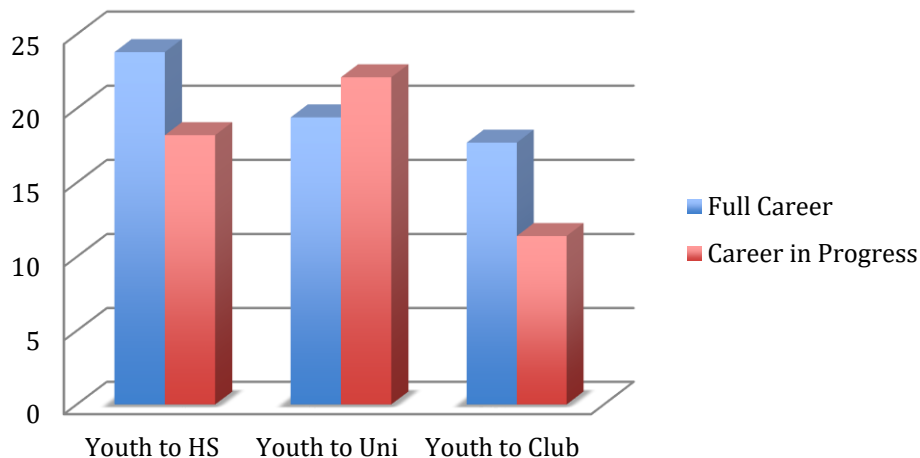
Movers played in a variety of formats (see figure below), with the most common format being an ongoing 15s league, followed by 7s tournament play. Approximately 75% of all Movers listed 15s league as their favorite way to participate. Types of participation are reported in Figure X. Movers have participated in a wide range of playing formats. It is likely that participation in different formats has encouraged retention by providing some variety in playing experience, allowing for varying levels of commitment, and extending playing opportunities beyond the tradition league season.

Playing Format
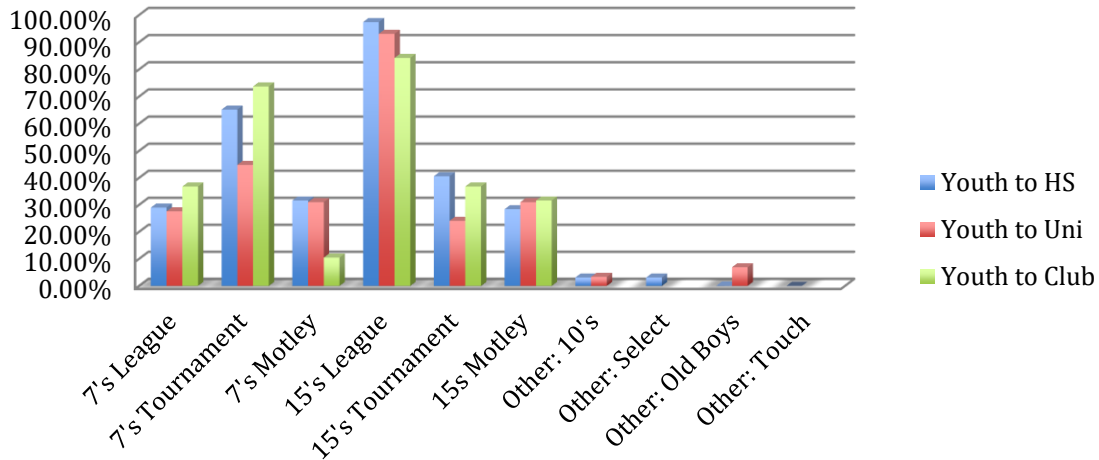
There is significant interest in non-contact versions of the game at all levels (see figure to the right). As might be expected, nearly two-thirds of players making the transition to club are interested in non-contact rugby. These players have typically been in the game longer, experienced more injuries, and find it more difficult to recover after full-contact play.

Interest in Non-contact Rugby
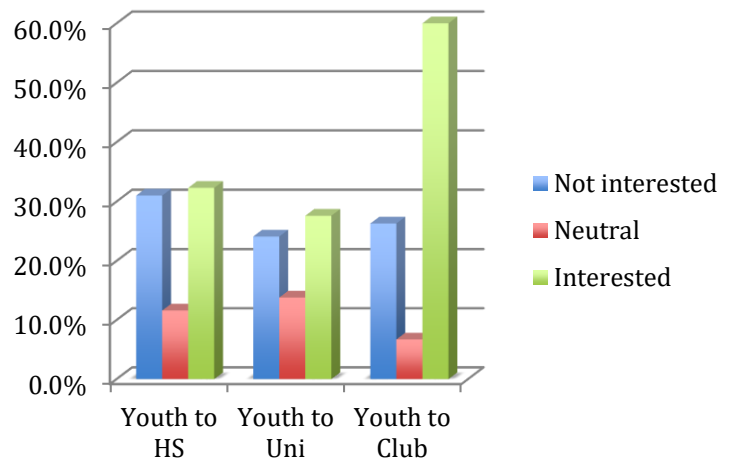
RECOMMENDATION: Provide multiple playing opportunities to generate and maintain interest, and to provide avenues to maintain commitment to the sport. Be sure to include non-contact options at all levels.

Intrapersonal Characteristics. Four types of motivation to play rugby were measured: (1) intellectual, (2) mastery, (3) social, and (4) escape from everyday life. Intellectual motivation (to learn, expand interest, discover new things) is highest among players that transition from youth to club. Motivations among those who transition from youth rugby are graphed below. The club setting is, arguably, the most different to that of the youth setting and would appeal to players motivated to learn and discover new things. Mastery

and social motives are important to all groups. The escape motive includes items measuring escape in terms of relaxation and 'getting away from everyday life.' It also includes the concept of escape as a place to embrace physicality that is not allowed in everyday life. Movers headed to more youthful settings (particularly university) are more motivated to escape than are those moving to club settings, and are the only group more motivated by escape than by intellectual motives.

Motivation to Play
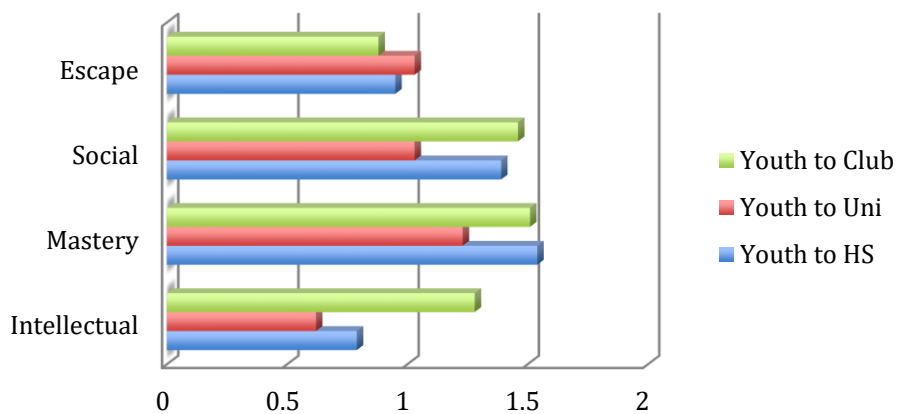
Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree

There are small, but significant differences in Movers' perceived competence as a player. This is in line with the social comparisons Movers make in their new context. Transitions from youth to high school result in the highest levels of perceived competence (average score = 1.53), as high school players are most similar to youth Movers. The gap in size, skill, and experience is greatest when youth transition to club settings. As a result, these Movers report the lowest levels of perceived competence (average score = 1.03). The transition from Youth to University results in perceived competence in the middle of the other two transitions (1.31). Feelings of competence are critical to players' decisions to   remain in a sport, as well as to their choice to specialize in that sport. It may also be related to Movers' identity as a rugby player. Players moving from youth to high school are most highly identified as rugby players (avg.= 1.44). Moving to university results in the lowest levels (1.11), with the move to club resulting in an average score of 1.25. Universities typically engender high levels of identification with the university itself. It may be that the university identity, combined with newfound independence takes precedence over a rugby identity.

> **RECOMMENDATION: Appeal to all four motives (intellectual, mastery, social, and escape) to recruit former youth players; then help them to develop a sense of competence in their new context.**

All players face constraints on their participation. Fear of injury is of most concern to all Movers. As players move into the club setting and away from the more structured youth and high school settings, they report more time conflicts – that is, the team takes too

much of their time and they have too many other things to do. Perhaps because rugby clubs in the United States have little infrastructure, participation at that level may require more resources from participants. Time is a critical resource; one that players experience conflict around. Very few other constraints are salient to Movers. There are small but significant differences in a few constraints. Youth-to-club Movers experience skill deficits more often than other Movers. Convenience is less of an issue when transitioning to a club, mainly because there are more clubs in more areas than there are other settings. Clubs are more likely to attract members from all walks of life and a wide range of ages. Consequently, off-field activities may reflect a wider range of preferences than in other settings. The age gap between most club members and a player coming from the youth ranks is certain to highlight different preferences for entertainment and other off-field activities. Scores for motives, identity, perceived competence, and perceived constraints are provided in the table below.

Variable	Youth to HS	Youth to Uni	Youth to Club
Motivation[1]			
Intellectual	0.79	0.62	1.28
Social	1.39	1.03	1.47
Mastery	1.54	1.23	1.51
Escape	0.95	1.03	0.88
Rugby Identity[1]	1.44	1.11	1.25
Perceived Competence[1]	1.53	1.31	1.03
Perceived Constraints How often is this a concern?[2]			
Fear of injury	1.37	1.38	1.48
Recovery time	1.30	1.28	1.05
Team takes too much time	1.01	1.55	1.68
Too many other things to do	1.15	1.38	1.89
Poor skills	0.38	0.31	0.84
Friends don't play	0.38	0.34	0.42
Significant other doesn't support	0.72	0.45	0.74
Cost to play	0.64	0.59	0.68
Club not convenient	0.74	0.86	0.37
Too much travel	0.41	0.38	0.47
Don't fit in	0.99	0.79	0.84
Don't enjoy off-field activities	0.21	0.17	0.58

[1]Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree
[2]Scale: 0=never; 1=rarely; 2=occasionally; 3=somewhat often; 4=often; 5=very often; 6=always

RECOMMENDATION: At all levels, provide low-contact versions of the game for those who may otherwise worry about injury. At university and club levels, be prepared to help transitioning youth players to manage their time in order to fit rugby into their schedule of activities.

Interpersonal Characteristics. Five aspects of players' interactions with the rugby community were measured and are reported in this section: (a) social ties to rugby, (b) sense of community players feel within their club, (c) players fit with the rugby subculture, (d) their commitment to their club, and (e) the importance they place on elements of the social infrastructure of the sport.

Participants were asked to indicate whether they had friends or family who had played or currently play rugby. Few Movers agreed that they had family in the sport. In fact, Youth-to-Club and Youth-to-Uni Movers actively disagreed. Yet nearly half of Youth-to-HS Movers reported that family members were instrumental in their recruitment into rugby. This percentage decreases as the transitions become less traditional. For example, only 31% of Movers going from Youth to University claimed that family recruited them, and only 10% of Youth-to-Club Movers had family as their primary entry into the sport. This pattern was reversed for friends. Slightly more than half of Youth-to-Club Movers were recruited primarily by friends with 38% of Youth-to-Uni and 17% of Youth-to-HS Movers claiming that friends got them into the sport. All groups had friends that currently play or had played rugby. School personnel were important, albeit secondary, recruiters for Movers to both high school (25.8%) and university (13.8%) contexts.

Movers reported very similar responses to queries of the social experience within their club, and their resulting commitment to that club (see the figure below).

Social Experience

Scale
-3 = strongly disagree;
0 = neutral;
+3 = strongly agree
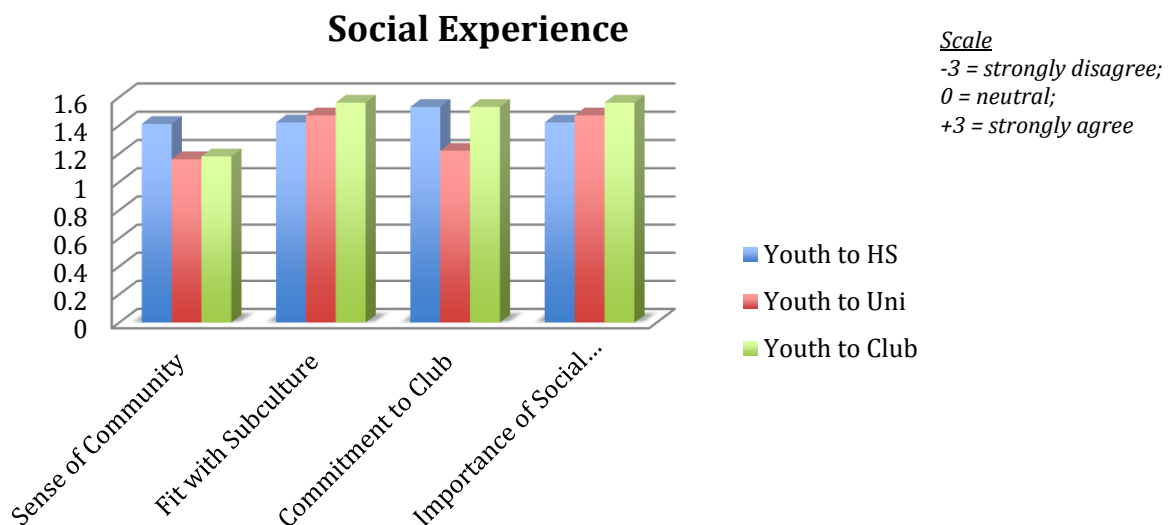
Sense of community in the rugby setting is strongest for players moving from Youth to High School play. High schools generally have a pre-existing community, and in many smaller towns, it is the center for the town's development of itself as a social community. Participation on a team, particularly a team representing the high school, would heighten that sense of community. Larger settings provide more alternative places to find community. Although all Movers experienced a sense of community with their teammates, respondents repeatedly mentioned this camaraderie as a critical aspect of ongoing participation. Thus, programs, training, and fixtures should continue to facilitate camaraderie within clubs and among members of different clubs and at different levels of play. The importance of social infrastructure gradually increases in significance as

players transition further from the youth setting. The figure below illustrates differences for each element of the social infrastructure.

Importance of Social Infrastructure
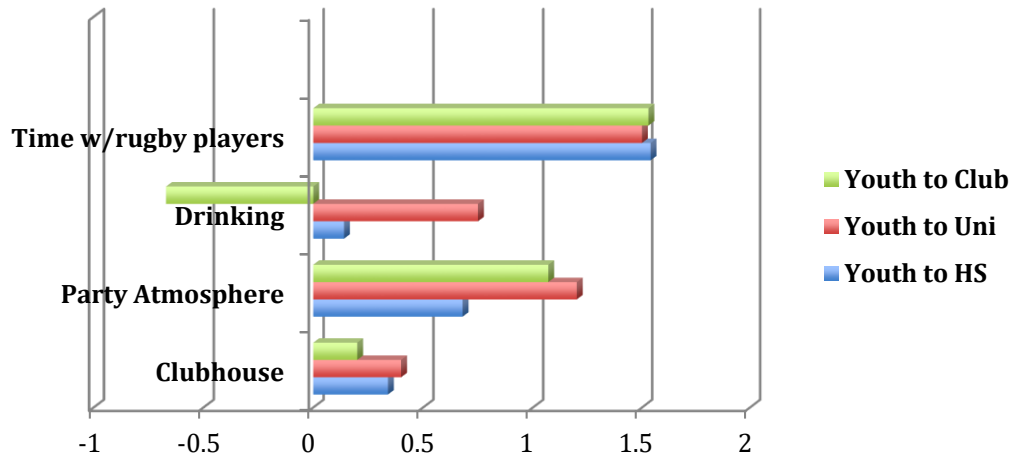
Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Incorporate and maintain activities that build camaraderie among club members, horizontally among clubs, and vertically among levels of play.

Once more, it is encouraging to note that the most important aspect of the social experience is the time spent with other rugby players. This is true for all Movers. Although a party atmosphere is important to all Movers, it is least important to those moving to the high school setting. Importantly, it is only associated with drinking for players making the transition into university rugby. Drinking is part of the broader university student culture, thus it's appearance here is not unexpected. Other movers are either indifferent (i.e., Youth to High School) or feel that drinking is an unimportant part of the rugby experience (i.e., Youth to Club).

On average, Movers are fairly indifferent to the idea of a clubhouse. It is important to note that youth rugby settings, and youth sport settings in general, almost never have a clubhouse facility. Thus, there is little expectation that other settings should have a clubhouse. That is not to say that a dedicated clubhouse would not be welcome. Rather, players don't realize what they may be missing out on. A clubhouse could potentially enable the very cross group camaraderie that players value so highly.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Consider ways to create opportunities for socialization and socializing through temporary or permanent club facilities.

Four questions about players' satisfaction with the competitive structures were asked. Respondents reported their satisfaction with: (a) frequency of competitions, (b) quality of competitions, (c) access to top competitions, and (d) seriousness of competitions.

No Movers were dissatisfied with the competitive structures available to them (see the figure below). The move to the high school setting was associated with the least amount of satisfaction with competitions overall. High school programs are a new membership category for USA Rugby. Finding appropriate competition without excessive travel can be difficult for some programs, and may limit the frequency of competitions. High school rugby programs do not yet enjoy the full varsity status of other high school sports; this may affect players' views about the quality and seriousness of competitions. It is less clear, why players moving to club are less satisfied with the frequency of competitions than other Movers, although the length of the club season is longer than most youth seasons.

Satisfaction with Competitive Structures
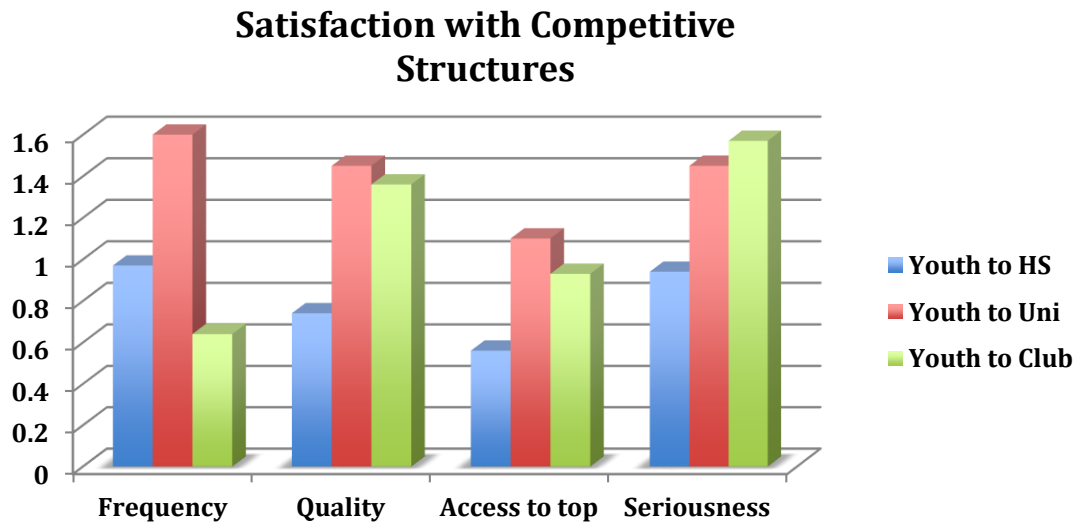
below zero=dissatisfied, zero=indifferent, 1=somewhat satisfied, 2=satisfied, 3=very satisfied

HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

This section profiles the transitions of current and former high school rugby participants. Of the overall sample of respondents, 24% (n=746) reported having played at the high school level at some time in their rugby career. The figure below shows the transitions made by high school players as a percentage of high school players in the sample.

High School Transitions
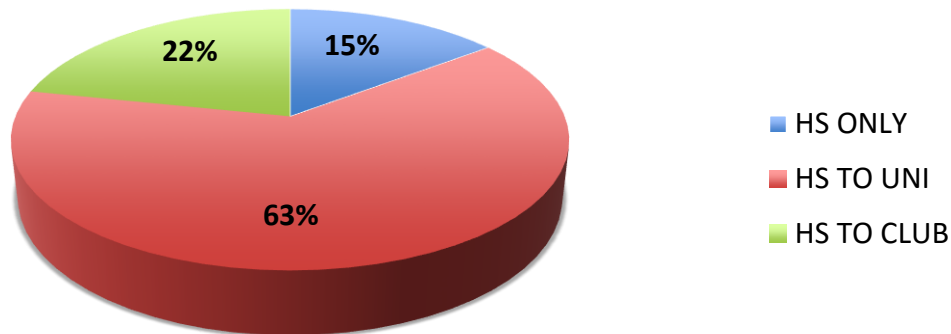
High School Only (Stayers v Leavers – no transition)

Demographics. One hundred ten respondents reported having played no further than high school rugby. Of these respondents, 98 were still playing. The majority (73.5%) were male. Only six current players indicated that they were either "unsure" or unlikely to play the following year. Only one Leaver indicated that he would not consider playing again. An examination of playing formats offers intriguing suggestions for player retention (see the graph below). The most common playing format experienced was 15s leagues. Stayers also indicated 15s league as their favorite playing format. This is not the case for Leavers. Not a single Leaver preferred the 15s league format. Instead, Leavers chose a variety of 7s formats as their favorite, *even when they had never played in that format*. By itself, this finding may indicate a preference for formats that require less time, either in terms of the length of season or in terms of the length of time on match days.

RECOMMENDATION: Offer a variety of playing formats at every level. Actively promote alternatives to the 15s league format.
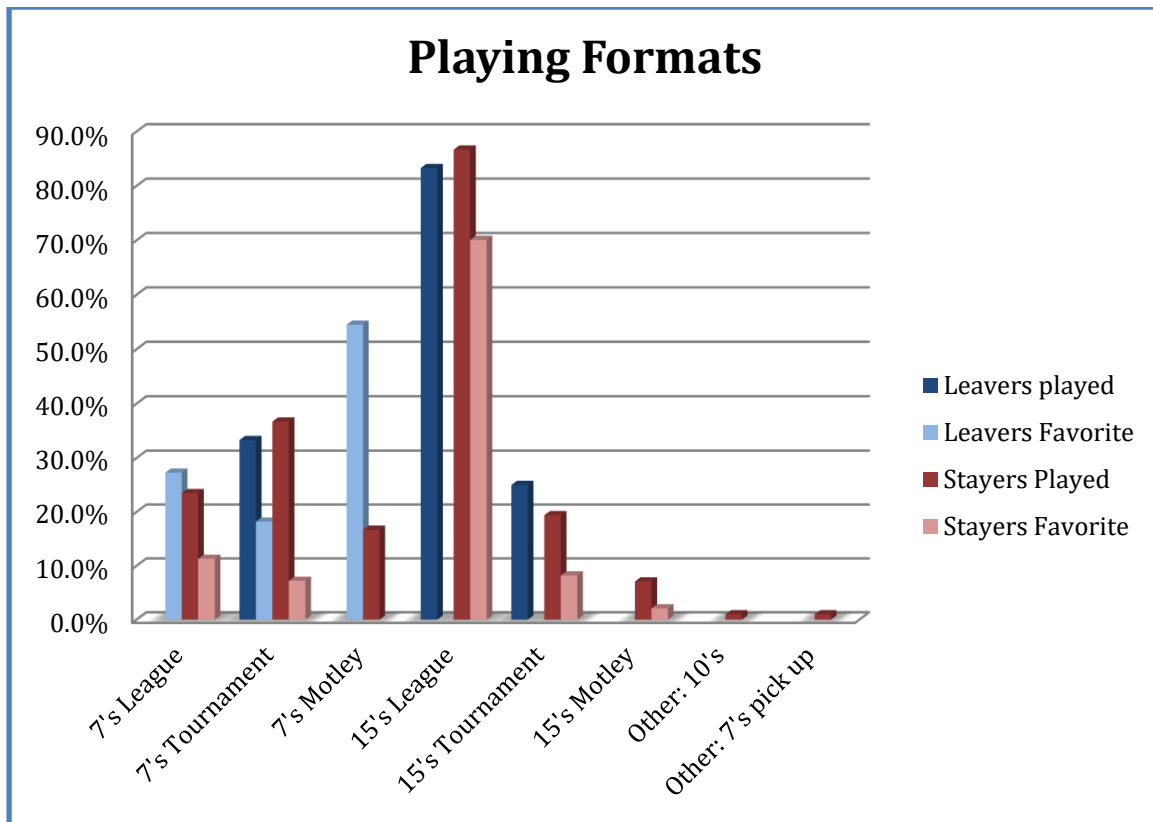
Playing Formats

Intrapersonal Characteristics. Four types of motivation to play rugby were measured: (1) intellectual, (2) mastery, (3) social, and (4) escape from everyday life. Stayers and Leavers were dramatically different in their motives to play rugby. Stayers were overall more highly motivated to play, reporting scores above one (i.e., well engaged with that benefit) for every motive (see the table below). In contrast, Leavers were largely indifferent. None of these benefits motivated them to participate in rugby. It is not clear exactly what motivated these players to begin playing rugby, but clearly, none of these motives kept them in the game. Although Stayers and Leavers reported very similar perceptions of their own competence as rugby players, Leavers did not embrace the rugby identity. In other words, Stayers saw themselves as rugby players and felt that others also saw them as rugby players. This was not the case for Leavers. It may be that Leavers were not adequately socialized to appreciate the subcultural values of rugby, and never learned to appreciate the benefits that Stayers learned to appreciate.

RECOMMENDATION: From the beginning and throughout participation in school rugby, participants should be engaged not merely with development of rugby skills, but also with the values associated with rugby. These should include intellectual, social, and escape aspects, as well as mastery of the sport.

Variable	Stayers (n=98)	Leavers (n=12)
Motivation[1]		
Intellectual	1.24	0.42
Social	1.43	0.22
Mastery	1.54	0.72
Escape	1.13	0.02
Rugby Identity[1]	1.23	0.15
Perceived Competence[1]	1.17	1.03
Perceived Constraints	**How often a concern?[2]**	**How important in decision to quit?[3]**
Fear of injury	1.17	1.92
Recovery time	0.92	1.33
Team takes too much time	0.62	3.00
Too many other things to do	0.72	3.08
Poor skills	0.76	1.00
Friends don't play	0.60	1.50
Significant other doesn't support	0.32	0.92
Cost to play	0.72	1.00
Club not convenient	0.29	1.08
Too much travel	0.35	1.92
Don't fit in	0.31	1.67
Don't enjoy off-field activities	0.18	1.33

[1]*Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree*
[2]*Scale: 0=never; 1=rarely; 2=occasionally; 3=somewhat often; 4=often; 5=very often; 6=always*
[3]*Scale: 0=not at all important; 3= neither important nor unimportant; 6=extremely important*

Both Leavers and Stayers face constraints to participating (as the table above shows). Stayers have overcome their constraints to continue playing. However, that does not mean that they no longer face constraints. Consequently, Stayers were asked to report how often each constraint had been a concern for them. Constraints were almost never a concern for Stayers. On average, Stayers reported constraints less than 'rarely'. The constraints faced most often were 'fear of injury' and 'recovery time', although even these constraints were rarely a factor.

Leavers, on the other hand, were not able to overcome their constraints, which played a role in them ending their participation. Consequently, they were asked to specify the importance of each constraint in their decision to stop playing. On average, Leavers agreed that only two of the constraints were important in their decision to quit: (1) they had too many other things to do (mean=3.08), and (2) the team takes too much time

(mean=3.00). None of the other constraints were important. Time is a common, but relative, constraint. It is only seen as 'too much' when the benefits of participating fail to compete with the benefits of participating in other activities. Thus, it is difficult to say whether the actual time required to play high school rugby is too much or that the benefits don't measure up to the time investment. It is possible that the recommendation above would alleviate the time issue by providing a better return on players' investment of time.

Interpersonal Characteristics. Five aspects of players' interactions with the rugby community were measured: (a) social ties to rugby, (b) sense of community players feel within their club, (c) players fit with the rugby subculture, (d) their commitment to their club, and (e) the importance they place on elements of the social infrastructure of the sport. These are graphed below to the right.

Participants were asked to indicate whether they had friends or family who had played or currently play rugby. Social ties are typically a key factor in retention. Neither group reported having a family tradition of playing rugby, although Stayers did report having friends in the sport. Leavers had on social ties to the sport. School personnel and coaches play an increasingly important role in recruitment at this level. Half of all Leavers were recruited by school personnel or a coach, and only one was recruited into rugby by a family member. Friends are key at this level of the sport. Still, half of Leavers and 70% of Stayers were recruited by friends and family. When combined with the lack of a family tradition in the sport, this seems odd. Yet it is possible, and even likely, that friends and family members introduced youth to rugby without ever playing the sport themselves. Although a family tradition of rugby can be a powerful tool for recruitment and retention in the sport, it is encouraging that it is not a necessary component for player retention. Rugby is still a fairly young sport in the American sport landscape. As such, it cannot depend solely on family tradition for players. Like more traditional American sports, family members (particularly parents), can have a significant impact on players' initial choice to participate as well as their intention to continue playing *without having played themselves*.

Stayers and Leavers reported feeling a strong sense of community with others in their club, and, perhaps because of this camaraderie, they also reported similarly high levels of commitment to the club. Yet Leavers and Stayers differ with respect to their sense that
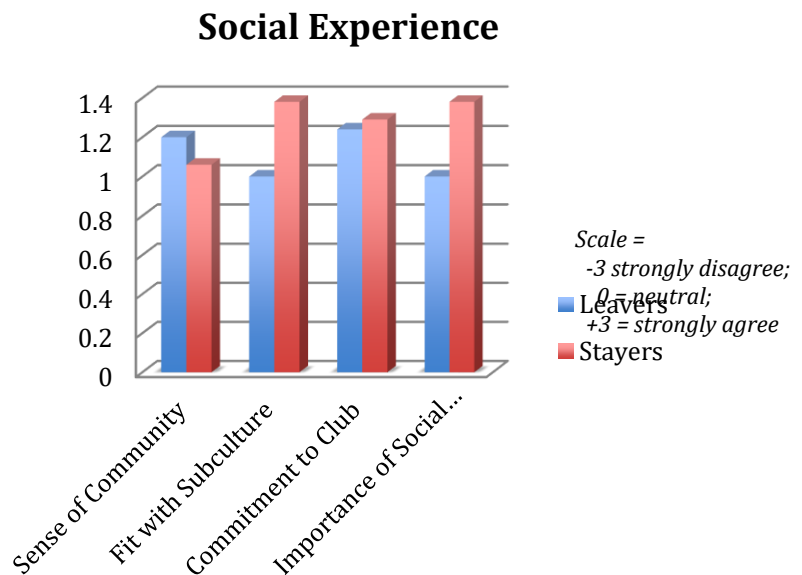
they fit with the rugby subculture and the importance they place on elements of that subculture (see the figure below). A closer examination of players' perceptions of the importance of each element of the subculture suggests that Leavers and Stayers have a very different understanding of the subculture. Both groups valued time with other rugby players, and Stayers rated this the most important element of the subculture. Leavers, on the other hand, rated a party atmosphere most highly, and felt that drinking was an important element of the social infrastructure. It may be that the lack of fit with the subculture reported by Leavers was, in fact, a disconnect between the image of rugby shown in the media and the actual social experience of high school rugby – one that is based on camaraderie, and one that does not require drinking and partying to lubricate the social experiences of players. Lastly, neither group indicated that a rugby clubhouse was an important part of club infrastructure. High schools have reasonably good infrastructure for their sport teams. As long as teams are a part of the high school, their access to quality infrastructure would not require a distinct clubhouse set aside for rugby.

Importance of Social Infrastructure
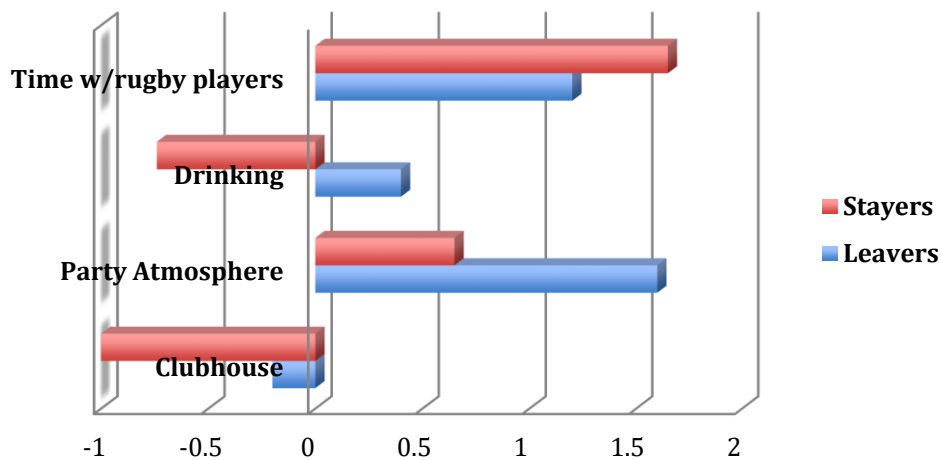
Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

Four questions about players' satisfaction with the competitive structures were asked. Respondents reported their satisfaction with: (a) frequency of competitions, (b) quality of competitions, (c) access to top competitions, and (d) seriousness of competitions. On average, Stayers were satisfied with competitive structures, and Leavers were not (see the figure below). Further research is needed to identify competitive structures that will remain satisfactory to those who stay in the sport, but that will improve the satisfaction of those who would otherwise leave.

Satisfaction with Competitive Structures

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree
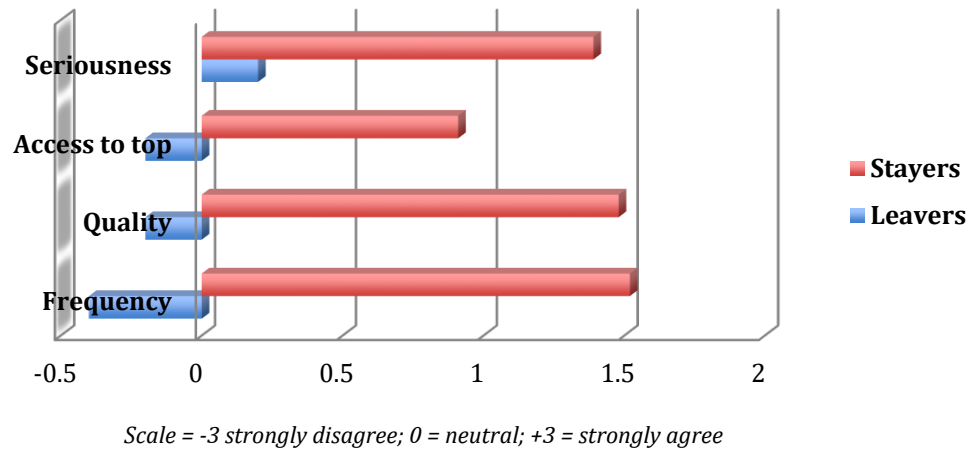
**High School Movers (successful transitions)**

Demographics.
Twenty-four percent (n=746) of the survey respondents reported having played high school rugby. Of those having played high school rugby, 64% (n=474) went on to play at the university level, and 22% (n=162) skipped university rugby and went straight to club. The transition from high school to university would be expected to be the easier transition, as the newly transitioning players are more similar in age, experience, and maturity to university students than they would be to club players. If players are able to transition directly to club, they report longer playing careers than do players transitioning directly to university rugby settings. This difference is, on average, a two-year difference as shown in the figure below.

Playing Career (in years)
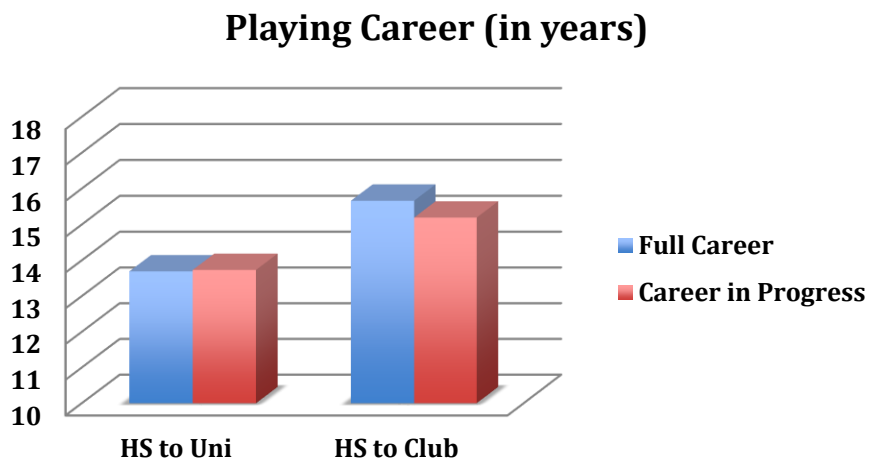
Movers played in a variety of formats, as shown on the figure following. The most common form of play was 15s league play followed by 7s tournaments. These athletes report playing across multiple formats including various forms of 10's, select sides, Old Boys, and even rugby league. There are no noticeable differences in the two groups in either the formats they have experienced or their favorite format. Both groups showed an overwhelming preference for 15s leagues (77.6% and 71%), followed by 7s tournaments (7.4% and 8%). The breadth of trial across a wide range of formats suggests that players are looking for different ways to stay involved in rugby, and perhaps seek some variety in their experience of the sport.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide multiple formats for play. Use special formats particularly to extend play beyond the traditional season.

Playing Format
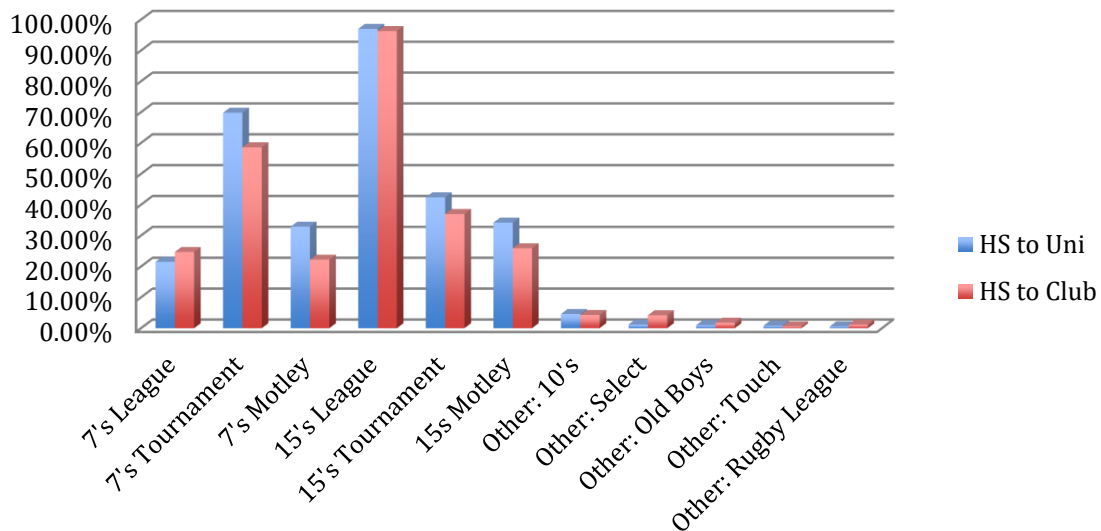
Although few players reported playing touch, it was mentioned by players as a way to stay involved outside of the regular season without "getting my body beat up." In fact, opinions about non-contact versions of the game vary as a function of where players are in the system, as shown on the figure below. High school only players, perhaps due to their youth, are not very interested in touch versions of the game. As they transition to university and club, the balance shifts and more players are interested in non-contact versions of the game. It is important to note that there is still a strong anti-touch segment of players, and that many of those interested in touch rugby are not interested in touch as their primary form of play. Rather, they see non-contact rugby as extending their involvement in the sport.

Interest in Non-Contact Rugby
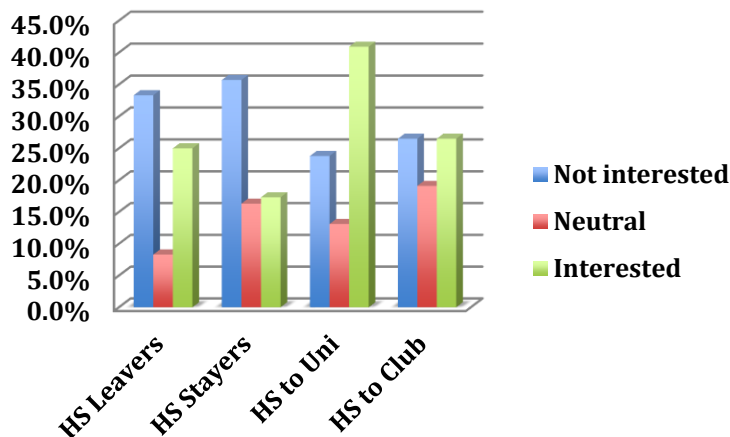
Intrapersonal Characteristics. Four motives to play rugby were measured: (1) intellectual, (2) mastery, (3) social, and (4) escape from everyday life. The differences between the two transition groups is quite small, as the table below shows. The overall pattern of results shows that the more natural transition (HS to Uni) is associated with slightly higher levels of motivation, rugby identity, and perceived competence. As the physical and psychological distance increases (i.e., the move from high school to club), one's rugby identity and perceptions of competence decrease a bit. This is not surprising, as the new reference group (club players) is less similar to the former high school player. Interactions with the new team would highlight these differences, and would take some time for the athlete to adjust to the new environment.

Variable	HS to Uni (n=474)	HS to Club (n=162)
Motivation[1]		
Intellectual	0.90	0.93
Social	1.34	1.35
Mastery	1.57	1.43
Escape	1.13	0.85
Rugby Identity[1]	1.38	1.25
Perceived Competence[1]	1.53	1.27

Perceived Constraints	How often is this a concern?[2]	
Fear of injury	1.83	1.55
Recovery time	1.49	1.23
Team takes too much time	1.78	1.09
Too many other things to do	2.06	1.40
Poor skills	0.49	0.59
Friends don't play	0.49	0.44
Significant other doesn't support	0.74	0.88
Cost to play	0.91	0.69
Club not convenient	1.04	0.88
Too much travel	1.37	0.96
Don't fit in	0.40	0.29
Don't enjoy off-field activities	0.46	0.41

[1]Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree
[2]Scale: 0=never; 1=rarely; 2=occasionally; 3=somewhat often; 4=often; 5=very often; 6=always
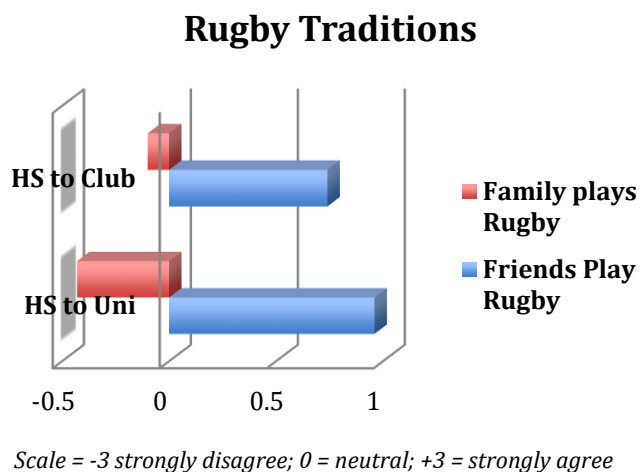
The move to the university setting highlights other issues. Although both groups have clearly overcome any constraints to continue playing and to move to another playing level, there are some interesting differences in the frequency at which constraints occur among high school players transitioning to the university setting and those moving directly to club. The transition to university is a challenging one for young people generally. When the sport transition is loaded onto this major life transition, it is not surprising that players feel constrained by too many other things to do, the time the team takes, fear of injury, and too much travel. University students often have difficulty with time management. Also, they are moving from the high school setting in which most

aspects of the team and club were done for them, to a university setting in which club members are expected to take on the tasks necessary to keep the club functioning. Thus, the time investment goes beyond training, competitions, and travel. It now includes things like administration, scheduling, organizing, recruiting, and sometimes coaching. Female players were more vocal in expressing feelings of being overwhelmed with tasks that had nothing to do with playing rugby, but were necessary to sustain a team. In fact, many of the women noted that they did not even have a "real coach". Instead, coaching fell to the more experienced players.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Assist players coming to university with time management. Local clubs may find this to be a potential point of useful contact if they can provide help managing and coaching university teams.

Interpersonal Characteristics. Five aspects of players' interactions with the rugby community were measured and reported in this section: (a) social ties to rugby, (b) sense of community players feel within their club, (c) players' fit with the rugby subculture, (d) their commitment to their club, and (e) the importance they place on elements of the social infrastructure of the sport.

As with the vast majority of Stayers and Movers, High School Movers have friends in rugby, but no family tradition of rugby participation, as shown in the figure to the right.

Rugby Traditions

HS to Club

HS to Uni

-0.5   0   0.5   1

■ Family plays Rugby

■ Friends Play Rugby

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

This does not seem to be a problem. In fact, these participants may be the ones to begin a tradition of rugby participation in their own families. Friends (40% and 34%) and Family (28% and 23%) were the most common source of recruitment for High School to Uni Movers and High School to Club Movers, respectively. As with other groups, friends and family do not have to be active participants to influence Movers' participation in rugby. For the first time, Movers note the influence of media on their choice to play rugby. Both of these groups of Movers included athletes that learned the sport overseas and came (or came back) to the United States seeking to continue their involvement in rugby. As one respondent put it, "I'm from New Zealand, so everyone plays!"

RECOMMENDATION Take advantage of rugby's presence in media, especially World Cup and Olympic excitement to promote the sport to players at high school and university levels. Also target international students who come to university from countries with a rugby tradition.

Both groups of Movers reported feeling a strong sense of community and camaraderie within their club (see Figure below). High schoolers moving to university rugby reported slightly better fit with rugby subculture, more commitment to their club, and higher levels of importance for social infrastructure than did athletes moving directly from high school to club. These distinctions are small, but significant. In general, university students have more in common with one another than do club members. They are facing similar challenges, are at a similar life stage, and have similar responsibilities. The shared values and experiences of university students make it easier to find a shared identity and fit with the subculture. University clubs are often undermanned settings – that is, they have more tasks to assign than they do individuals to take them on. Undermanned settings are known to enhance the commitment of members as they put in more effort per person to maintain the setting.

RECOMMENDATION: Capitalize on the undermanned nature of university rugby setting to recruit and retain players.

There is a slight difference in the importance these two groups attribute to elements of the social infrastructure as shown in the figure following, but it is truly minimal. Successful Movers attach the greatest importance to time spent with other rugby players, and a little importance to drinking and partying. Given the centrality of drinking on many college campuses and the popularly perceived association between rugby and drinking, it is encouraging to note the minimal importance placed on drinking by high schoolers who have transitioned to university rugby. As with other respondents, neither group of

Social Experience

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree
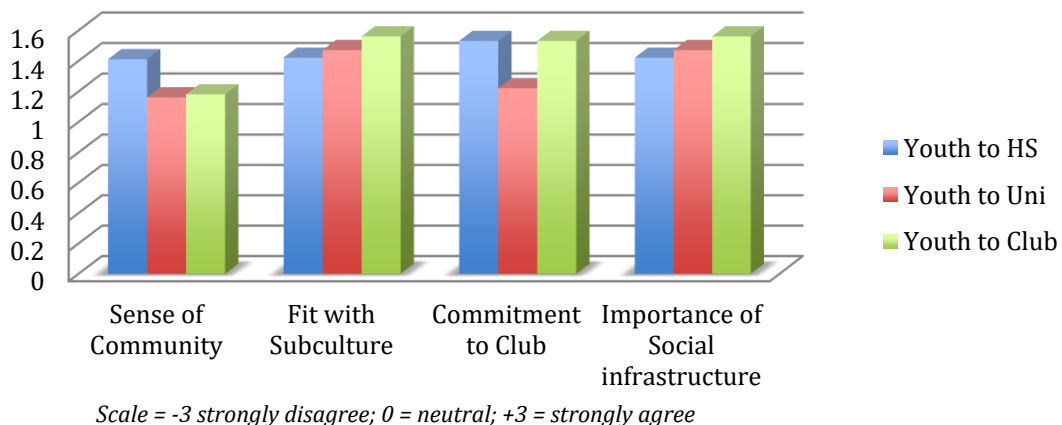
Movers felt that a clubhouse was important. Both high school and university settings have quality facilities available to players, albeit not of the same quality reserved for varsity athletes in other sports. It is surprising, however, that high school to club Movers did not rate a clubhouse as more important than they did. As one interviewee noted, "So, I change in the car. That's OK. I still enjoy [playing and training]."

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Help young players transitioning from high school to find similarities and camaraderie with committed players in the new setting, and to find their personal fit into it.


Importance of Social Infrastructure
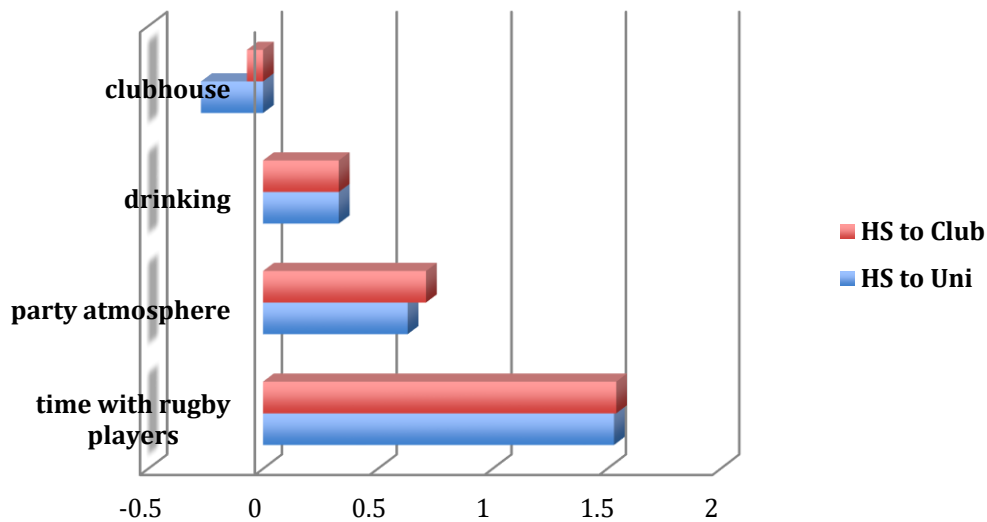
Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

Four questions about players' satisfaction with competitive structures were asked. Respondents reported their satisfaction with: (a) frequency of competitions, (b) quality of competitions, (c) access to top competitions, and (d) seriousness of competitions. Answers are graphed below. There were no differences in Movers' satisfaction with the quality or seriousness of the competitions. Both groups were the least satisfied with their access to top competitions, but were in no way dissatisfied with this element. High school players that successfully transitioned to university settings were slightly more satisfied with the frequency of competitions than were the high school to club Movers, although both groups were, on average, satisfied with the frequency of competitions.

Satisfaction with Competitive Structures
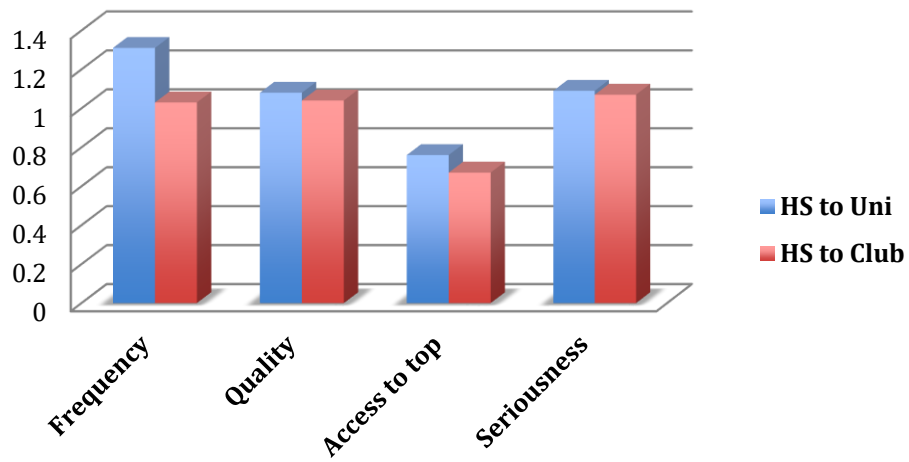
Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

UNIVERSITY TRANSITIONS

This section profiles the transitions of current and former university rugby participants. Of the overall sample of survey respondents, 1825 (58.8%) reported having played at the university level at some time in their rugby career. The figure below shows the transitions made by university players as a percentage of university players in the sample. University rugby is a critical recruitment point and an important gateway to club rugby, which is the setting for lifetime participation.

University Transitions

University only
13%

U18 & Uni
6%

Uni to Club
81%
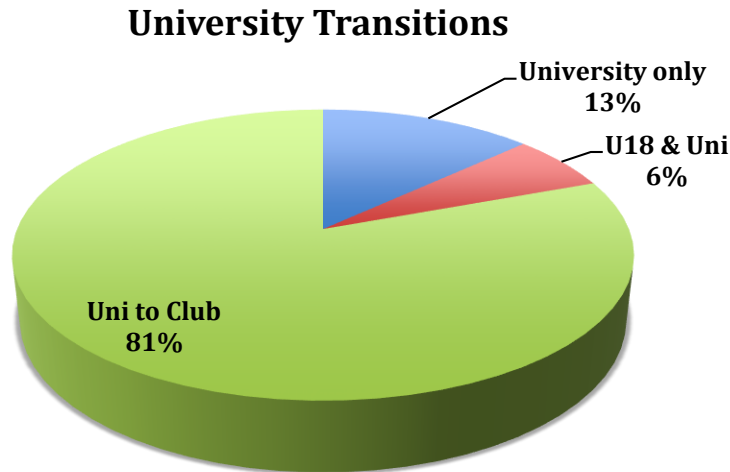
### University (Stayers v Leavers - no club transition)

This section examines players that played in a university setting, but have not or did not make the transition to club rugby. Four such groups are compared: (1) current university players; (2) current university players that played U18 rugby (3) former university players; and (4) former university players that played U18 rugby.

	Stayers (n=240)	Leavers (n=114)
Played University only	167	73
Played U18 and University	73	41

Demographics. There was almost a 50/50 split in our sample between males and females that had only played university rugby. More males (71%) than females in the sample reported a rugby career that included U18 play. Of the current university players, a small portion (5.4%) of the university players were Samplers – that is, they played one year at the university level and then quit, never to play again. Unlike Under 18 levels, more than 70 percent of current university players do not plan to play in the following season. This is far more than would be expected due to graduation. The percentage is over 80 percent for players who had played before university. The news is not all bad, however. When university players who left the sport were asked if they were likely to play rugby again, approximately half said that they were interested in playing again. Fewer than twenty

percent responded that they would not play again. University rugby Samplers (played only a year before quitting) were more likely to say no, they would not play again. But, even Samplers showed interest in playing again. These frequencies and differences in response rate are graphed below.

Interest in Playing Again
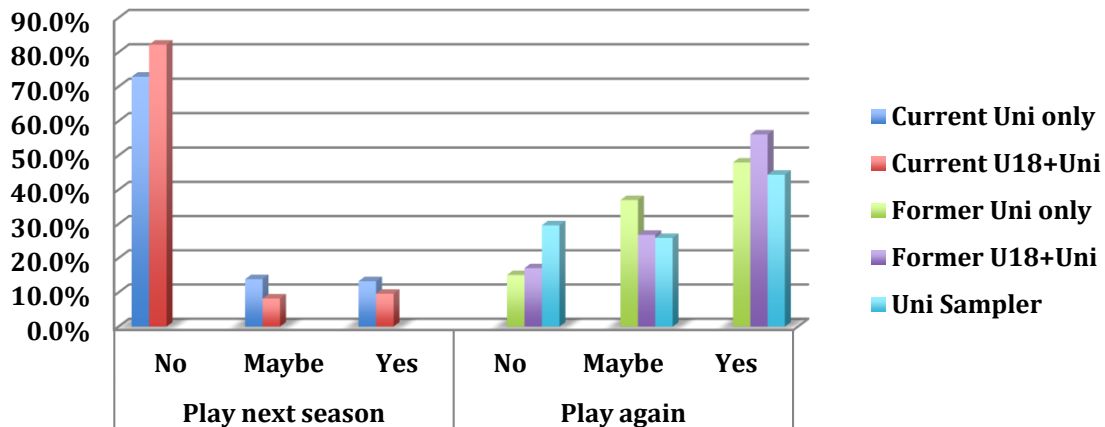
RECOMMENDATION: Create a "come back to rugby" program that invites former university players still in university to come back to their university team, and that invites former university players beyond university age to join their local rugby club. Samplers who do not want to return to their university team, can be invited to "come back to rugby" by joining their local rugby club.

The reasons this group provided in their open-ended responses about leaving the sport are enlightening, and provide further evidence that university players rarely leave rugby because they are no longer interested in the game (see the table following). Rather, it seems that the life transitions that occur with graduation greatly constrain one's ability to remain an active player.

Reasons for leaving	Male mentions (n=77)		Female mentions (n=37)	
Category	Uni only	U18+Uni	Uni only	U18+Uni
Physical (e.g., injury, aging, fear of injury, concussions, fitness, recovery)	12	14	10	-
Career (e.g., work, school, military deployment)	10	4	4	-
Culture (e.g., lack of fit with values or team activities	-	-	2	1
Location (e.g., moved, no team in location, moved away from 'my' team)	4	5	3	1
Transition to other rugby roles (e.g., coach, referee, administrator)	3	5	-	-
Time (e.g., too much time commitment, too many other things to do)	3	3	1	1
Money	-	-	1	-
Family	1	2	1	-
Graduation (have, start, pregnant)	11	2	8	3

Although the number of Leavers providing a qualitative response to this question was small, the results are telling. Graduation from college is a major milestone in participants' lives. The number and type of transitions occurring at this point in time are substantial. This is the time that people begin their career, start a family, and begin their adult lives. These are, for the most part, new responsibilities. For many, they also necessitate a move to another location. Each of these new responsibilities requires time and an adjustment in lifestyle. Each is represented to some extent in the reasons that players leave rugby at this time in their lives. Only three female players attributed their leaving to elements of the rugby culture.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** When recruiting players who are leaving university, provide them help in making the adjustment to new location, career, and family requirements.

Players sometimes left, in part, due to the physical elements of the sport. However, few of these players left *only* because of injury. For the most part, injuries and recovery were listed in combination with work, family, and time constraints. That is, it wasn't merely the fact of the physicality inherent in rugby that impacted their decision to leave; it was the impact of injury (real or potential) on their work and family obligations that made the difference. Two other reasons highlight potential avenues for retention or re-recruitment. First, players are finding ways to stay involved in the sport by coaching, refereeing, and working in club administration. Players want to remain involved in the sport. By providing low commitment forms of involvement during this time of multiple life

transitions, it may be possible for them to play again or to contribute to other players' development.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** As the time, work, family, and physical demands of *playing* become too much for players, provide other avenues for involvement such as coaching, refereeing, and administration.

The second potentially leverageable finding is the high number of players who leave rugby simply because they graduate from university. This suggests that players may not be fully aware of the pathway from university rugby to club rugby. These players do not report any dissatisfaction with rugby; nor do they seem to recognize the constraints to continued participation listed by others. In fact, the only reason they provide is that they have graduated or are no longer eligible to play university rugby. It should not be difficult to retain these players.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Identify and then actively recruit former university players into rugby clubs by inviting them, and by providing systems that then welcome them and help them to adapt to the club setting.

Players' initial recruitment into rugby varied as a function of when they were recruited into the sport (see the figure below). Family members were influential prior to university, but had almost no influence on recruitment into rugby *while at* university. Friends were the primary influence for all players. School personnel were somewhat effective recruiters both prior to and at university. However, the 'other' category has significant influence on player recruitment at university as discussed below.
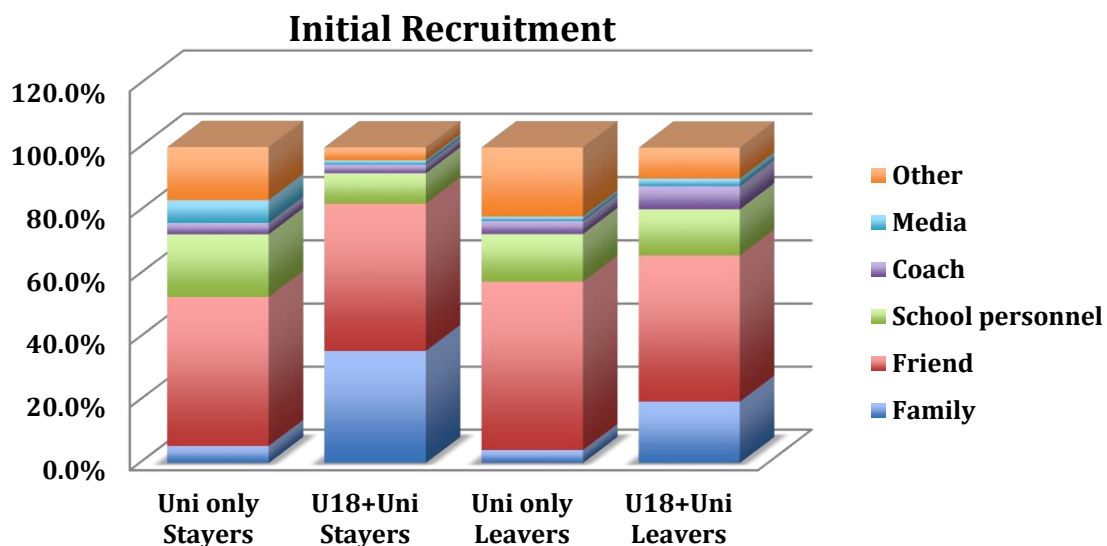
Players recruited while at university report a wide range of recruitment experiences. What is most interesting about this list is the low cost nature of these successful recruitment efforts, and the seemingly incidental nature of many of them. The vast majority of these recruitment efforts fall into three categories: (1) campus-wide events designed to introduce students to student organizations and activities (e.g., Club Fest, Club Fair, Orientation, Quad Day); (2) flyers and signs around campus and student housing areas; and (3) interactions with current players. Interactions with players include personal recruitment by a player, conversations with classmates, fraternity interactions, and even the random act of walking past the team's training session. Most of these efforts are either cost free or of minimal cost other than students' time. In fact, the types of recruitment activities mentioned require little effort and were, in all likelihood, implemented haphazardly. Yet, between 16 and 22 percent of players reported being successfully recruited in this way. Several also went on to explain that they were seeking a new opportunity or a new sport. It would seem that there is a fertile market for rugby at the university level. Recruitment efforts have been neither extensive nor systematic. Small changes can reap potentially big rewards in recruiting new players at the university level.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Assist university rugby programs to design and implement marketing communications (e.g., participation at campus events, posting flyers and signs, fostering word-of-mouth, inviting onlookers at practices) to recruit players.

University Stayers and Leavers reported a wide range of playing experiences and preferences (as shown in the figure below). The standard 15s league format is by far the most common rugby experience. Sevens tournaments and 15s tournaments are also commonly experienced by university players. For the most part, all the groups are quite similar in their experiences. However, there is an exception. Stayers who played before coming to university have significantly more experience with Sevens – both league and tournament. This is most likely a function of the format they experienced in U18 play, as 7s are not listed as this group's favorite format. In fact, Stayers that have only played at the university level are much more likely to prefer a 7s format (18% and 12%, respectively). Both Leavers and Stayers overwhelmingly list 15s league play as their favorite playing format.
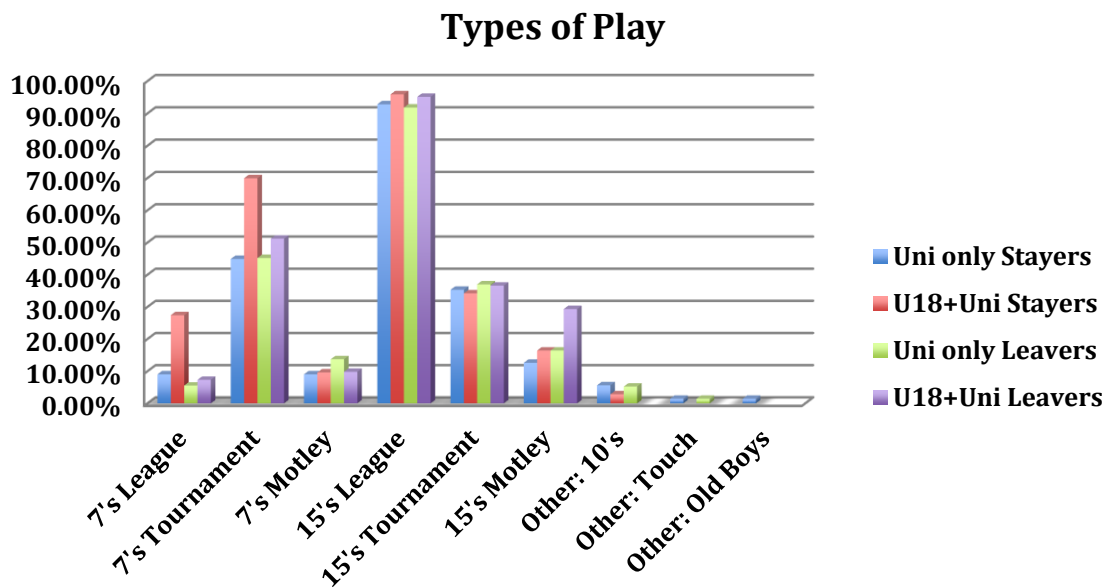
Types of Play

RECOMMENDATION: Continue to offer 15s as the core form of university rugby play, but also enable other forms of the sport, especially at recreational and tournament levels.

Intrapersonal Characteristics. Four types of motivation to play rugby were measured: (1) intellectual, (2) mastery, (3) social, and (4) escape from everyday life (as tabulated in the table below). Not surprisingly, Stayers are more highly motivated than Leavers. The biggest difference between Leavers and Stayers is in Escape motivation. Stayers are motivated by the ability to de-stress and get away from their regular lives, and in particular, to get away from the constraints on physicality that are part of society. Thus, Stayers are motivated to partake in rugby to "get away from everyday life," but also because they "like the physical contact that is part of rugby."

Players recruited into rugby before university experience important and long lasting benefits. They are more highly identified with the sport than are players beginning to play at the university level. Similarly, they have had a longer period of time to develop a sense of their own competence as players. This remains, even after the player leaves the game. To come back to rugby after leaving the sport requires one to feel that they will be competent on their return. Leavers that have played more than just university rugby have high levels of perceived competence, and still report a strong rugby identity. This suggests that these players may be attracted back to the sport at a later time.

RECOMMENDATION: Identify and actively recruit players who played both high school and university rugby by promoting their opportunity to use their skills and to find a place to get away from everyday life.

Variable	Leavers		Stayers	
	Uni only	U18+Uni	Uni only	U18+Uni
Motivation[1]				
Intellectual	1.26	0.94	1.32	1.01
Social	1.33	1.19	1.45	1.27
Mastery	1.37	1.39	1.48	1.60
Escape	0.72	0.88	1.26	1.18
Rugby Identity[1]	0.93	1.11	1.14	1.43
Perceived Competence[1]	1.02	1.54	1.01	1.51
Perceived Constraints				
How often is this a concern?[2]				
Fear of injury	2.73	2.63	1.76	1.34
Recovery time	1.92	1.46	1.16	0.78
Team takes too much time	2.34	2.56	1.11	0.90
Too many other things to do	2.82	2.78	1.49	1.19
Poor skills	0.89	0.41	1.11	0.58
Friends don't play	0.86	0.63	0.51	0.30
No significant other support	0.60	0.83	0.49	0.30
Cost to play	1.05	0.98	0.98	0.71
Club not convenient	1.95	1.29	0.54	0.78
Too much travel	1.34	1.59	0.71	0.68
Don't fit in	0.68	0.73	0.50	0.26
Don't enjoy off-field activities	1.34	1.00	0.40	0.40

[1]*Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree*
[2]*Scale: 0=never; 1=rarely; 2=occasionally; 3=somewhat often; 4=often; 5=very often; 6=always*

The importance of a more extensive rugby experience, both in time and in types of contexts, also shows itself in the patterns of constraints experienced by Leavers. Both groups of Leavers are more affected by constraints than are Stayers. But players with only university playing experience are most likely to agree that these constraints were important reasons for discontinuing participation. Either U18+Uni Leavers learned to cope, to some extent, with some of these issues during their earlier rugby experience, or that experience has provided them with a broader perspective and more realistic expectations. Although less pronounced, this pattern holds true for Stayers as well.

The biggest differences between Stayers and Leavers occur in three general areas: injury and recovery, fit with the subculture, and time/convenience. Leavers find it difficult to make time for rugby. They complain that the team takes too much time, team travel takes too much time, they have too many other things to do, and the club isn't convenient. In short, the benefits of playing do not outweigh the costs for Leavers. Otherwise, the time spent in the sport, would be considered positive and would not be considered, "too much." The other areas are at the core of the rugby experience – the physicality of the game, and the experiences with other rugby players, both on and off the field. It is also important to note that cost does not seem to be an important constraint.

RECOMMENDATION: Help university players with time management, and help them to find value in the time they devote to the sport.

Interpersonal Characteristics. Five aspects of players' interactions with the rugby community were measured: (a) social ties to rugby, (b) sense of community players feel within their club, (c) players' fit with the rugby subculture, (d) their commitment to their club, and (e) the importance they place on elements of the social infrastructure of the sport.

Rugby Traditions

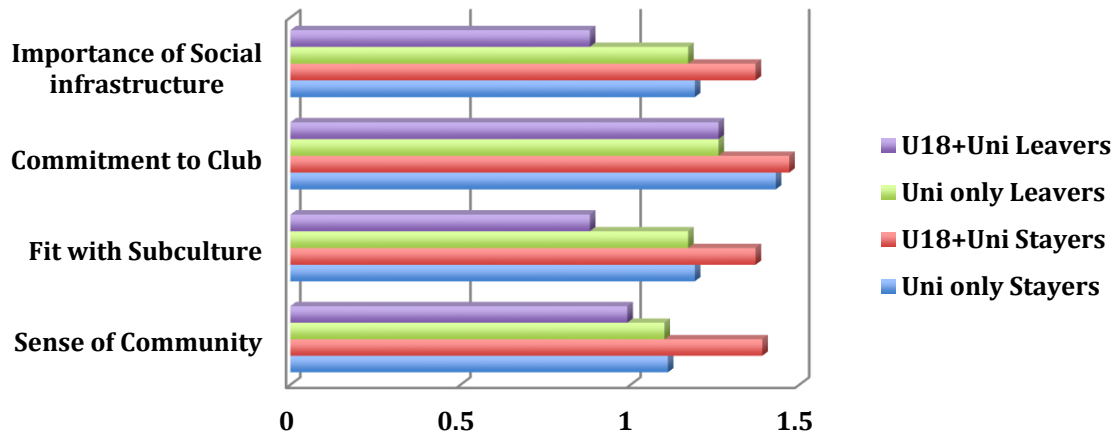Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree
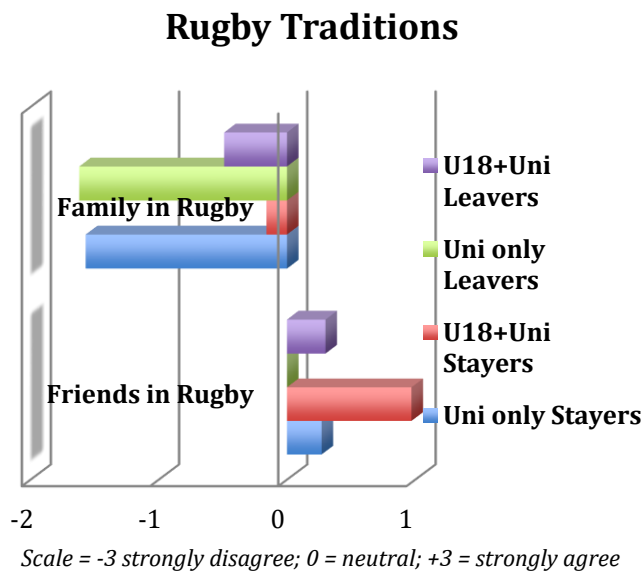
Participants were asked to indicate whether they had friends or family who had played or currently play rugby (as shown in the graph to the left). Social ties are typically a key factor in retention. As you can see in the chart to the left, none of the university players had family in the game, and few reported friends that played or had played. Current university players that had also played on a U18 team were the only group to report social ties of any significance. This makes sense, since they have had more time (and more than one setting) to build a network of friends in rugby.

It is encouraging to see that Uni only Stayers seem to be in the early stage of developing a similar network of friends in rugby. It is also interesting to note that players entering the sport at the university level have almost no family ties to the sport. This may be a function of the fact that rugby is not yet popularly established on the American sport landscape. Interview data suggest that as players feel the effects of aging and pressure to spend time with family, they may be open to coaching at the youth level. In this way, USA Rugby can begin to build the family traditions of rugby that are commonplace in more established rugby nations. Until then, it is important to note that recruitment at the university level does not in any way depend of having pre-existing social ties within the sport.

RECOMMENDATION: Use but do not rely on family or social networks to recruit into university rugby. Begin building social networks for rugby by recruiting friends and family who do not choose to play rugby to become involved in other ways.

The interpersonal and social components of rugby are a source of its strength (as graphed below). Commitment to one's rugby club is strong for both Leavers and Stayers. This strong sense of commitment is associated with a sense of camaraderie among players and a feeling that they fit with the rugby subculture. The social infrastructure seems to play an important role in developing, maintaining, and supporting players' relationships with each other and with their club. Examination of the below shows that U18+Uni Leavers report the lowest levels connection. It is likely that these players have had difficulty adjusting to the social environment of university rugby. Thus, they feel less like they fit, report lower sense of community, and value the social infrastructure (that includes drinking and a party atmosphere) less than all other groups.

Interpersonal Characteristics

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

Elements of Social Infrastructure
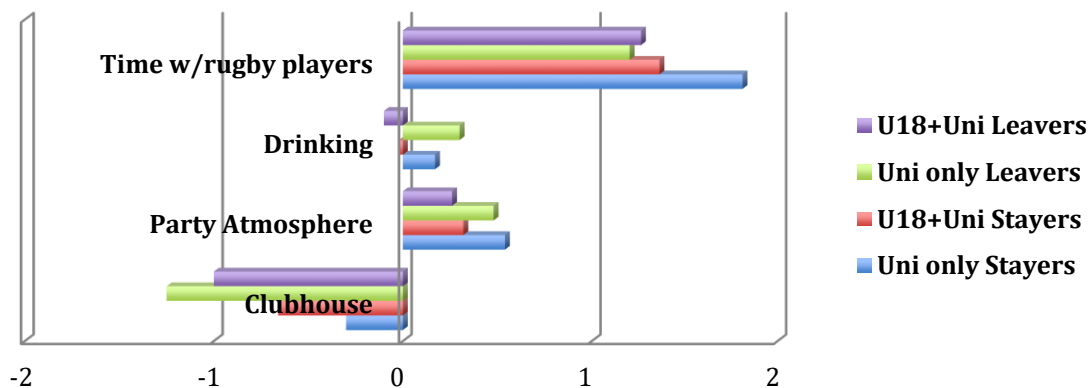
Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

In fact, as shown in the graph above, U18+Uni Leavers report the lowest levels of importance placed on the social infrastructure elements of drinking and a party atmosphere. There is nonetheless, a distinct difference in the degree to which players recruited at the university level value drinking and partying, and the degree to which their counterparts that started at the U18 level value these elements. Certainly drinking was not a part of the U18 rugby subculture. Consequently, U18 players are not socialized into associating rugby with drinking and partying. Yet, the university setting itself tends to value drinking and a party atmosphere. It is not surprising then, that rugby players recruited at the university level place a higher importance on these elements. It is noteworthy that all groups highly value the time spent with other rugby players, although it is likely that the context in which they choose to spend time with one another may vary. Although the majority of university rugby programs are part of the university club sport system, and not part of the university varsity athletics system, they do tend to have access to quality fields for training and competitions. Thus, it is not surprising that the groups do not place any importance on having a clubhouse.

Lastly, four questions about players' satisfaction with the competitive structures were asked (graphed below). Respondents reported their satisfaction with: (a) frequency of competitions, (b) quality of competitions, (c) access to top competitions, and (d) seriousness of competitions. For the most part, players were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with any of the elements of the competitions. The one exception was Stayers that had started rugby before entering university. These players were slightly dissatisfied with the quality and seriousness of competitions. It is likely that some of the university competitions may have seemed more recreational (less serious) than their high school experience, hence the slight dissatisfaction. It is unclear from these data what might be done to improve satisfaction with the competition structures. The current system isn't felt to be bad, but it isn't felt to be particularly good, either. Further exploration of means to improve satisfaction with competition structures may be useful.

Satisfaction with Competition
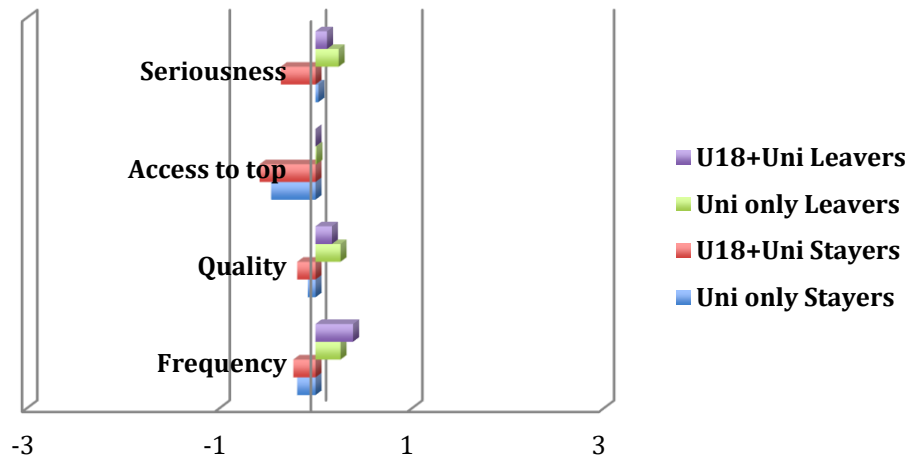
*Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree*

University to Club Transitions

This section examines successful transitions from university to club rugby. This transition is by far the most frequent successful transition among rugby contexts. In fact, the majority of university players in our sample went on to play club rugby. This section compares two groups of Movers: (1) first time Movers (i.e., players that were recruited at university and then moved on to club), and (2) career Movers (i.e., players that started as U18, then moved to university, and then to club). As shown in the graph to the right, the majority of our sample were first time Movers.
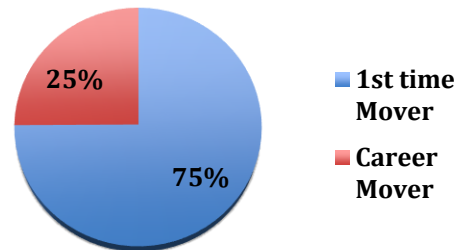
Movers played in a variety of formats, as shown in the figure below. Nearly all had participated in 15s league play, and most had experienced a 7s tournament. These athletes report playing across multiple formats including various forms of 10's, select sides, Old Boys/Girls, and even rugby league. There are no noticeable differences in the two groups in either the formats they have experienced or their favorite format. Both groups showed an overwhelming preference for 15s leagues (75.7% and 76.1%), with no clear favorites across the remaining contexts. The breadth of trial across a wide range of formats suggests that players are looking for different ways to stay involved in rugby, and perhaps seek some variety in their experience of the sport.
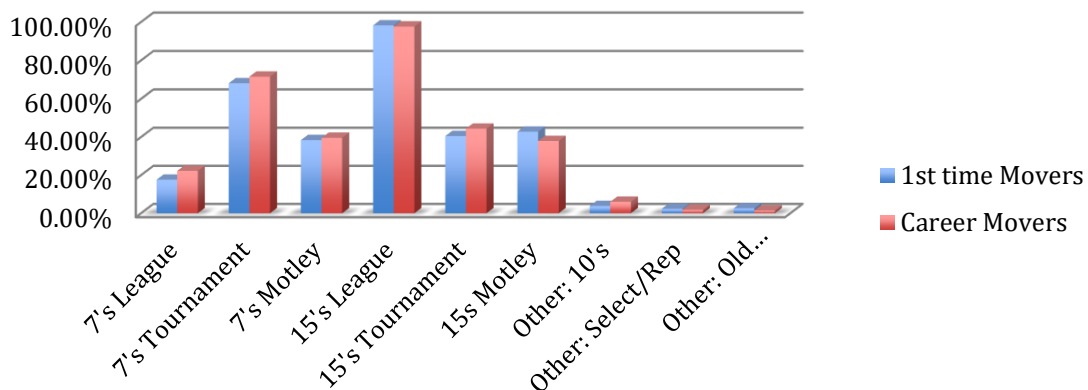
RECOMMENDATION: Maintain the 15s format at university level, but also offer other formats for recreational, tournament, and off-season play.

Although few players reported playing touch, it was mentioned by players as a way to stay involved outside of the regular season without "getting my body beat up." As you can see from the Figure below and to the right, there is some interest in non-contact rugby, but the interest is not universal. Nearly half of all players that have made the transition to club show some interest in non-contact versions of the game. It is important to note that there is still a strong anti-touch segment of players, and that many of those interested in touch rugby are not interested in touch as their primary form of play. Rather, they see non-contact rugby as extending their involvement in the sport. For some, touch is a way to play in the off-season. For others, it is a way to continue to play at all.

Interest in Non-Contact Rugby
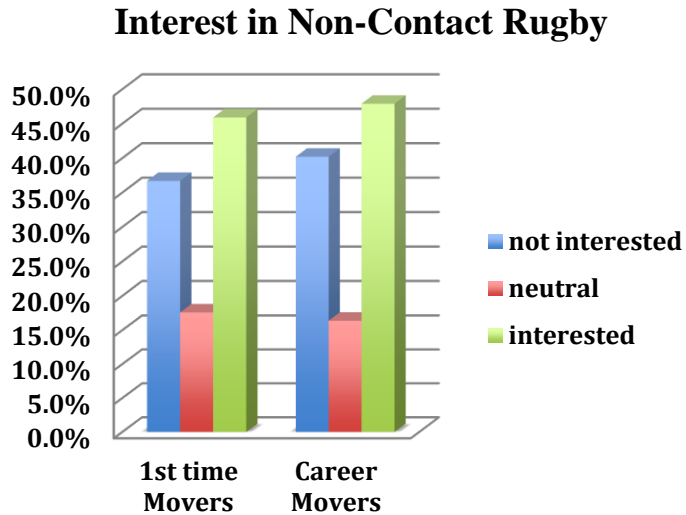
RECOMMENDATION: Offer touch rugby as an off-season and recreational play option for university players.

Intrapersonal Characteristics. Four motives to play rugby were measured: (1) intellectual, (2) mastery, (3) social, and (4) escape from everyday life. These are shown in the table below. The differences between these groups are so small as to be insignificant. Both groups of Movers are motivated in multiple ways to play, with the highest levels reported for social and mastery motives. Both of these groups have some perspective on the game via their experience with other contexts and teams. Both have a positive rugby identity and good perceived competence. Each has learned to overcome the constraints that rugby players face in maintaining their participation. Although they report facing constraints, in particular fear of injury and time constraints, these have not kept them on the sidelines.

Variable	First time Movers (n=1102)	Career Movers (n=369)
Motivation[1]		
Intellectual	1.04	0.87
Social	1.47	1.38
Mastery	1.66	1.58
Escape	1.22	1.09
Rugby Identity[1]	1.44	1.41
Perceived Competence[1]	1.58	1.53

Perceived Constraints

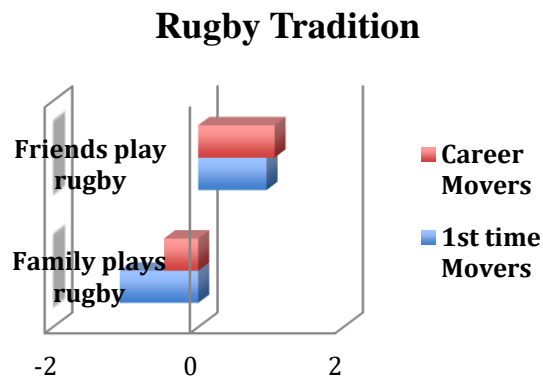|		
Fear of injury	2.02	1.83
Recovery time	1.80	1.63
Team takes too much time	2.00	1.86
Too many other things to do	2.20	2.14
Poor skills	0.63	0.48
Friends don't play	0.51	0.51
Significant other doesn't support	0.86	0.81
Cost to play	1.05	0.95
Club not convenient	1.11	1.08
Too much travel	1.45	1.48
Don't fit in	0.43	0.40
Don't enjoy off-field activities	0.58	0.41

[1]*Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree*
[2]*Scale: 0=never; 1=rarely; 2=occasionally; 3=somewhat often; 4=often; 5=very often; 6=always*

RECOMMENDATION: Appeal to multiple motives with university players; work to maintain and strengthen their rugby identity; help them to manage their time to facilitate their involvement with the sport.

Interpersonal Characteristics. Five aspects of players' interactions with the rugby community were measured and are reported in this section: (a) social ties to rugby, (b) sense of community players feel within their club, (c) players' fit with the rugby subculture, (d) their commitment to their club, and (e) the importance they place on elements of the social infrastructure of the sport.

As with the vast majority of American rugby players, Club Movers have friends in rugby, but no family tradition of rugby participation (see graph to the right). This does not seem to be a problem. In fact, these participants may be the ones to begin a tradition of rugby participation in their own families. Friends of First Movers and Career Movers (52.4% and 38.5%, respectively) were the most common source of recruitment for these players. First time Movers reported a vast array of recruitment influences, including school personnel (11%), family (9.9%), and Other (19.4%). Other influences were mainly interactions with rugby players on campus, flyers and informational events, and random sightings of rugby games, training sessions, or social events. As one player put it, "I saw the team practicing and it looked like fun."

Rugby Tradition

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

Others were seeking to replace longtime sport involvements that had ended for them upon graduation from high school. Still others credited an overseas experience with turning them on to the sport.

RECOMMENDATION: Although using social networks, especially friends, to recruit should be retained as a tactic, also help university programs to design and implement marketing tactics that use multiple channels for communication.
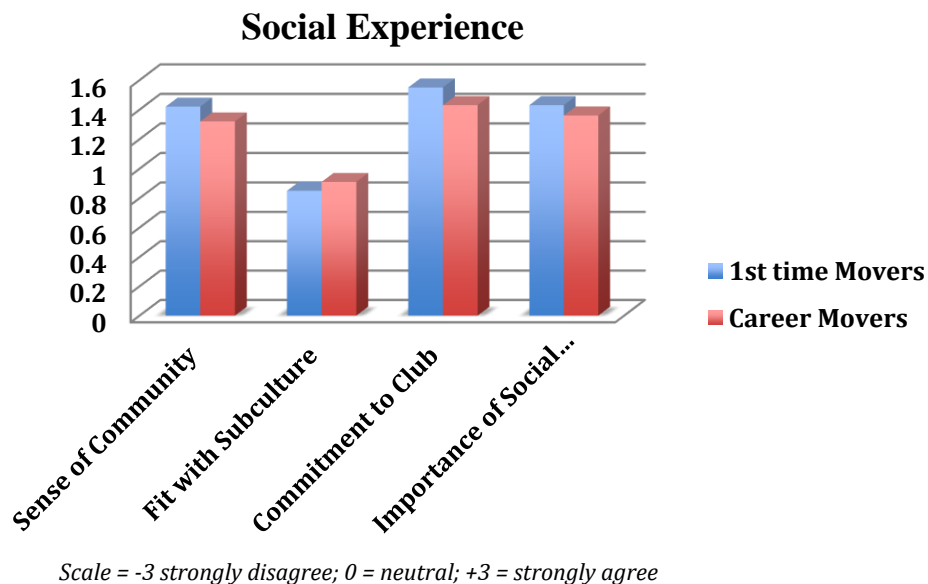
Social Experience

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

Both groups of Movers reported feeling a strong sense of community and camaraderie within their club, and recognize the importance of social infrastructure to support the community (see the figure above). Both groups also report high levels of club commitment. It is interesting to note that while Movers are high in all aspects of social experience, their sense of fit with the subculture is the lowest. This is not to claim that they do not feel that they fit. Rather, fit is the merely the lowest of the four experience variables. The interview data provide some clues as to why this might be. Numerous players spoke to us of the image of the rugby subculture versus their own experience of it. The elements measured by the survey (i.e., drinking, party atmosphere) were deemed to be less prominent in the actual experiences of players than in the stories, myths, and hyperbole surrounding the subculture. In fact, players often acknowledged that drinking and partying were often a part of the rugby experience, but they also stated that they, personally, did not feel pressured to partake. In fact, these same players waxed on about the sense of camaraderie in rugby that they have not experienced in other sports.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Work to reposition the rugby experience so that it is communicated to be much more about camaraderie than partying and boozing. Show camaraderie in multiple ways and in multiple contexts. In so doing, minimize boozy images.

There is no meaningful difference in the importance successful Movers attach to any aspect of social infrastructure (see the graph below). As with other groups, time spent with other rugby players is at least three times more important than the next most important aspect. As with other respondents, neither group of Movers felt that a clubhouse was important, and attached only marginal importance to drinking and a party atmosphere.

Importance of Social Infrastructure

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree
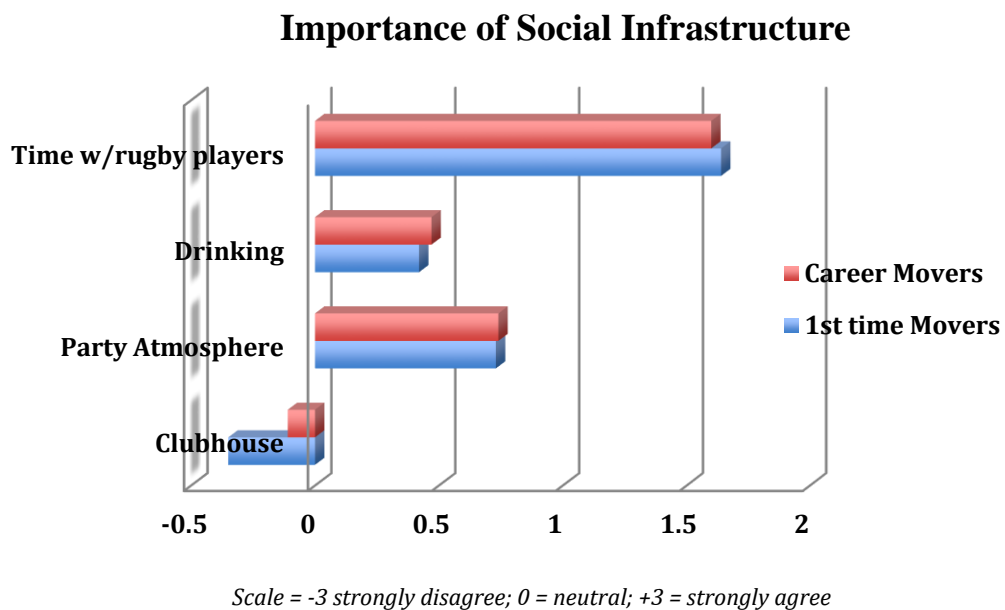
> **RECOMMENDATION:** Before training, after training, before games, after games, and during social activities, provide ample time for university players to enjoy time with each other.

Four questions about players' satisfaction with competitive structures were asked (graphed below). Respondents reported their satisfaction with: (a) frequency of competitions, (b) quality of competitions, (c) access to top competitions, and (d) seriousness of competitions. First time Movers were reasonably satisfied with the competitive structures in place. Career Movers have a longer history with the sport, and are likely to have experienced what they perceive as inappropriate or unfair access to top quality, serious competitions. It is not clear from our data whether these perceptions are real or imagined. Nevertheless, perception matters. structures available to them.

Satisfaction with Competitive Structures
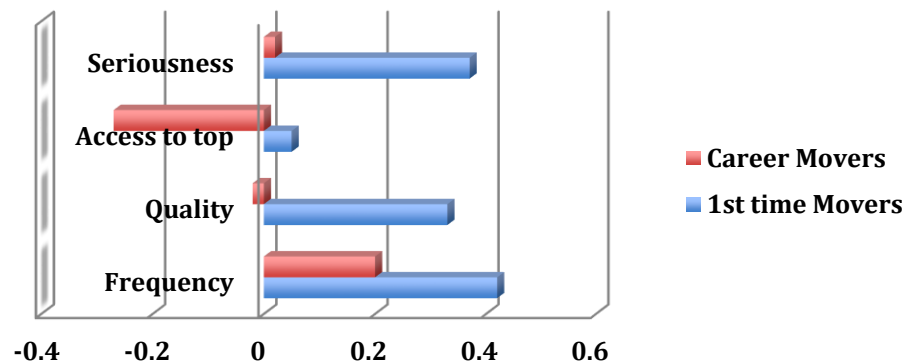
Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

RECOMMENDATION: USA Rugby and its geographic unions should work to communicate and shape positive perceptions of the competitive structures available to players.

CLUB RETENTION

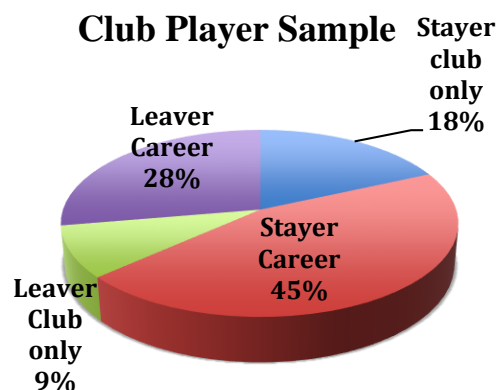The majority of players completing the survey were currently playing at the Club level (63%). Most had played more than Club over the course of their rugby careers. This section of the report compares Stayers and Leavers, and also takes into account whether players entered the sport at the Club level (i.e., Club only) or transitioned to club from another level of play (i.e., Career). Percentages of each type are shown in the graph on the right.

Club Player Sample

Stayer club only 18%

Leaver Career 28%

Stayer Career 45%

Leaver Club only 9%

On average, males play for more years than do females. Females recruited into the sport at the club level play the fewest years of all groups. It is interesting to note that, at least for the men, those currently still playing (i.e., Stayers) already report playing careers that are similar to men that have ended their career. As only three percent of current club players indicated that they would not play again next year, it is likely that playing careers are increasing in length, at least for men. This is not true for women. In fact, the trend is quite the reverse for women that have only played (or are playing) club rugby. See the graph below.

Playing Career in Years

	Leaver Career	Leaver Club Only	Stayer Career	Stayer Club only
Males	15.29	11.85	15.89	12.02
Females	12.33	8.87	12.03	5.32
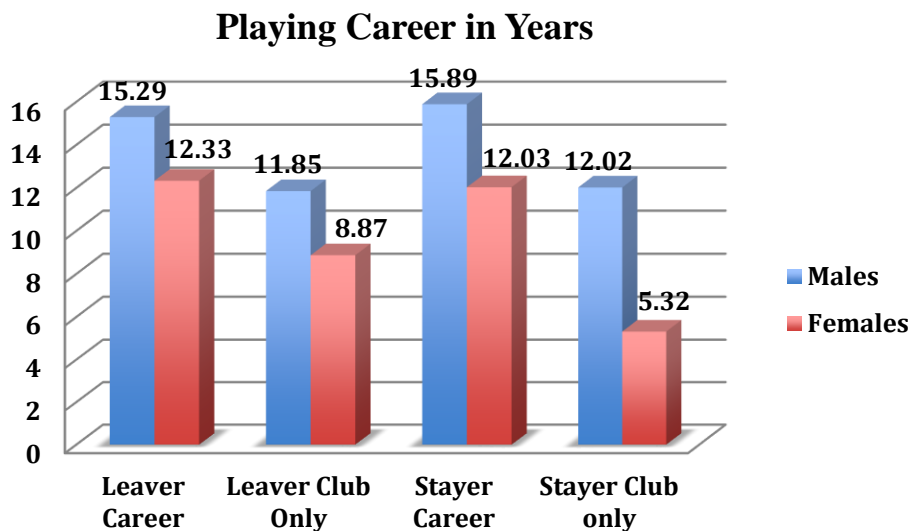
RECOMMENDATION: Programs to retain female rugby players need to be devised, tested, and honed.

Players were overwhelmingly recruited into the club setting by friends (see the figure below). There was some influence of family and media, predominantly late night

broadcasts of rugby matches played overseas. Influences mentioned in the 'other' category are related to one of the following: international or military exposure, personal contact with someone not considered a friend or family member, and personal exposure to a training or competitive session. A few players credited military service or some other international exposure to the sport; some were recruited by co-workers, players, people they met incidentally in social settings. These meetings were often by chance, as noted by current players (e.g., "drunk hooker in a bar," "guy on a bus," "random girls I met at a country fair"). Another dozen were attracted to the sport by seeing it played near their home by their local club teams. These data may indicate an over-reliance on social forms of recruitment, and suggest the need for better use of media and other marketing channels for
recruitment.

Recruitment into Club
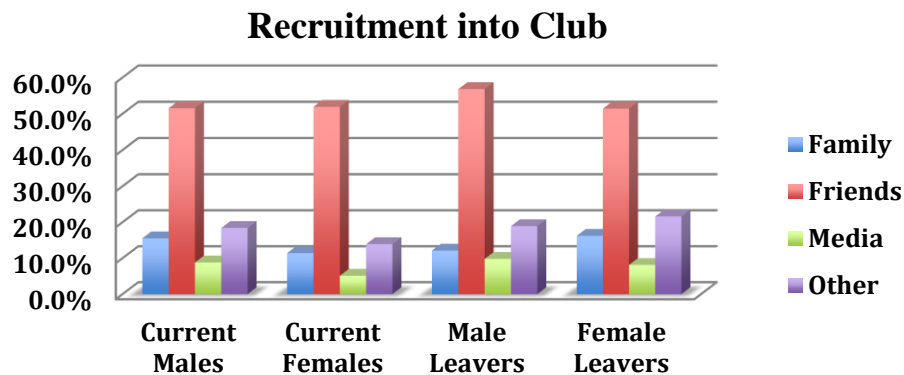
RECOMMENDATION: While continuing to use social networks (friends) to recruit players to club, develop and implement additional marketing communications tactics.

Over the course of their playing careers, club players competed in a variety of rugby contexts (as shown in the figure following). Nearly all players had participated in a 15s league, and most had played in a 7s tournament of some kind. More than a third of all club players had played in a 15s tournament, with current career players most likely to have played on a one-off team. There was an interesting pattern of participation in other contexts. Players recruited directly into club reported far fewer opportunities beyond 7s and 15s. There was some 10s play reported, but at lower frequencies than career players. Similarly, there were fewer reported club only players participating in select or representative sides, suggesting that the development system is moving down, identifying top players earlier in their career. Touch and rugby league play were only mentioned by career players. Although club only players were much less likely to have experienced a broad range of playing contexts, slightly fewer of them indicated the ongoing 15s league as their favorite context.

Playing Contexts
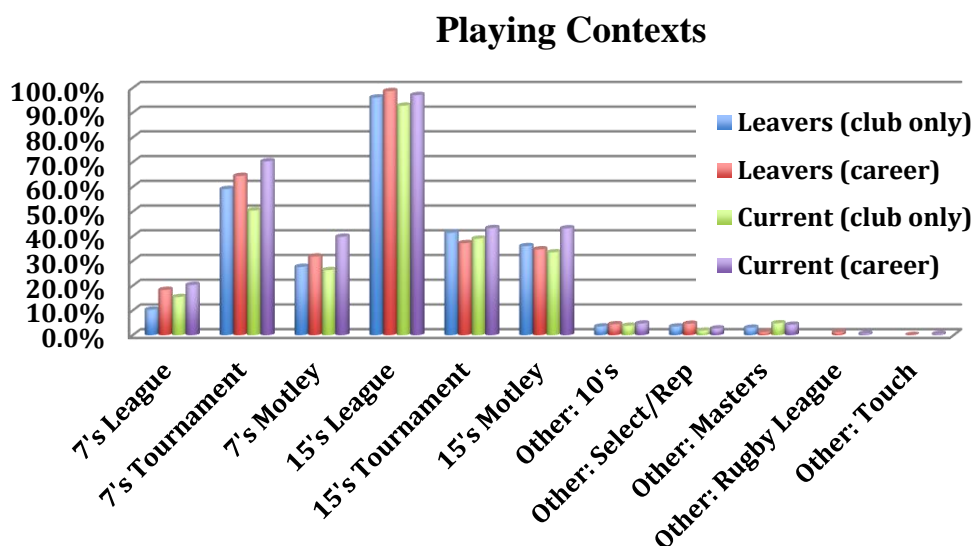
RECOMMENDATION: Provide multiple forms of rugby, especially in the off-season, to enable ongoing involvement.

We also asked club players to tell us how interested they were in touch/non-contact versions of rugby. We looked first at current club players (see figure following). As with other groups, the idea of touch or non-contact rugby elicits both positive and negative responses. There are significant numbers of players interested in playing touch, and nearly equal numbers who have no desire to play touch. Current club-only women seem the most evenly divided with approximately one-third interested, one-third not interested, and one-third neutral. About 40% of the other current players indicated an interest in non-contact rugby. These women did not report any experience playing touch, so perhaps some low commitment experience with touch versions of the game could provide a gateway to extending rugby careers. Still, at least a third of all current players have no interest in touch. It would be useful to know if many players would be interested in touch as a way to extend their participation beyond the regular 15s season, or if they would consider touch instead of full contact versions as a way to extend their career involvement with rugby, as each of these possibilities was mentioned in interviews.

Current Players' Interest in Touch

	current males (club only)	current females (club only)	current males (career)	current females (career)
interested	39.7	30.3	40.1	42.4
neutral	19.4	30.4	26.7	14.1
not interested	40.9	39.2	33.3	43.5
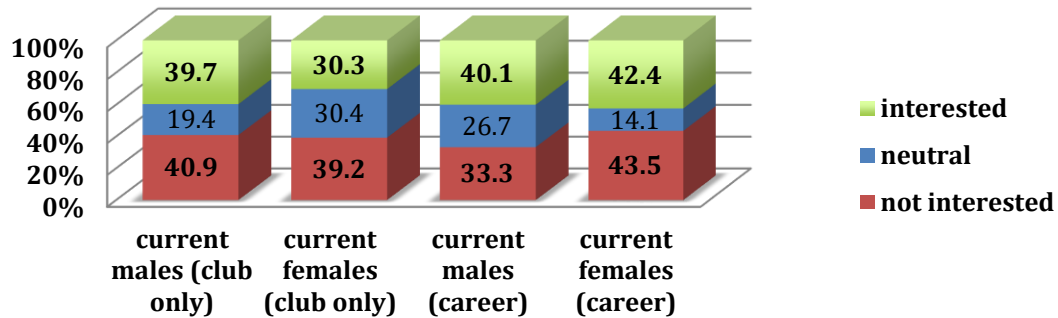
Club players who have retired or left the sport (i.e., Leavers) were much more interested in non-contact rugby (see the figure below). Forty-five percent of male Leavers showed interest in touch rugby, and more than half of female Leavers were interested. Yes, there is still a core group of Leavers that would not be interested in touch, but fewer than in other groups. One might expect that players who had been in the sport longer would be more deeply embedded in the subculture of physicality evident in the sport. This was not true. There were no significant correlations between interest (or lack of interest) in non-contact rugby and the number of years played. One might also expect that older athletes with more wear and tear on their bodies would be more interested in touch versions of the game. This was also not true. There were small but significant correlations between interest in touch and age for male Leavers only ($r = -.251$ for club only; $r = -.165$ for career), but these were in the opposite direction than expected. Younger male Leavers were more interested in touch versions of the game, than were older Leavers. It is probable that younger Leavers may feel that they could come back to rugby without the grinding physicality of the contact versions of the game. In fact, thirty-five percent of club only male Leavers, and forty-six percent of career male Leavers indicated that, yes, they expected to play again. Touch may be an ideal gateway back into the game, especially for male Leavers.

Leavers' Interest in Touch

	male Leavers (club only)	female Leavers (club only)	male Leavers (career)	female Leavers (career)
interested	45.8	59.4	45.8	52.2
neutral	22.6	16.2	15.9	17.1
not interested	31.6	24.3	38.4	30.7
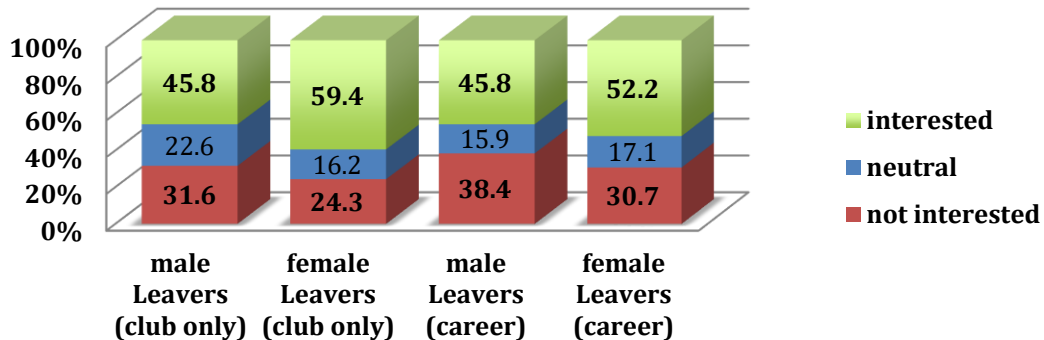
> **RECOMMENDATION:** Offer touch rugby at club level, especially as a means to extend involvement in the sport and to enable leavers to reinitiate their participation in rugby.

Intrapersonal Characteristics. Four types of motivation to play rugby were measured: (1) intellectual, (2) mastery, (3) social, and (4) escape from everyday life. Scores for these and other intrapersonal variables are tabulated below. Players are generally highly motivated to play, with social and mastery motives consistently rated the highest. Women report the highest social motivation across all groups. Club players are (or were) highly motivated to continue to test their abilities, to compete, and to obtain a sense of achievement through rugby. Women and male club-only players reported high levels of intellectual motivation. Male career players (both current and past) were less interested in learning and discovering new things. Current players reported the highest levels of escape motivation, perhaps because they are still able to feel that they are able to get away from 'normal' life for a while when they play. Leavers, particularly female club-only Leavers, are least motivated by escape.

Two things are evident from the mean scores for rugby identity. Current players have a stronger sense of rugby identity than do former players. This is not surprising, as they are still parading and celebrating their rugby identities through active participation in the sport and their club. It is more difficult to feel like a rugby player when you no longer play. However, the more others in one's life see them and have known them as rugby players, the more salient is one's identity as a rugby player. It is in these interactions that identity is displayed, embraced, and recognized. Career Leavers have played in a number of rugby settings throughout their career; therefore they are likely to have a broader rugby network. In other words, their identity is more embedded with rugby due to the array of social interactions they have developed within and across the sport. Thus, they report higher rugby identity than do club-only Leavers. With one exception (female club-only Leavers), perceived competence is higher *after* one has finished playing than it is when one is an active player. This is not as surprising as it might first sound, as current players measure their competence against others at every training session and competition. It is much easier to maintain a high level of perceived competence when it is not regularly challenged.   It is less clear why female club-only leavers perceive lower levels of competence than their currently active counterparts.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Recognize that the motivations of different players may vary, and are probably multiple. Although rugby mastery is paramount, social, intellectual, and escape motives are also important, and need to be taken into account in program development and implementation. Use rugby involvements to instantiate rugby values in order to build and support rugby identity. Recognize evidence of competence to support a sense of competence.

Variable	Current Players				Leavers			
	Club Only		Career		Club Only		Career	
Motivation[1]	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Intellectual	1.52	1.92	1.04	1.45	1.50	1.70	1.17	1.67
Social	1.85	2.14	1.71	2.00	1.65	1.82	1.60	1.99
Mastery	2.06	2.23	1.96	2.04	1.90	1.68	1.91	2.07
Escape	1.57	1.81	1.48	1.65	1.33	0.97	1.24	1.31
Rugby Identity[1]	1.67	1.81	1.74	1.99	1.36	1.21	1.55	1.72
Perceived Competence[1]	1.47	1.52	1.81	1.71	1.55	1.26	1.98	1.96
Perceived Constraints	Club Only		Career		Club Only		Career	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Fear of injury	1.68	**2.01**	1.73	**2.11**	**2.65**	**3.45**	**3.04**	**3.43**
Recovery time	1.60	1.52	1.72	1.69	**2.48**	**2.53**	**2.49**	**2.77**
Team too much time	1.45	1.72	1.75	1.91	**2.71**	**2.89**	**2.90**	**3.32**
Other things to do	1.71	1.87	**2.07**	**2.11**	**3.04**	**2.97**	**3.11**	**3.60**
Poor skills	1.14	1.39	0.69	1.11	0.96	1.24	0.62	0.61
Friends don't play	0.65	0.48	0.51	0.41	0.94	1.08	0.74	0.82
No signif. other support	1.05	0.43	1.05	0.55	1.40	0.87	1.30	0.73
Cost to play	1.06	1.67	1.00	1.88	1.04	1.58	0.87	1.83
Club not convenient	0.79	0.66	0.98	1.29	1.30	**2.32**	1.45	**2.28**
Too much travel	1.14	0.95	0.49	0.56	1.69	1.89	1.72	**2.52**
Don't fit in	0.41	0.61	0.32	0.49	0.68	0.89	0.57	1.06
Off-field acts. not fun	0.41	0.53	0.49	0.57	0.66	1.16	0.71	1.11

[1]*Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree*
[2]*Scale: 0=never; 1=rarely; 2=occasionally; 3=somewhat often; 4=often; 5=very often; 6=always*

Reasons for Leaving

time .01%
moved 9%
work/career 16%
family 11%
injury 46%
age 18%
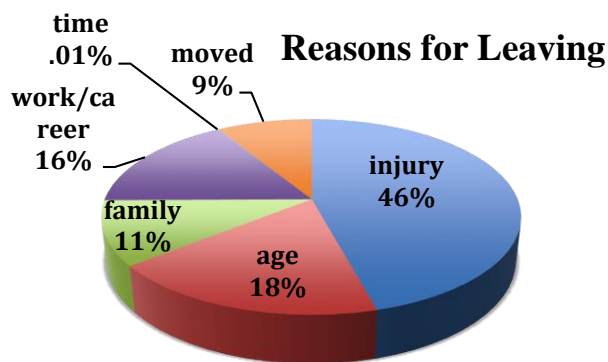
As you would expect, Leavers were less able to overcome constraints and maintain their participation, yet all players face constraints (see table above and the figure to the left). It is a matter of the importance each player places on particular constraints that can affect his or her willingness to continue involvement in the sport. Typically, no single constraint makes the difference, with the exception of a career ending injury. Thus constraints often accumulate, with bundles of constraints growing over time such that the group of them becomes too much to overcome. In fact, that's what you see with Leavers. Fear of injury, problems recovering physically, and time constraints steadily increase in importance until players are no longer able to overcome the group of them. Women face an additional constraint – that of inconvenience – that combines with the time constraints and physical issues to cause them to leave the game. Interview data suggests that there are fewer women's teams. Thus, women may have to travel further to find a club, or to compete. The lack of women's teams is also discussed by women in terms of 'fit' with the club. It is more difficult to find a team whose philosophy, values, and competitive level is aligned with that of individual players. This is particular true for players moving from a university setting to a club setting as they are often looking for a club like "mine," that is, the one they just left.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop more programs for women. If a club does not have enough women to form a women's team, consider a coed version of the game.

When specifically asked to write the reason they left rugby, Club Leavers overwhelmingly cited injury and health-related reasons for curtailing participation. Common injuries listed were back and knee injuries, concussions, and multiple injuries. Nearly twenty percent of injuries that caused players to leave the sport were not rugby injuries. Rather, they were sustained in car accidents or were more general health issues. A related issue mentioned in conjunction with injuries, was a lack of fitness that either kept a player from returning or resulted in the injury in the first place. Age and injury often appeared together, as did work/career and family. Work and family were often mentioned with respect to time, as in, "with toddlers it is very difficult to be away on weekend road trips," "new baby, new job," or "family additions and work hours changed." Relocating was most often mentioned with regard to a lack of opportunities to play in the new location. This was mentioned by twice as many women as men. Moving also served as a break from their current club commitments. Players seem to use the move to rethink their priorities, with rugby sometimes dropping off the priority list. It is

important to note that time does not seem to be a common reason for leaving; when it is cited as the reason, it is almost always in conjunction with another reason.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide low risk options (e.g., touch, flag) to enable participation following injury or a phase back into playing contact.   Where possible, provide support for negotiating bundles of constraints.

Interpersonal Characteristics. Five aspects of players' interactions with the rugby community were measured and reported in this section: (a) social ties to rugby, (b) sense of community players feel within their club, (c) players' fit with the rugby subculture, (d) their commitment to their club, and (e) the importance they place on elements of the social infrastructure of the sport. The first of these is graphed below.

Rugby Tradition

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree
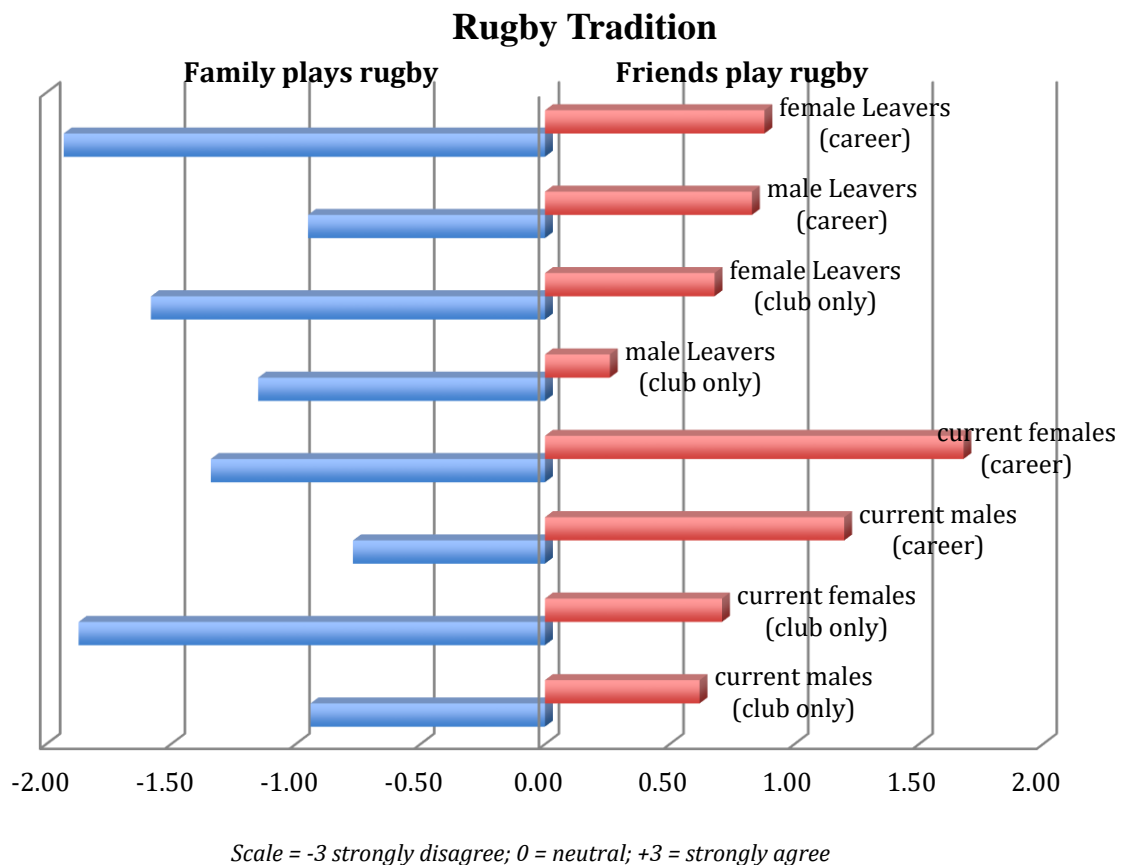
It is safe to say that a family tradition of rugby participation is an anomaly in the American setting. No club groups reported having family in the sport; this was especially true for women. Qualitative data suggest that this may slowly change over time. Career players are beginning to get involved with youth rugby, either as a coach or administrator, as they retire from active playing status. They tell us that this gives them more time with their kids, but less time with the friends they've made in their clubs. Clearly, career players have an extensive network of friends in the sport. One has only to

note the differences between current and former players in the figure above to see the difficulty in maintaining social ties after ending one's active playing career.

RECOMMENDATION: Integrate youth clubs with adult clubs to enable more interaction among players, and to help youth coaches maintain some social life with their home club.

The social experience responses are graphed below and to the left. Current and former players of both genders report a strong sense of community and commitment to their club. They also feel that they fit well with the rugby subculture. Further, they ascribe high levels of importance to the infrastructure that supports the subculture. There are very few differences of note among the groups. One, albeit a small difference, nonetheless provides an important insight. Female Leavers report significantly less fit with the subculture than do the other groups, and do not value the elements of the social infrastructure as highly. It seems that these themselves at odds with some aspects of the subculture. When we look at players'
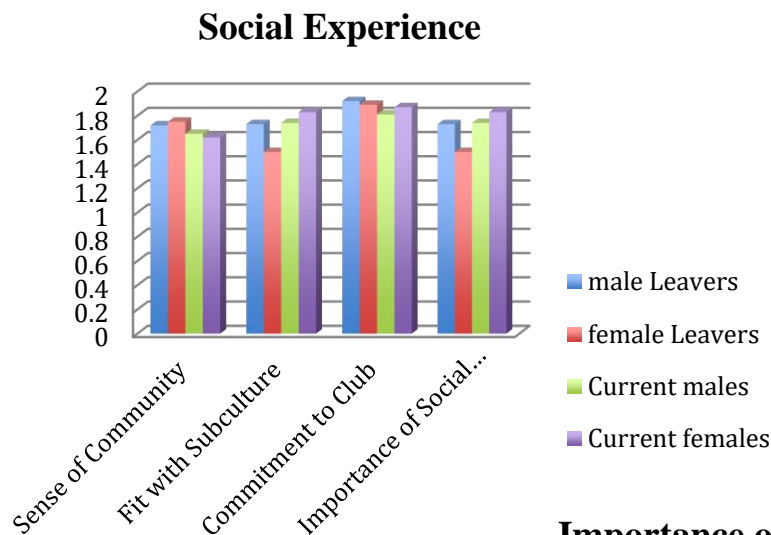
Social Experience

- male Leavers
- female Leavers
- Current males
- Current females

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

Importance of Social Infrastructure

Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

evaluations of the importance of each element of the social infrastructure (graphed to the right), we can understand what is happening. Although it is important to note that no groups suggest that drinking is a critical part of the social infrastructure of the sport, there is still quite a disconnect between the value women and men place on drinking as a key social infrastructure. Women also report slightly less value for the party atmosphere than men do. Men and women agree that the most important element of the social infrastructure is the time they spend with other rugby players. This finding has remained consistent across all groups.
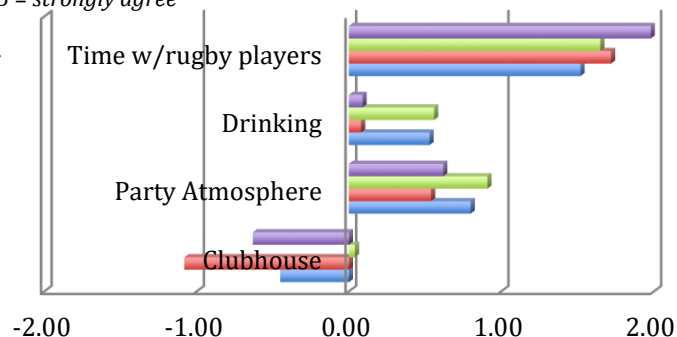
Similarly, club rugby players do not find a clubhouse to be an important element. Adult sport clubs in the United States (other than tennis and golf) are not expected to have their own facilities or field space. Instead, clubs typically rent fields from local parks and recreation offices or from schools. Club level facilities are the least likely to be of high quality of any of the playing divisions, so on the one hand it seems odd that players do not covet their own clubhouse. On the other hand, the club systems in other countries that give rise to rugby clubhouses are still foreign in the United States. Interviews with club players suggest that players are not well satisfied with the condition of the fields they play on, and often change for training in parking lots. Yet the only mentions of a clubhouse came from players who had played with clubs overseas.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Although social occasions, like party atmospheres, are useful inclusions for building the rugby social world, other forms of interaction that enable players to spend and enjoy time together should also be incorporated. In so doing, a clubhouse is not essential at this time. Player expectations with respect to facilities may nonetheless need to be managed.

Satisfaction with Competitive Structures
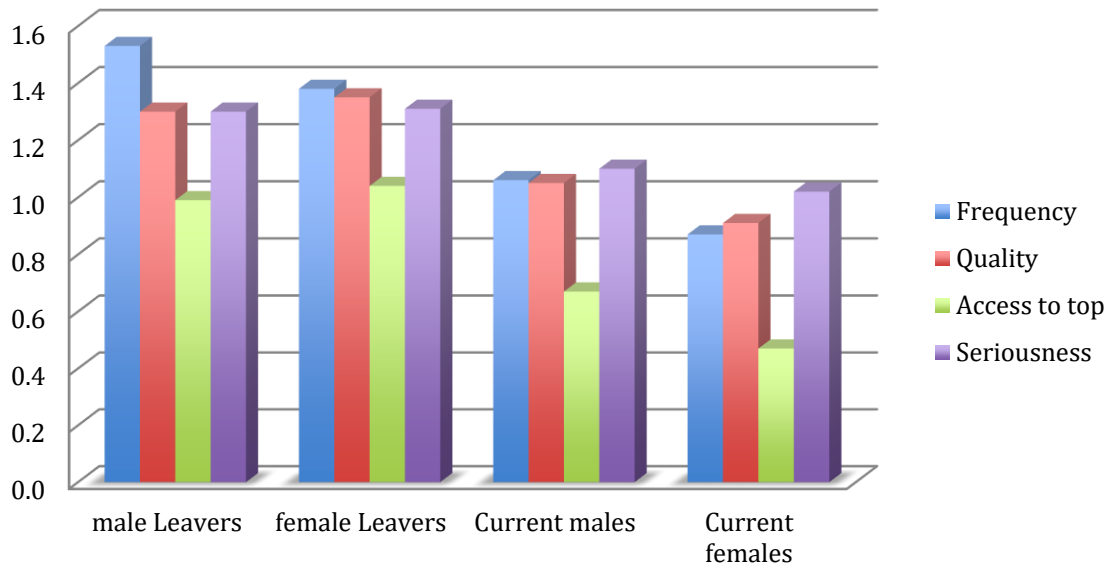
Scale = -3 strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; +3 = strongly agree

Current and former players of both genders were satisfied with the competitive structures. All groups were least satisfied with their access to top competitions. Satisfaction with the frequency, quality and seriousness of the competitions was fairly consistent within each group. However, current players less satisfied than were former players, and current female players were less satisfied than their male counterparts. As we heard in the interviews, female players feel that they have limited opportunities compared with those

available to men. This is seen, to some extent, in the comparison of current males' and females' satisfaction above. As women spoke about their perceptions, the most salient elements were the time and effort to get to women's competitions. Women felt that there were fewer convenient competitions for them. They also spoke of the limited breadth of competitions (and teams, for that matter) for women. Thus, women often played with players who were not a good fit for their skill level or, alternatively, not a good fit for them in terms of their focus. As one player put it, "They wanted to win Nationals, and I just wanted to play. I would have really enjoyed playing in some competitions that were not quite as life or death."

> **RECOMMENDATION:** At club level, the current competition structure does not need to be changed dramatically. Better access to high-level competition, and more competition options of all kinds and levels for women would be useful foci for future development.

Interviews with Current and Former Players

One hundred seventeen interviews were conducted with current and former players of both genders. Players were selected from the USAR database and contacted first by email, then via phone. Players were interviewed by phone. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview questions appear in Appendices F, G, & H. Thematic analysis was conducted within groups, after which a comparative analysis was conducted to identify commonalities and differences. A synopsis of the thematic analysis for each group is presented in the following sections. The final summary includes the comparative analysis.

High School (current players only)

High school player interviews were conducted onsite at the Midwest Challenge Cup, therefore high school player interviews were limited to current players. Nearly every high school player was introduced to rugby by either friends or family. When family was instrumental in a player's recruitment into the sport, it was typically in one of two ways: (1) a sibling played and brought the younger player into the sport, or (2) a non-playing parent suggested the sport or just signed them up for it. As one player noted, "my Mom told me to try it [rugby] because I didn't like baseball." A few of the interviewees became interested through reading about rugby, watching it on TV, or seeing it in a movie.

When asked to talk about the thing they loved about rugby, every high school player mentioned the bonds they had with their teammates. A common refrain was, "everyone has each other's backs." Others seemed both pleased and surprised that the bonds extended beyond their own teammates to include players on opposing teams. A female player noted, "rugby people, even opponents, are all very friendly and supportive." Still others highlighted the respect that everyone has for the sport and their opponents, contrasting this aspect with that of other sports, "rugby is much more respectful, the focus isn't on winning at all costs like football or other sports." The second most valued aspect of their rugby experience was the physicality of the sport, and "getting to hit people." Once again, players contrasted the type of physicality with that of other contact sports. As one young man put it, "It's fun hitting others using form instead of just brute force like in football." Girls also valued the chance to hit and tackle people, with one player noting, "it's fun to be aggressive!" Other valued aspects included the non-stop aspect of the sport, the teamwork involved, and the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of the game. In particular, players enjoyed that you can score from any position in rugby. A former football lineman noted with glee, "I even get to score!"

The downside of rugby was overwhelmingly associated with the injuries associated with playing the sport. These were variously described as bumps, bruises, injuries, pain and soreness, and possibility of injury. At the same time that they worried about injuries, they also appreciated these aspects of the game for what it said about them. As one player put it, "the worst part is the injuries, but playing through them is a part of the game and shows toughness." Other negative aspects mentioned were the amount of running required, the amount of travel necessary, losing, opponents playing dirty, playing against

stronger opponents, and practicing. Something to note is that there were several players who claimed there was nothing negative about playing rugby.

When asked specifically to compare rugby with their previous sport experiences, players proudly claimed that rugby is more physically challenging, faster-paced, more respectful and welcoming, more team-oriented, and has more difficult rules than other sports they play. Players kept coming back to the close bonds they made in the sport, suggesting that they were much closer with their rugby teammates than they were with their teammates in any other sport.

Every single high school player interviewed claimed to have plans to continue playing rugby. Everyone said that they would play throughout high school and a majority said they were planning to play during college. When pressed, they all said they would consider playing past college depending on various factors such as physical health and ability. Several even went so far as to say that they would play until their body no longer allowed it.

High School Movers (to College and to Club)

Both male and female players routinely comment on the camaraderie within the sport. The bonds they form are important on the field: "On the rugby team, everyone's more a team player. No one's really out there for themselves." Players comment on the truly team-oriented nature of play that they see as very different from other team sports. Along those lines, they also note the inclusiveness of rugby and the fact that everyone can play. As one player put it, "you can be big and slow, small and fast, pretty much any body type can play rugby… and be a full part of the game." They also appreciate the camaraderie that extends to opponents and the social life around rugby. One current player put it this way, "There is nothing in my life that can really compare to the type of enjoyment that I had at those types [post match] of gatherings." Lastly, the camaraderie is not superficial. Players commonly noted the importance of rugby friends outside of the season, as well as throughout their lives. A female player said it this way, "The friends I made when I played rugby, we still hang out when the season is over. It's more a lasting friendship that we have." Although extreme, this comment was more common than one would expect, "I owe my family to rugby. The best man and the other folks standing up in my wedding, I met in rugby." In short, rugby is more than sport for these players; it is a pervasive presence in their lives through the relationships they build with others in the sport.

When players discussed the transition from high school to college rugby, two main themes arose. First, players talked about the step up in size, strength, speed, and intensity of the game. At least for men, coaches were identified as helpful in making this transition. Women were less likely to report having anything other than player-coaches. Player-coaches were not mentioned as helpful resources for moving from high school to college rugby by men or women. Successful transitions required a significantly higher time investment, one that included more physical training (often on their own), more time spent on rugby-specific training, and more time traveling to compete. Players noted the

challenge of adjusting to increased time demands for rugby while also maintaining good study habits.

The second theme was also about time, but time spent off the field. Players noted the change in support from parents and coaches during high school to a heavy reliance on teammates for support in college. This was generally seen as a positive change, and contributed to the camaraderie and bonds discussed in the previous paragraph. The rugby 'family' they developed in college placed significant non-playing demands on their time – both socially and administratively. As one player put it, there was a big difference in "the magnitude of social life" surrounding rugby in the college setting. Others described the time demands for fundraising that ultimately resulted in players leaving the team. A variety of administrative roles were highlighted including recruiting, social director, scheduling, and organizing team travel. It was only when players also had issues with team culture that the administrative load resulting in players leaving the sport. For example, players sometimes complained about the lack of maturity of teammates that would prioritize partying over match day competitiveness. Others noted the "social" nature of the team, that did not suit their competitive natures.

Although not a major theme throughout the data, women reported an increase in stereotypes associated with playing a contact sport when they got to college. They also suggested that changes in playing style and skill development could be more challenging for females making the transition from high school to college rugby. One player explained the difference this way, "When you get to college, the mindset is completely different because in high school, we're like, we're girls, so we're not used to playing rough sports. When I got to college I had to learn to hit… the physicality and aggression are scores apart [from HS to college]." Another noted, "It's easier for men to come out and for men to want to hit each other than it is for women. For women it's just so masculine for a lot of women, so they feel intimidated by it."

Very few players in our sample went directly from high school to senior club rugby. The few that did either grew up in a rugby nation and moved to the U.S., played on development or high-level elite teams while in high school, or played for a high school with an existing relationship with a local senior club. No matter how they got from high school to club, players were unanimous in the challenges inherent in making this transition. They all noted the huge difference in physical maturity of players at these levels. A high schooler described his transition to "playing with men" this way: "The best part was how everyone just took me under their wing. The hardest parts were the physicality and speed, a huge step up. It was definitely an enormous learning curve." Each also noted the increase in commitment and personal responsibility that came with the transition. One player summed it up by saying, "I feel at this level (club), the commitment has to be a lot stronger. You have to be more committed to it, simply for the fact that no one's on your ass to get to practice, it's all up to you."

The final themes examine reasons for leaving the sport. Two main themes arose: injuries and opportunities. Nearly every interviewee had experienced some type of injury. A current player told us, "I have dislocated my shoulder a couple of times. I have a kind of

ligament involved; I dislocated my ankle. I don't have as many lasting effects as I should." He is still playing. Multiple injuries were not uncommon. In fact, it was often the accumulation of injuries that caused players to discontinue participation. A significant number of players stop playing at the end of their collegiate years. Interviewees in this group reported that they no longer had the opportunity to play after college. Some moved to areas where there were no club teams. Others felt that the teams available to them were not attractive; they were "too competitive" or "too social" or as one player put it, "we played against the local club team during college. I didn't enjoy them, so I never considered playing for them."

University Only

University players come to the game via a wide range of contacts with the sport and with people in the sport. Often they are merely seeking something to do. A male player described his 'recruitment': "They were playing rugby outside of my dorm and I was like, shit why not? Why not? I'll go. I went to the first practice." The randomness of recruitment is quite striking. Others also commented that they saw people playing and decided they would try it too. There were, of course, more formal recruitment efforts that routinely attracted students. These included rugby social events, personal recruitment efforts by players, and student activities and club days in which student groups were able to have a table at a college-wide event to introduce the student activities and clubs on campus. A number of interviewees told us that they had played sport in high school, but were not able to continue playing their sport at the university level. They saw rugby as a chance to continue their athletic career. The obvious sport switchers came from sports like football, soccer, and wrestling, but others were also attracted to making the switch to rugby. A former cross-country runner explained it this way, "I was a runner. I never did any contact sports. A lot of people don't want to step on the field, but as soon as you get the first hit, that first little piece of rugby, you're like, 'Man, this isn't so bad.' I kind of like doing this."

Still others either sought or discovered a ready-made social support group. As a female player put it, "When I first joined it was great to have older people I could ask for homework help, for advice on what classes to take, or people to hang out with around campus." Not only was this an effective recruiting tool, but it often formed the bedrock of retention efforts. One player described it this way, "It was just the togetherness and especially when you're away from home. You're looking for a second family and I think that the rugby team, especially at our school, filled that void in becoming second family for us." No matter how they described it, every player mentioned the welcoming environment in rugby. For example, one player explained how his team overcame the dysfunction of having a bunch of players new to the sport, "It was all the team just taking in rookies and really showing us the sport and trying their best to integrate us. It was great."

Beyond the camaraderie and social life associated with college rugby, players also mentioned their enjoyment of the nature of the game. Everyone reported feeling that they contributed to the team, no matter their physical attributes. Few women in this group

admitted to being affected by stereotypes of women who play contact sports. In fact, one women felt that rugby was one of the few sports that was truly equal, at least in some respects, for men and women: "I like the aggression. I like the power. I like how it makes you a stronger person both on an off the field. The rules and the ball and all of it, it's the same as the men's team. There's (sic) not any differences because women are playing it."

Interestingly, university-only players spent most of their interview time describing the people and the social life around their sport, and little time on playing aspects. That's not to say that they did not enjoy playing. They certainly did. In fact, current university players expected to continue playing after graduation. Some had even begun to google clubs in the area to which they would be moving. They were certainly well-intentioned when it came to thinking ahead to a potential transition to the club setting.

Leavers in this group were also well-intentioned, and even suggested that they would be interested in returning to the game. However, the challenges to returning were still salient. One player succinctly described the challenge: "think the biggest challenge is just once you graduate, you're trying to transition into your job and stuff like that out of college." The 'and stuff' can include a move, a new job, new responsibilities, and even the start of a new family. In short, these are major life transitions. It is not surprising that players find it difficult to deal with all of these *and* find a new club to play for in the midst of it all. Yet, they do miss playing. Consider the following quote from a former university player:

> I was working. I'm a teacher so I was just a first year teacher. It was crazy. I was like, 'I can't have any extra time for rugby.' Even this year. I miss it. I want to go back to it. My old teammates told me, 'Sevens. It's more fun.' I was like, 'Yeah. I kind of just do it for a fun team just to get back into it.

Time concerns coupled with a desire to maintain some involvement spurred some players to pursue alternative involvements. Some coached, some refereed, and others sought less less committed playing involvements. Summer sevens were seen as a viable way to stay involved, or to 'get back into it.' Others simply showed up at convenient tournaments hoping to get picked up by shorthanded teams. One such player described it this way:

> In grad school, kind of had time constraints and then now that my wife finished her degree we moved and there isn't a current team. I can put my cleats and a mouth guard in my bag and show up at pretty much any tournament. You don't miss out on the social aspect because after you play three games with them and you go and hang out with them afterwards, you still get that but there's not the time commitment or the money commitment that there was playing on a regular team.

Even when players could find the time to play, they worried about the availability of clubs in their new location. They also had concerns about the potential choice of clubs and their fit with a new club. This was more often a concern for women, but men also worried about availability and fit. Their bigger worry was that they would get injured. As one player noted, "I'm out of college. I can hurt myself now. That's another big reality.

You have to think about it." Another put it best, "Currently at 33 years old I don't know if you could pay me a million dollars to step back out on the pitch. I'm not trying to get injured again." Clearly, safe alternative involvements are needed to assist these players to keep some skin in the game, but with less commitment than is traditionally required of senior club players.

University to Club Movers

Players who transitioned from university rugby to club rugby reported recruitment into the sport that was comparable to players who only played at university. Many described the process as "random," and talked about the role that classmates, friends, flyers, and campus festivals showcasing clubs played in bringing them to try the sport. Clearly, those who made the transition from university to club rugby enjoyed their university experience enough to want to continue. However, they did find the transition to be challenging.

In some instances, there was no club available locally. If there were enough former university players around, and if they were socially in touch with each other, the players occasionally started a club. Most commonly, however, players had to find a club. It was rare for the club to find them unless they already had a friend from university rugby that was with the club.

The challenges associated with transition depended on the nature of the university training and playing environment from which they came, and the training and playing environment provided by the club. For men, the core differences had to do with intensity, expected commitment, and quality of coaching. One or more of these might have been stronger in one experience or the other, and making the adjustment was a challenge. A current male club player who found the transition to require less intensity said, "Going from my freshman year until the junior and senior years, we got a lot more competitive and we did a lot more training and things together as a group…. You get to club level and we only practice two times a week, and we play games one time a week. It's much more relaxed." On the other hand, a current male club player noted the need to adjust in the other direction, "In college, you're there for kind of the fun of it…. My club is much more organized and intense."

Women, on the other hand, found the transition to require adaptation to much more intensity and commitment. As one current female club player described it, "There were only a handful of people from my college team that went on to play for women's teams. I think the reason they stopped playing was because they weren't ready for the level of play [and it is] more likely that you could have a serious injury." Another described the transition by noting, "It's a lot of time and a different level of competitiveness. They may come from a college where they're going to automatically play no matter what…. When you start getting competitive , all of a sudden you have to fight for your position – realizing that it's just not two days a week to practices; it's actually having to train on the off days and work on your skills and all that stuff." On the other hand, nearly all the women who played university described their university teams as self-coached, and those who were in club situations they deemed to be well-coached appreciated the difference.

One current player describe it by saying, "When I was in college we didn't have a coach. So, the first time I ever played with a coach was when I was at club level. So I learned more in the first year than I did in the whole five years I played in college."

Men and women also noticed the loss of status in the transition from university to club. As a male current club player put it, "Having to prove yourself all over again was challenging." Another said, "It's basically a step up on the respect. You really have to come and put your body on the line for the first couple of years to get respect from the people on your team."

The transitions to new expectations and changes in status were made possible particularly through the help of players already on the team. Social support mattered. A current female club rugby player described her experience this way, "When I joined, I had a lot of support…. They would always help me out … or they'll direct me to someone else who plays that would be able to help me answer questions."

The male dominance of so many clubs was deemed an issue by many women, who felt that it relegated them to second-class status. It was also a reason that some women quit. A woman player who had quit playing at club, although she had enjoyed university rugby described the problem by saying, "I dislike the fact that [the club] was run off of the guys' program. Girls' sports a lot of times are not the same as guys' sports. We're not as fast…. If you watch a girls' rugby game compared to a guys' rugby game, the girls' rugby games just look like a mess….. If more teams have coaches who coach to the girls and not coach as rugby in general, it could really start off being an awesome program."

Males and females otherwise had very similar reasons for leaving club rugby. The most common were injury, fear of injury, and the competing demands of family and work. The cost of playing rugby was also mentioned frequently, particularly when a team had to travel to distant locales to play its games.

Nevertheless, leaving the sport risked leaving the camaraderie that every interviewee in this category mentioned favorably. Consequently, many of those who had left looked for other ways to be involved, whether as an administrator, referee, coach, or supporter. A male former player said, "I love the game, and I love our club. I may not be able to participate anymore on the field, but I still can help organize … because those are the kind of things I can do that doesn't take a lot of my time." Another said, "Before I had children, it was for my own personal goals.... Now as a coach for kids, I've always thought we have a very nice model for being good citizens. We shake each other's hands after the game … and then we [socialize and] tell stories."

Current players also think about what they will do when their playing days are over, and they think about other ways to stay involved with their clubs. As one put it, "I'd like to continue as long as I can. I don't know how long that will be, but when that does end, I won't be done…. I will probably move into coaching and officiating." Another said, "There's times when I think about being a referee. Refereeing would be a nice way to

stay involved in the game while also being involved in something that you can focus on getting better at."

Senior Club Players (Current and Former)

Club players were the most varied in their experiences of rugby. They were nearly uniformly recruited through friends and family, albeit sometimes the friends were better characterized as acquaintances. The bigger issue at the club level is retention. Players' characterizations of the sport are wide ranging and highlight the potential frustrations that players have with the sport. Some players characterize rugby as a hobby. This view paints a picture of rugby as a recreational outing that competes with other leisure activities for participants' time. This is a low commitment view of the sport. As one female player explained, "It's a hobby for most of my teammates so if something else comes up, they go do that. We have a lot of trouble getting enough players sometimes."

On the other hand, some players characterize rugby as a lifestyle. This is a high commitment vision of the sport in which time, effort, social and financial resources are prioritized to maintain participation in rugby and embeddedness in the social network of the club. As one high commitment player put it, "It's hard to balance being a normal member of society, and also being part of a rugby club." All players highly value the camaraderie of rugby, but some also note that it is all encompassing and affects relationships outside of the sport. As one player put it:

> As soon as you start playing rugby it's like joining a cult, your friends don't really want to hang out with you as much anymore, but your new friends are your rugby friends and they're great. It's sort of funny that I lost a lot of friends during that time because I wanted to hang out with my rugby friends.

The cult-like nature of rugby involvement is both a strength and a weakness. It creates a warm, welcoming environment that is conducive to recruitment. It can be a powerful retention tool, *if* new players share the same values and seek the experiences that are celebrated. Two things must occur for this to happen. First, players must already value or learn to value key aspects of the culture. They must enjoy (or learn to enjoy) the physicality of the game, and they must value the time spent interacting with club members *more than they value alternative involvements.* Interviews with players that tried rugby for a year, but did not continue are instructive. One player explained it this way, "I don't like getting hit. I would wake up on Sunday and I couldn't move my neck. I would get all these bumps and bruises. I felt like I couldn't do anything on Sunday because I was so hungover and in physical pain." Another noted the time commitment:

> A game would only be an hour and a half long. You couldn't just go do that. That's not rugby culture. You would travel there, or it was a home game. Then afterwards you would go to the bar and you would eat and drink. The next thing you know it was eight o'clock and you were drunk and in pain.

These two reasons come up consistently with one-year players. Some of these concerns also began to creep into the conversations with older players, although it was framed differently. Older players still claimed to enjoy the physicality, but noted that their bodies were now unable to sustain the physical demands or to recover quickly from the physical nature of the game. These players looked for alternatives that were less demanding on their bodies. They often moved into Old Boys, thus they only subjected their bodies to the physical demands once per week in the competition, rather than also including midweek training sessions.

Similarly, as players' life circumstances changed, their priorities also changed. While these players still were highly identified with rugby and enjoyed all elements of the game and the culture, work and family began to take precedence over all day rugby competitions and midweek training. One family man explained it this way, "My kids now play sport on Saturday. I want to be there for them. I can't imagine just showing up for my team's match, then leaving immediately. It just wouldn't feel like rugby. My kids are my priority right now."

In fact, it was fairly common to have gaps in your playing career. Some players had difficulty finding a team right out of college, but were able to find one later and come back to the game. Others played for a while until their circumstances changed, took some time away, and came back. The key to coming back was their connection to the game. Connection took the form of staying in contact with college rugby teammates, staying in touch with current club mates, or even following rugby through a variety of media sources. When players were unable to come back, it was most often attributed to a lack of fitness and fear of injury.

Many of the former players were no longer playing fifteens, but sought out other, less formal (and less strenuous) playing opportunities such as social sides at the club, and touch sevens. One player even suggested, "I would love it if there were enough people… that would want to get together just to have a regular touch 7 game like people play softball once a week. That would be awesome!" The love for game and desire to keep playing doesn't seem to go away, even when it logically should. As an older gentleman told us, "I've blown out, I've tore a calf. I've blown out a couple of ankles. I just can't stop. It's too fun." Yet, some are forced to stop due to injury. It is encouraging to hear that even these "Leavers" find ways to continue their involvement. They coach, they referee, they take on administrative roles in their club. In short, they find ways to maintain their rugby lifestyles.

Careerists (played U18, University, and Club)

Interviews with Careerists were nearly twice as long as with other players. This reflects the longer and more varied experiences of these players, as well as their perceived understanding of the sport more broadly than that of their club or region. Nearly every careerist we spoke with had played, at some point in his or her career, on a select or development team of some sort. Most often, these players had been identified as elite early in their rugby careers, and had received opportunities to play at a higher level than

their high school teammates. Many had traveled or toured with a team, or had some experience playing overseas. As a result, they had a broader understanding of the state of the sport in the United States, and the strides it has made in the past decades. Because they had played in a variety of settings, they were able to speak knowledgeably and critically about the sport of rugby, the ways in which players are retained, and the challenges in moving from one rugby setting to another. To a person, these players appreciated and were excited by the growth in the sport in the U.S. One player captured this feeling in his comment:

> Over the years, being able to see how the game has grown… There's teams popping up all over now, and being able to go to Vegas and see… they host that international tournament now. I read na article about women's rugby as the fastest growing sport in the nation. It's cool to see that more people are becoming aware of it and how awesome it is. That's probably what keeps me playing too, just being part of the growth.

And yet, these same players recognize that there still aren't enough players or teams to cater to all skill levels, as a female player complains, "The teams in my area are really good. They don't have any intermediate or beginner levels, so you'd have to be really good to play or you have to travel really far." These players also suggest the need for more teams to cater to different levels of commitment. This is a problem recognized by both men and women, but is more often problematic in the women's club setting. One careerist notes:

> The thing with rugby after college is that there aren't enough, especially women, there aren't enough female rugby players out there to populate all the different levels of commitment like there are for soccer or for basketball or whatever. Really, your options are very limited. I would love to have, literally, like a pick-up rugby team where we play once a week and then we all go drink.

Often these players had been instrumental in the organization of their team or club, and have put in significant effort to sustain participation in the sport. As one women quipped, "There have been times when rugby has taken more time than my job." One area in which these experienced players were critical is in the area of officiating. There was some complaining, but overall players recognized the problems in recruiting and training quality referees as the sport grows. In fact, many of these players had stopped participating and were now refereeing.

Overall, these players had a deep appreciation for the sport, the culture surrounding the sport, and the positive effects of the sport on their lives. The following quote nicely captures their feelings:

> I would say it's the strangest sport you'll ever play. It's the most authentic team sport. It's really to be successful, you have to have 15 players working together. You don't necessarily have to be the best players in the world, you have to be the best team. I would also say that the family you'll have, the friends you'll meet

along the way, is absolutely unparalleled. You'll never make friends like you will playing rugby.

EXPERT WORKSHOP

In order to explore implications of findings from the survey, player interviews, and GU interviews, core findings from the research were presented to a group of 13 experts, which included thought leaders from rugby, the USOC, and sport management academic programs. Participants at the two-day workshops identified an array of potential advantages and needs in orders for rugby to recruit and retain players, including challenges when helping them make transitions. Their ideas fall into three categories: (1) means to position rugby in order to enhance is attractiveness to players, (2) means to foster a culture that encourages players to remain in the sport, and (3) means to build and strengthen links among rugby organizations at all levels – youth, school, university, and club – in order to help players transition.

Positioning Rugby

Three aspects of attracting players into rugby were considered: (A) benefits to be promoted, and (B) channels of communication to and through which to promote those benefits, and (C) factors that could facilitate promotion and communication of benefits. For the most part, the key benefits to be promoted did not differ as a function of level, although how those benefits might be portrayed could differ by level insomuch as the ages of potential players typically differ as a function of level. The consensus was that rugby should position itself in its own right, and not simply as a different form of football.

The following key *benefits* to be promoted to potential new players were identified:
- Camaraderie among teammates – a sense of community on rugby teams
- Enhances social connections at the school and/or community
- Welcomes families
- Everyone gets to touch the ball
- A lifetime sport
- Beginners are always welcome
- Low cost / easy to join and participate
- Builds skills that are relevant to other sports (e.g., speed, agility, ball handling, reading play)
- Fosters fitness
- An international (and Olympic) sport that is different from other popular American sports

Each of these highlights a different facet of the sport, allowing for multiple and varied communications that stress benefits.

Necessary *channels of communication* were thought to differ somewhat for youth/school, university, and club. For youth and school, it was suggested that communications should be targeted at parents, teachers, and coaches of other sports (especially with reference to the value of rugby as an off-season means to continue to

build skills and fitness). For university students, fliers and the time of move-in, campus recreation services (including intramural sports), events at which campus clubs can showcase themselves, and alumni were deemed to be potentially effective channels for communication. During the off-season, pick-up games of rugby could be scheduled and promoted as a means by which people could try the sport but without making a firm initial commitment. It was also suggested that international students, especially those coming from countries with strong rugby infrastructures, should be identified, targeted, and encouraged to bring their friends. Similarly, high school athletes who will not be participating in their sport at university could be identified and recruited. Clubs need to communicate through community organizations, including public recreation, other sport organizations, and community service groups. At all four levels, it was noted that an attractive and up-to-date website and social media were necessary supporting channels. Links to the community, good works in the community, as well as links and cooperation with other sports should all be highlighted.

It was agreed that in order for benefits to be communicated and realized, several things are ***needed***. At youth and club levels, there needs to be a strong relationship with the local community and also with other sports. It was suggested that building partnerships with local parks-and-recreation and with local service organizations would enable better access to channels of communication. This would require rugby organizations to help those organizations to meet their mission in order to establish the necessary *quid pro quo*. It was also suggested that rugby clubs and teams establish relationships with coaches of other sports, which could help with recruiting and also enable participants to enjoy multiple sports, including rugby, while also enhancing the quality of coaching and training of rugby players. For example, wrestling coaches could teach take-downs; track coaches could help with running technique and speed. In order to maintain contact with players throughout the year, it was also suggested that rugby clubs and teams could join with one or more other sports to create a multi-sport organization or camps.

It was also recognized that at different times of the year, and at different ages or life stages, players may want to play rugby in ways that are less stressful on their bodies, but that nonetheless emphasize and develop rugby skills. It was noted that modified versions of the game need to be offered across all levels. These could include such variations as touch, flag, 7s, or modified rules, time, and/or size of field. Flag was strongly advocated for young participants as a means to build skills with minimum physical risk, as was enabling young people to learn to play multiple positions. Similarly, clubs should seek to offer multiple teams that vary in their commitment and intensity of training.

Local-level rugby coaches and administrators rarely have the marketing expertise necessary to establish the conditions noted and then to sell the sport by communicating its benefits. Training local clubs and administrators (probably through USA Rugby or a partner organization) in the requisite strategies and tactics was recommended. It was also suggested that kits should be developed (probably by USA Rugby or a partner organization) to provide turnkey local access to the tools necessary.

Fostering an Attractive Rugby Culture

The data reported to the workshop demonstrated clearly that a core feature of rugby for those who stay in the sport is the quality of the rugby culture. The values and experiences that youth, school, university, and club environments instantiate and deliver affect ongoing participation. The more attractive those values are and the more positive the experiences provided, the more likely players are to continue in the sport. So, the culture of rugby in the United States, and the culture of each local rugby club or team matter.

The camaraderie that is intrinsic to much rugby differentiates it from many other sports. That is a distinctive strength. It derives from a set of values that stress community within the team and club, and that welcome family members, and people from multiple backgrounds. It values participation, personal improvement, and strong social support for both. These can become lost when the emphasis is on winning for its own sake, or when day-to-day operations for training and competing overwhelm social life within the organization.

Consequently, it was strongly urged that rugby coaches and administrators be trained to appreciate the value of a positive social climate, and the means to sustain it. New recruits need to be provided mentors to befriend them. Those mentors should help to welcome them into the organization, and should help them to learn the values that make rugby a distinctively attractive social opportunity. Alumni and players current out due to injury should be included in social events.

This sounds easier than it is. Coaches, administrators, and players may lack the skills that could optimize new player socialization into the sport or that nurture a rugby identity. Again, training in those skills, and provision of a kit that provides useful means for building the desired culture were advocated. It was also suggested that successes in this regard should be highlighted through local, regional, and national rugby communications. Celebrating successes beyond mere wins was considered to be essential. These could include systems to build the social engagements and networks on and beyond the club. It could also include improvements among individual players and teams, especially as when they are in the early stages of their development.

It was also noted that an effective culture can be attractive to family members and to players beyond their playing years. Creating an environment that encourages family members and former players to take-up administration, coaching, fundraising, and/or refereeing was strongly recommended. It was also suggested that systems which nurture fanship and that treat fans as part of the organization could also strengthen the desired culture. Those systems might go beyond the club or team, as they could include multi-organization networks for mentoring administrators, coaches, fundraisers, and referees.

Succession planning is also part of an organization's culture. Leaders, particularly at university and club levels, should be encouraged to begin planning for those who will follow them, and to make that pathway inviting. Mentoring others so that they can take

on leadership roles needs to become a routine feature of university and club rugby administration.

Linking Rugby Organizations

Too many players do not transition. This was recognized as a particular problem for rugby in the United States. The variety of organizations delivering rugby, particularly to different ages or in different contexts, makes it difficult for rugby players to transition. It was noted that many have no idea what the potential pathways to development as a rugby player are beyond the level at which they are currently involved. Others simply do not know how to find and join a club or team as they transition out of youth, school, or university.

Thus, three requirements were noted: (1) There have to be identifiable pathways in the sport that are then communicated clearly and succinctly to players. Opportunities to participate in parallel or more elite organizations at the same level, as well as opportunities to participate as one ages out of youth, school, and university also need to be identified and made clear. (2) The places that players can go to be involved need to be easy to find. There needs to be an online national database that describes clubs and university programs by features, location, age level, and gender. It needs to provide up-to-date contact information; it needs to be easy to query; its availability needs to be widely and regularly publicized. (3) There needs to be a stronger linkage of clubs to school, youth, and university programs. Clubs should provide the glue that binds all levels together. This could include camps and special sessions run by clubs for school, youth, and university players. It could incorporate joint training sessions and/or events at which clubs participate jointly with youth, school, or university participate jointly (even if in different divisions). It could consist of joint social events. To foster linkages, the returns-to-scale that can be generated should be emphasized, and made real through joint marketing efforts.

Databases are also important. Make the USA Rugby database easy to query so that players who are graduating from one level can be identified. Then send them an email inviting them to participate at the next level, and specifying clubs/teams through which they might do so. Also provide a link to the database of club/team options so that former players who are moving can find their own locales. Notify the clubs/teams that the players have been contacted. The important thing is to encourage and invite future participation, and then to follow-up so that former players are always being recruited back into the sport.

Building linkages across levels is a strategic endeavor. The requisite strategies and tactics need to be formulated, and club leaders need to be trained in them. A kit that provides necessary tools could be useful.

A fair bit of time was spent discussing the aspiration of some who work at the university level in rugby that rugby should become and NCAA sport, rather than a club sport as it is in nearly all universities. It was agreed that having rugby operate at a club level in

universities is potentially advantageous because it helps to train participants in the administrative skills necessary later for club rugby. Further, if rugby were to become an NCAA sport, the conditions for the sport at university level to be linked to clubs for post-university participation would be undermined. It was also noted that under the current policies and politics of the NCAA, it is highly unlikely that rugby will become an NCAA sport in the near future, yet efforts to make that happen are divisive and are taking up resources that could be put to better use elsewhere. Consequently, it was suggested that USA Rugby should develop a strong counter-narrative – one that celebrates rugby's club nature, and that eschews becoming an NCAA sport.

PILOT PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT and RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to activate the results and recommendations stemming from the study's data analysis, and expert panel discussions the final stage of the study dealt with the identification and formulation of potential pilot programs that could be implemented and evaluated over the next several months. These pilot programs were a result of a synopsis of the strengths, challenges and opportunities that were identified in the study. Taking the dozens of recommendations that surfaced as a result of the research and analysis led to several core ideas that are the focus of the pilots.

The pilots are described in this section and the details regarding their components and implementation are also provided. Of the six options provided, two pilot programs will be selected by USA Rugby and each one will be implemented in 2-3 locations to test their effectiveness. During the course of the remainder of the 2015-16 membership year the impact of the pilot programs will be evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Although only two of the six pilots will be tested at this time, it is hoped that the other pilots will be applied in the future, either by USA Rugby or by World Rugby in other national unions.

Strengths

From the analysis of the information and data collected during the research of this report we identified a number of strengths that the present organization and nature of rugby in the US demonstrates. These strengths are the elements that USA Rugby should take advantage of in developing and implementing future programs.

- Culture of belonging/social group/camaraderie
- Opportunities for all physique/skill levels
- Gender equal
- All ages/levels/commitment
- Adaptability of game type
- Low cost resources required / affordable
- Organization/championships/programs are in place nationally
- Can enter sport at anytime
- International game
- High level of fitness provided & transferable skills to other sports
- Accommodates multisport athletes
- Unique, novel sport in the US
- Attractive athlete image

Challenges

In addition to the strengths identified, there were numerous challenges apparent that posed obstacles to the improved development, retention and growth of the game in the U.S.

- Injuries & safety concerns
- Reputation (drinking/sexist/rowdy)

- Lack of cooperation between levels
- Personnel
- Coaches (training)
- Referees (quantity and quality)
- Administrators
- Availability of facilities (fields & clubhouses)
- Other sports competing for players/sponsors/facilities
- Other life commitments
- Travel/time commitment required
- Lack of family/friend support
- Lack of visibility in the mainstream media
- Attitude of "old boys"
- Lack of competitive opportunities/structure
- Variance in commitment levels of player
- Lack of communication (especially at transitions)

Opportunities
It was also noted from looking at the current environment that there are several opportunities and conditions that could be capitalize on to enhance the recruitment, retention and transition rates of USAR. U.S. participation in Olympics (men's/women's) August '16.

- Men's WC September 2015
- Parents spending too much on youth sport ($/time)
- Project Play initiative
- ADM/LTAD/physical literacy/appropriate development
- Other sports in same position
- Need to improve physical opportunities for youth /teams/adults
- Loss of personal social interaction
- For profit sport clubs in most cities
- Municipal/State Youth Sport Summits
- Football is killing itself (concussions)
- International support – World Rugby
- People want to belong to groups
- For support
- For friendship
- Networking
- Other sport development models

Core Issues

In synthesizing the challenges and obstacles noted, we identified three core issues and needs:

1. Massive loss of players at transition points

    →   Eliminate or reduce transition gaps

2. Limited involvement opportunities

    →   Create and implement multiple (and varied) involvement opportunities

3. Poorly linked system components (youth, college, club)

    →   Develop and maintain a unified system of communication, coordination, and cooperation across the three settings

Core Approach

As a result of this analysis the development of the pilot programs followed a core approach:

1. Square the pyramid from within, below, and the outside
2. Create a continuous pipeline
3. Give back/ support / maintain involvement after player retirement
4. Leverage media opportunities to generate awareness, interest and affiliation
5. Partnerships / sharing
    a. Rugby
    b. Other sports
    c. Municipalities
    d. Schools
    e. Commercial enterprises

Solutions

The solutions focused on three areas and the result was the idea of the need to move existing and new clubs and organizations towards that of a "SUPERCLUB" concept, that would address the key elements that were identified as being critical to long term success and growth.

1. Eliminate the Gaps
2. Account for life transitions
3. New US Sporting Dynamic

The "SUPERCLUB"
- Vertical Integration
- External Connections
- Multiple Opportunities
- Enhanced Communication
- Social Affiliation

- Quality Organization

The Pilot Program Recommendations

The recommended pilot programs are aimed at introducing, implementing and testing the key areas that have been identified as critical to the improvement of the USA Rugby club system and operation. A summary of each pilot program appears in the next pages. Each includes a description and key objectives of the program. The necessary communications, activities, and resources are discussed, and evaluation is considered.

Pilot #1 - Vertical Integration

Description
The data shows that as players move through the Rugby pipeline there are massive losses of players at the transition points between levels of organizations. Efforts to recruit and retain players at the youth, and high school levels have been very effective over the last several years, but these successes are diminished due to the subsequent loss of these players when they transition out of high school. Taking steps to better connect the levels and integrate their efforts and programs should increase the number of players being retained in the system at all levels.

Objectives
- Reduce the "gaps" in the connections between the local senior club teams, college teams, HS teams and youth teams
- Improve the "flow through of players, coaches and fans, reduce loss of players at the transitions
- Develop a unified strategy and vision through the levels in regards to athlete development.
- Locations
- USAR selects pilot locations.
- There should be a senior club (with both men's and women's teams, college teams, and a high school and youth program in the area.

Communications
- USAR sends out pilot program request to executives of the senior club, college, high school and youth programs (Rugby Pilot Area Executives) in the pilot area and describes the pilot.
- Conference call with USAR, Rugby Pilot Area Executives, SDC, (and World Rugby) to explain the parameters of the pilot.
- Pilot Project Coordinator contacts and arranges a group meeting to discuss and finalize the implementation plan.

Activities
- USAR and pilot area clubs to assemble membership data for the past 5 years for analysis and evaluation comparison.
- Establish coalition of the groups and teams, and municipality.
- Organize regular meetings to discuss shared issues and solutions.
- Create a brand for local area rugby. Involve the municipality to promote.
- Establish a physical presence for rugby in the community. Enable and allow use of facilities to all levels of rugby in the area
- Organize a local area rugby festival where all the teams will be represented – mainly an information and social event, with sport safety demonstrations, mini technical scrimmages, information booths, parent, coach, referee, and player workshops,

- Organize joint coaches/referees certification clinics and workshops.
- Jointly promote programs on player welfare, concussion training, harassment, sexual molestation prevention, and respect development
- Establish a coaches' learning community across all levels to develop mentorship opportunities.
- Organize joint matches showcasing all the teams in the area at all levels.
- Lobby for inclusion in PE classes and by park and recreation departments.
- Establish a scholarship for local high school rugby players to assist in paying for expenses if they are playing rugby
- Establish a shared database of players, coaches, parents to allow for communication throughout the rugby community.

Resources
- Manual for meetings and project organization and planning
- Database for collecting member information
- Presentations for municipalities
- Player, coach, referee, and parent workshops

Evaluation
- Determine change in retention rates
- Determine transition rates and compare to any historical local data and national report findings
- Post season surveys and interviews to assess attitude change of members of rugby community
- Assessment of physical and skill development of participants.

Pilot #2 – External Connections

Description
Rugby is a non-mainstream sport in the US. It is not a sport that most Americans think of playing; it is not part of the American sports mindset at present. The efforts to bring people into the game at the adult level, have disorganized and isolated. Rugby needs to expand its reach at the adult level by leveraging new relationships and partnerships (sports and commercial) with other organizations in order to expose the benefits of the game to a wider audience.

Objectives
- Increase the visibility and accessibility of rugby within the local community
- Increase the influx of players and supporters at the adult level
- Expand rugby's influence in the community, thus having input into local decisions on facilities and programs in the area

Communications
- At national level, USAR contacts other NGBs looking to cooperate in developing multi-sport clubs.
- USAR sends out pilot program request to executives of the senior club, college, high school and youth programs (Rugby Pilot Area Executives) in the pilot area and describes the pilot.
- Conference call with USAR, Rugby Pilot Area Executives, SDC, (and World Rugby) to explain the parameters of the pilot.
- Pilot Project Coordinator contacts and arranges a group meeting to discuss and finalize the implementation plan.
- Pilot Project Coordinator arranges senior club meeting to discuss and get buy-in on components of plan.
- Local clubs reach out to other sports teams in the area to see what partnerships they can arrange.

Activities
- USAR and pilot area clubs to assemble membership data for the past 5 years for analysis and evaluation comparison.
- Work to be "the team" of the local municipality. Connect with local politicians, municipal staff, business development organizations, fraternal organizations.
- Local clubs to work with municipal park and recreation departments to provide exposure for rugby (especially non-contact) to a wide array of participants.
- Local clubs to work with for-profit recreational social clubs to offer playing opportunities.
- Organize Annual State Sport Summits to bring together leaders of sports in the region to share opportunities for cooperative initiatives and programs.
- Attend community events and publicize club and its services and features.

- Enlist parents of youth/HS players to promote club activities in their social and professional networks.
- USAR to provide discount memberships to members of other NGB organizations (insurance, and background check should be already paid for).
- Look to develop connections with a variety of ethnic groups.
- Ask for HS/college coaches of other sports to come and help team club team train and practice.
- Arrange for other sports teams (ie: soccer) to practice and scrimmage
- Market to technical and vocational colleges as a way to provide athletic opportunities that may not be part of their programs.
- Establish a coalition of the groups, teams, and municipality.
- Organize regular meetings to discuss shared issues and solutions.
- Create a brand for local area multi-sport club. Involve the municipality to promote.
- Establish a physical presence for rugby in the community. Allow shared use of facilities to all levels of rugby in the local area.
- Organize a local area rugby festival where all the teams will be represented –a social/information event and with sport safety demonstrations, technical scrimmages,, workshops (parent, coach, referee, and player), physical literacy assessments for all ages.
- Organize joint coaches/referees certification clinics and workshops.
- Jointly promote programs on player welfare, concussion training, harassment, bullying, sexual molestation prevention, and respect for officials.
- Establish a coaches' learning community across all sports to develop mentorship opportunities.
- Organize all-sport events showcasing all the teams/clubs in the area.
- Lobby for inclusion in PE classes and by park and recreation departments programming.
- Establish a scholarship for local high school rugby players of both genders to assist in paying for expenses if they are going to a local area college and playing rugby.
- Establish a shared database of players, coaches, and parents to allow for communication throughout the sports community.

Resources
- Manual for meetings and project organization and planning
- Database for collecting member information
- Presentations for municipalities
- Player, coach, referee, and parent workshops

Evaluation
- Determine change in retention rates

- Determine transition rates and compare to any historical local data and national report findings
- Post season surveys and interviews to assess attitude change of members of rugby community
- Assessment of physical and skill development of participants.

Pilot #3 – Multiple Opportunities

Description
Rugby is a very traditional game. That is both a blessing and a curse. The growth of the women's game, the advent of the 7s game, and other iterations of the game have only recently been supported at an international level. This rigidity in the game is not uncommon in sports. Other sports have resisted increasing their scope until pressure from decreases in membership and interest (hence revenue) pressured them into welcoming other versions of the sport into the fold. By offering more versions of the game to existing and potential ruggers, the game will be able to grow and develop players, coaches, clubs, and fans that it would otherwise have lost.

Objectives
- Expand the types of rugby games available for participants
- Increase the types of USA Rugby memberships to appeal to a wider group of people
- Encourage getting involved in rugby at numerous points in the lifecycle
- Promote members to play multiple roles and functions

Communications
- USAR sends out pilot program request to executives of the senior club, college, high school and youth programs (Rugby Pilot Area Executives) in the pilot area and describes the pilot.
- Conference call with USAR, Rugby Pilot Area Executives, SDC, (and World Rugby) to explain the parameters of the pilot.
- Pilot Project Coordinator contacts and arranges a group meeting to discuss and finalize the implementation plan.
- Pilot Project Coordinator arranges senior club meeting to discuss and get buy-in on components of plan.

Activities
- USAR develops a non-contact version of the game that can be adopted by local clubs, and played at all levels, with tournaments at local, regional, and national playoffs.
- USAR develops new membership categories
- USAR and pilot area clubs to assemble membership data for the past 5 years for analysis and evaluation comparison.
- Membership categories organized so that participants can switch membership categories depending on circumstances but will always remain a part of the club
- USAR to develop and encourage participation in multiple roles (playing, coaching, refereeing, administration, supporter) by developing multiple role benefits packages.
- Encourage co-ed games and leagues, and also drop in games.

- USAR to develop membership category to reach out to companies to develop company teams (as one sees in softball and bowling).
- Host summer series of 7s teams competitions for HS/college age players

Resources
- Manual for setting up non-contact games
- Database for collecting new member information
- Information describing new multiple roles

Evaluation
- Determine change in retention rates
- Determine transition rates and compare to any historical local data and national report findings
- Post season surveys and interviews to assess attitude change of members of rugby community
- Assessment of physical and skill development of participants.

Pilot #4 – Enhanced Communication

Description
With the increasing advent of new communication technologies and platforms, staying in touch with members of the rugby community and attracting new members would seem simple. Unfortunately, with the growing number of avenues for information transmission and communication, messages are often lost in the noise, and we lose touch with those we need to connect with and stay connected to.

Objectives
- A strategic and integrated communication system to maintain connection with players as they move through the system.
- Implemented at the club level in order to ensure involvement is maintained.
- Enhanced membership system to permit post-season assessment of the rugby experience, as well as auto-reminders of registration

Communications
- USAR sends out pilot program request to executives of the senior club, college, high school and youth programs (Rugby Pilot Area Executives) in the pilot area and describes the pilot.
- Conference call with USAR, Rugby Pilot Area Executives, SDC, (and World Rugby) to explain the parameters of the pilot.
- Pilot Project Coordinator contacts and arranges a group meeting to discuss and finalize the implementation plan.
- Pilot Project Coordinator arranges senior club meeting to discuss and get buy-in on components of plan. .

Activities
- USAR and pilot area clubs to assemble membership data for the past 5 years for analysis and evaluation comparison.
- Implement member communication app (like Mitoo) to help players connect with other players, coaches, and teams in their area.
- Promote the use of team management and training applications to provide better support for coaches and players.
- Develop blogs/columns in local media, including recreation and community publications.
- Reach out to kids who don't make other varsity sports.
- Use Ex-pats (even non-rugby ones) in the community to spread the message about rugby being a world-wide sport with high-profile events.
- Promote the uniqueness of the rugby experience, especially its social character.
- Enable loading of team videos and clips on local team web-site.
- Develop "ambassador program" for HS and colleges to build and retain connections.
- Develop database of clubs so participants can search and evaluate options.

- Organize "Parent Workshops" to help parents better support the athletic development of the kids, multi-sports, and free play,

Resources
- Social media/team management mobile app for use in communicating
- Database for collecting member information
- Information describing new avenues for communications

Evaluation
- Determine change in retention rates
- Determine transition rates and compare to any historical local data and national report findings
- Post season surveys and interviews to assess attitude change of members of rugby community
- Assessment of physical and skill development of participants.

Pilot #5 – Social Affiliation

Description
One of the key elements noted by both stayers and leavers is the degree of social affiliation that is found in rugby. The ethos of rugby as a communal and supportive environment is an area that rugby needs to continue to shape and take advantage of as it grows and reaches out to new members and members transitioning through the system.
Objectives
- Improved transference of a club's culture to new and existing members and to the outside community
- More support, acceptance, and participation from members and community

Communications
- USAR sends out pilot program request to executives of the senior club, college, high school and youth programs (Rugby Pilot Area Executives) in the pilot area and describes the pilot.
- Conference call with USAR, Rugby Pilot Area Executives, SDC, (and World Rugby) to explain the parameters of the pilot.
- Pilot Project Coordinator contacts and arranges a group meeting to discuss and finalize the implementation plan.
- Pilot Project Coordinator arranges senior club meeting to discuss and get buy-in on components of plan.

Activities
- USAR and pilot area clubs to assemble membership data for the past 5 years for analysis and evaluation comparison.
- Clubs provided with guidelines for improved development of social culture and image in the area and with other rugby and sports organizations.
- National, state, and local organized charity affiliations that will expose rugby to a wide variety of new fans, participants, and supporters. Clubs enabled to become a more salient component of the community's social fabric.
- Clubs to host recreational social play days to encourage sampling and participation.
- Encourage "flash games," running around and passing the ball in suitable open spaces.
- Provide "move-in" informational flyers to new people in the community.
- Reach out to the Greek system in universities to develop fraternity/sorority teams and leagues.
- Clubs develop off-season activities.
- Arrange inter-club socials.
- Examine ways to provide various forms of support for club members (services, childcare, dog-sitting, networking, aid).
- Be open to LGBT community and show tolerance and inclusion.

- Expand the game experience, BBQ's, entertainment, and games for kids. Foster an atmosphere of festivity.
- Push for Olympic-related events and publicity in 2016.
- Examine opportunities for gamification (e.g., video games) to extend the game beyond the field.
- Provide financial aid/support for kids selected to all-star teams, national camps.
- Be open to LGBT community and show tolerance and inclusion.
- Expand the game experience, BBQ's, entertainment, and games for kids. Foster an atmosphere of festivity.
- Push for Olympic-related events and publicity in 2016.
- Examine opportunities for gamification (e.g., video games) to extend the game beyond the field.
- Provide financial aid/support for kids selected to all-star teams, national camps.

Resources
- Database for collecting member information
- Information describing new avenues for communications

Evaluation
- Determine change in retention rates
- Determine transition rates and compare to any historical local data and national report findings
- Post season surveys and interviews to assess attitude change of members of rugby community
- Assessment of physical and skill development of participants.

Pilot #6 – Organizational Quality

Description
Organization of the club and quality of competition is at the core of rugby. Existing structures and regulations sometimes impede players as they move through the pipeline to achieve their goals and realize their true potential. The quality of the organization should not drop off after high school and college.

Objectives
- Improved organizational structures and processes for clubs
- Improved financial management and revenue generation
- Ongoing management and support for clubs from USA Rugby.

Communications
- USAR sends out pilot program request to executives of the senior club, college, high school and youth programs (Rugby Pilot Area Executives) in the pilot area and describes the pilot.
- Conference call with USAR, Rugby Pilot Area Executives, SDC, (and World Rugby) to explain the parameters of the pilot.
- Pilot Project Coordinator contacts and arranges a group meeting to discuss and finalize the implementation plan.
- Pilot Project Coordinator arranges senior club meeting to discuss and get buy-in on components of plan.

Activities
- USAR and pilot area clubs to assemble membership data for the past 5 years for analysis and evaluation comparison.
- Competition structures at various levels need to be harmonized so that they support the ambitions and development of players.
- Various levels of competitions to be developed for different types of players both competitive and recreational.
- Provide opportunities at semi-annual meetings to review organization and function of the club.
- Host coaching and referring clinics and seminars to improve existing skill levels and promote new coaches and referees.
- Arrange with local medical/physical therapy services and facilities for assistance at events.
- Develop a fundraising strategy.
- Partner with other clubs on bigger programs and projects
- Examine and improve eligibility requirements and policies.
- Investigate use of spring for development focus, summer for 7s, and fall for 15s competition.
- Formulate and implement training for player-coaches on administration.

Resources
- Database for collecting member information
- Information describing new avenues for communications

Evaluation
- Determine change in retention rates
- Determine transition rates and compare to any historical local data and national report findings
- Post season surveys and interviews to assess attitude change of members of rugby community
- Assessment of physical and skill development of participants.

Concluding Observations

Rugby is a distinctive sport with distinctive advantages upon which it can capitalize. Without question, the most significant are the fact that rugby can be a lifetime sport, and that it is a sport that enjoys levels of camaraderie rarely seen elsewhere in the sporting world. These two strengths establish the foundation upon which rugby development must be based. Rugby is more than a sport; it is a social world – one that offers multiple benefits and that can serve multiple motivations among its players. Thus, player recruitment, retention, and transition do not begin or end with wins, losses, or ambitions to be an Eagle. Rather, they begin with learning to value what it means to be a rugby player. Yes, helping people to master, test, and showcase their skills are important. But even more important is helping them to become people who value what it means to be a rugby player – culturally and socially. Not only will that extend their playing lives; it will extend their range of involvements – into coaching, refereeing, administration, and supporters. Rugby enjoys a dedicated and talented pool of participants throughout the United States who can enable the sport to advance effectively and efficiently.

Without question, there can be better retention of players who try the sport, better recruitment back of players who have left the sport, and much better management and marketing to enable players to transition vertically and horizontally. There are some relatively simple things that can be done to facilitate these at all levels. Throughout presentation of findings, this report provides an array of recommendations toward that end. These are realistic and feasible, although the skills necessary to formulate the necessary management and marketing tactics are not yet fully formed throughout the American rugby landscape. The six pilot programs recommended at the end of this report provide a synthesis of key insights and needs highlighted by this research, and suggest the necessary next steps to take the sport to a new level.

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Appendix A: USA Rugby Press Release

USA Rugby members past and present will be surveyed and interviewed over the next few weeks as part of a World Rugby study that will examine the factors that cause players to remain in the sport and those that result in players leaving the sport. USA Rugby commissioned the sport development firm Sport Development Concepts LLC, in conjunction with researchers at the University of Illinois, to perform the study of the over 300,000 players who have been USA Rugby members since 2005.

In addition to the on-line surveys, over 100 present and past USA Rugby members will be interviewed to delve into the reasons for their continued participation in rugby, or their exiting the sport. The quantitative and qualitative approach will provide researchers and USA Rugby and its member clubs with insight into what is working and what isn't in the present organizational, competitive and development environment for rugby in the US.

 "By gaining a better understanding of the reasons for continued participation in the sport from high school to club, high school to college, and college to club we will be better able to develop programs in conjunction with the club programs that will attract and retain more players as they transition through the levels of play", said USA Rugby CEO Nigel Melville. The study funded by World Rugby will shed light on issues and solutions that can be applied world-wide to assist growing the game on a world-wide scale.

Participants in the survey and interviews will be provided the opportunity to receive USA Eagles signed jerseys for engaging in the study. The study is expected to be completed in June of this year.

Appendix B: E-mail to Geographic Union Leaders

As you are aware USA Rugby is undertaking a study examine the factors that cause players to remain in the sport and those that result in players leaving the sport. The funding for this project is being provided by World Rugby. My firm, Sport Development Concepts LLC, has been retained to undertake this study in conjunction with the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.

In addition to contacting several thousand present and past USA rugby members with the online surveys, more than 100 current and past USA Rugby members will be interviewed to delve into the reasons for their continued participation in rugby, or their exiting the sport. The quantitative and qualitative approach will provide researchers and USA Rugby and its member clubs with insights into what is working and what is not in the present organizational, competitive, and development environment for rugby in the U.S.

The third group that we are reaching out to is the Geographic Union Leadership and Administration to gain an understanding of regional challenges, opportunities and capabilities for program implementation. This will allow us to develop programming, policies and resources that can "actually" be used by your Union to recruit more players and retain those that you have.

In this regard I would like to request to speak to you for about 20 minutes in the next couple of weeks at your convenience. It will be a fairly structured interview and if you wish I can send you the pool of questions from which I will do the interview. Please let me know when would be a good time for you. I am available whenever you would like and we can do the call either via phone or Skype.

Please feel free to drop me an e-mail at david@sportdevelopmentconcepts.com , or phone me at 719-332-4685, if you require any additional information or have any questions. I want to thank you for help and support of this initiative and I am looking forward to talking with you!

Appendix C: Telephone Interviews with Geographic Union Leaders

1. Do you have any problems getting kids coming out of high school to join and play at the club level? College?
    a. Why do you think that is?
    b. What are the obstacles that graduating HS players face in trying to continue their rugby? College players?
    c. Probe for gender differences
    d. Probe for:
        i. Coaches
        ii. Facilities
        iii. Reputation of club
        iv. Attitude of older players
        v. Fear of injury
        vi. Cost
        vii. Time commitment
        viii. Lack of publicity/awareness of the club existing
        ix. Availability of a club to play on
        x. Status of rugby – attitudes of friends and family
        xi. Rugby friendships
        xii. Other sports/activities that are attractive to potential players
2. Are there both 7sand 15s (and other) forms of play available at the club level?
3. Are the challenges different for high school players going to University versus straight to clubs?
4. What is the atmosphere/attitude of older (25+) players to younger players (18-24). (M/F)
    a. Probe for acceptance; encouragement; bonding/connection issues; etc.
5. How do you currently recruit graduating high school players? College players?
    a. Do you have communication with the youth/high school rugby associations? College conferences?
    b. Do clubs interact with the HS in their areas? Colleges?
        i. Probe: If so, how? If not, why not?
    c. What, if any, is the relationship with the colleges/conferences?
        i. Probe: If present, describe. If missing, why and what might be done about it?
6. What opportunities do you think are out there to attract more graduating HS athletes/college players (if money were no object)
    a. Do there need to be more/new clubs specifically aimed at younger players?
    b. Would a different competitive structure attract more players out of high school?
        i. Probe: If so what might it look like? Why?
7. Clubs are not just a place to play the sport; they are also social organizations.
    a. What do your clubs do, if anything, to create and maintain an attractive social atmosphere?
    b. Is there more that you think they can or should do?

       c. What?
       d. Why?
8. What would you need (e.g., types of support? Knowledge? Skills? Partnerships? Other?) to attract more graduating HS players? College players?
       a. Who/what organizations would be helpful? USA Rugby?
       b. How?
9. When it comes to growing and retaining players for the sport, what else do you think we should consider?
       a. What else do you think is important?

Appendix D: Survey Items

Perceived Competence 1= terrible, 2=below average, 3=average, 4=good, 5=great
How good at rugby are you?
How good at rugby would your teammates say you are?
How good at rugby would your coach say you are?

Constraints - 7pt Likert – agree/disagree
[A] Intrapersonal, [B] Interpersonal, [C] Structural
A   Fear of getting injured
A   The time it takes to recover from playing
A   Too many other things to do
A   Poor skills
B   Friends don't play
B   Lack of support from significant other
B   Don't fit in
B   Don't enjoy off field activities
C   Too much travel
C   Time it takes to be on a team
C   Cost to play
C   Club isn't convenient

Sense of Community 7pt Likert – agree/disagree
Members of my rugby club support other members
I feel like a valued member of my rugby club

I share similar values with the members of my rugby club
My rugby club provides me with friends who share a strong commitment to rugby.

The leaders of my rugby club make decisions that benefit everyone
The leaders in my rugby club make decisions that are fair

I have a say about what goes on in my rugby club
I have influence over what my rugby club is like

Social ties to Rugby: 7pt Likert – agree/disagree
Many of my friends currently play rugby
I have family members who have played rugby
Many of my friends played rugby at some time
I have family members who are currently playing rugby

Identity
Self: Being a rugby player… semantic differential
Describes me/does not describe me
Affirms my values / doesn't affirm my values
Have strong feelings about / do not have strong feelings about

Social: 7pt Likert – agree/disagree
       Many people think of me as a rugby player
       Other people think that rugby is important to me
       People would be surprised if I stopped being a rugby player

Motivation: Rate the degree to which each of the following were reasons for playing rugby
     7pt Likert – agree/disagree
     Intellectual
       To expand my interests
       To discover new things
       To learn
     Mastery
       To feel a sense of achievement
       To test my abilities
       To compete against others
     Social
       To build friendships with others
       To interact with others
       To meet new and different people
     Escape
       To get away from my everyday life
       Because I like the physical contact that is part of rugby
       To relax mentally
       Because I like hitting people

Club Commitment 7pt Likert – agree/disagree
     My rugby club really inspires me to perform to the best of my abilities
     I really care about the fate of my rugby club
     I feel like an important member of my rugby club
     I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help my club be successful.
     I will do what is needed to ensure the competitive success of my club

Subcultural Fit 7pt Likert – agree/disagree
     The rugby culture fits my lifestyle.
     The rugby culture suits me.
     The rugby culture is attractive to me.

Social Infrastructure: Rate the importance of each element in your decision to participate in rugby
     Scale = 1=not important at all; 2=somewhat important; 3=important; 4=very important; 5=necessary/would not play without it
     A nice clubhouse

The post-game party atmosphere
Drinking with other rugby players
Spending time with other rugby players
The rugby image that creates opportunities to hook up

Interest: How interested are you in participating in…   Scale - 1=not interested at all; 2=somewhat interested; 3= interested; 4=very interested; 5=definitely want to do this

Non-contact versions of rugby such as touch or flag
1-off competitions as part of a Motley team

Satisfaction with competition structures: How satisfied are you with: 1=very dissatisfied, 7=very satisfied
The frequency of competitions
The quality of competitions
Access to top competitions
Seriousness of competitions

RUGBY

Current
Are you currently playing rugby? Yes / no
If yes,
Membership Division:
Youth / High School / University / Club
Playing division:
A team / B team / other _____
What do you play (check all)
7s, 15s, other _____
Ongoing league/ Tournaments only/ Motley team (1-off comp)
Favorite? _____
Do you intend to play next season?
Definitely will / probably will / not sure / probably not / definitely not
If no,
What year did you last play? (drop-down menu of years)
Why did you stop playing? (open)
Would you consider playing again?
No way / probably not / not sure / possibly would/ definitely would

Playing history
years played & level (A, B, Other):
Youth / High School / University / Club
What have you played (check all)
7s, 15s, other _____
Ongoing league/ Tournaments only/ Motley team (1-off comp)

Favorite? _____

Who first got you involved in rugby?

Family member / friend / school personnel / coach / media (e.g., tv, newspaper, Internet) / other: _____

Fanship / Consumption

Do you consider yourself a fan of the sport of rugby?

If yes, how would you best describe your fanship?

slight fan_____ average fan_____ passionate fan_____ (seven point Likert-type scale anchored as shown)

Do you consider yourself a fan of a specific (professional or amateur) rugby team?

If yes, how would you best describe your fanship?

slight fan_____ average fan_____ passionate fan_____ (seven point Likert-type scale anchored as shown)

How often do you attend rugby matches *as a spectator (**not as a player**)*?

Never, 1 -2 times per year, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, more than 10 times per year

How often do you watch rugby on television?

Never, 1 -2 times per year, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, more than 10 times per year

How often do you follow rugby on the Internet?

Never, a few times a year, every few months, about once a month, a couple of times a month, weekly, several times a week, daily

How often do you travel (at least overnight) to watch rugby?

Never, 1 -2 times per year, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, more than 10 times per year

How often do you travel (at least overnight) to play rugby?

Never, 1 -2 times per year, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, more than 10 times per year

How far away is the nearest opportunity to participate in rugby (e.g., how long would it take to get to the nearest rugby club)? _____ minutes / don't know

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age   zipcode

Gender   current member of USA Rugby? Yes/no

Education level

Family income

Appendix E: Email scripts

Dear Rugby Friend:

USA Rugby continues to seek ways to make the rugby experience better for everyone who participates. The Sport+Development Lab at the University of Illinois is seeking help from current and former players to do this. Please click this link ${l://SurveyLink?d=USA Rugby Survey} to take a short survey about your rugby experiences. We will be using your responses to recommend ways to make rugby the best possible experience for all who participate. Please help by completing this survey:${l://SurveyLink?d=USA Rugby Survey}.

If you complete the survey, you can enter a drawing to win one of the following prizes: one of 5 Go-Pro cameras; one of 3 pairs of tickets to an upcoming test match; $10 off your USA Rugby membership; discounted merchandise from the World Rugby shop.

Thanks for your help to make rugby better throughout the country!

If you have any questions about the survey or any aspect of this study, please contact Dr. Chris Green at the University of Illinois. Please open the attached file for further information, and consent to participate: Online consent doc survey 2.18

Warm regards,
Chris Green
cgreen@illinois.edu
217 244-2773

Dear Friend of USA Rugby

We are still waiting for your response. Please help us to improve the sport by responding to this short survey.

Thanks for taking the time to share your opinions and experiences with rugby.

Warm regards,
Chris Green, Director
The Sport+Development Lab at UIUC

Follow this link to the Survey:
${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${l://SurveyURL}

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

Apologies if you have completed this survey using the link sent by USA Rugby. This is a final reminder to please voice your thoughts and opinions! Just click on the link below.

We are also doing short phone interviews with 100 of you. Have something to say? Please talk with us. If you are willing to tell us your rugby story in a 20 minute phone interview, please email us at: cgreen@illinois.edu
One of our researchers will respond to set up a convenient time to talk.

USA Rugby continues to seek ways to make the rugby experience better for everyone who participates. The Sport+Development Lab at the University of Illinois is seeking help from current and former players to do this. Please click this link ${l://SurveyLink?d=USA Rugby Survey} to take a short survey about your rugby experiences. We will be using your responses to recommend ways to make rugby the best possible experience for all who participate. Please help by completing this survey:${l://SurveyLink?d=USA Rugby Survey}.

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Appendix F: Telephone interviews with current and former players

Are you currently playing? OR When did you last play?

1. Tell me about your rugby experience.
        Probe: What got you started?
              How long did you play and at what levels?
              Transition points

2a. [If played at High school and then university]: What was it like for you to go from rugby at school to rugby at university?
        Probe: What was most helpful?
           What was the hardest part?

2b. [If played at school and then club]: What was it like for you to go from rugby at school to club rugby?
        Probe: What was most helpful?
           What was the hardest part?

2c. [If played at university and then club]: What was it like for you to go from university rugby to club rugby?
        Probe: What was most helpful?
           What was the hardest part?

3a. What did you particularly like about rugby?
        Probe: what did you like about your team? Your club?

3b. Was there anything you particularly disliked about rugby? Tell me about it.
           Probe: Dislikes about team?
             Dislikes about club?

4a [for current players only] What keeps you playing?

4b. [for former players only] Why did you stop playing rugby?
           Probe: What, if anything, would help you to play rugby again?

5. In your opinion, what could USA Rugby do to make the rugby experience better for players?

6. Is there anything else that you would like us to know?

Appendix G: Face-to-face interviews with HS players at Midwest Challenge Cup

How did you get started in rugby? Probe for family connections, school, friends, etc. How old were you when you started?

Did you play on a youth team and then a high school team? If so, how were they different? How alike? What was it like to go from your youth team to a high school team? Easy, hard, why?

What are the best and worst things about playing rugby? How is rugby different from other sports you play or have played?

How do you figure out how to stay playing rugby AFTER you finish high school? Or do you even want to keep playing? Try to get some details here if you can.
Do you think you'll play rugby in college?
Do you see yourself playing club rugby some day?

If you were trying to convince a friend to play rugby, what would you say to them?

Appendix H: Face-to-face interviews with university & club players at 7s tournament

1. How did you get started playing rugby? Probe for levels they played (youth, HS, Uni) Be sure to get their current playing status.

2. If they've played other levels or types ask them to think about/describe what it was like to go from one to the other — what was different/same/challenging/etc.

3. How did they get from 1 level to the next? Did someone recruit them? Did they look it up? Or something else?

4. It's a 7s tournament, so ask what other rugby involvements they have — do they play 15s? Touch/flag rugby? Coach? Referee?

5. Ask the University players what they plan to do rugby-wise when they graduate from college —if they plan to play club. If so, do they know how to find a club? What do they think it will be like to play club versus with their university team? If not — why not?

6. Ask club players how they get university players to play club. Also ask them what they think are the key challenges in making the change from university team to club team, and why.

7. Ask them all what would make them stop playing rugby? Why they think other people stop playing? What other ways would they (or could they) stay involved in rugby?

8. Finally, ask them all what could be done to get and keep more people playing rugby.