



FACILITATING TRANSITIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF RUGBY PLAYERS IN THE UNITED STATES

USA RUGBY REPORT TO CONGRESS
29 JULY 2017



INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Source: Recruit and Retain Study, Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

	2006	2007	2008	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	Avg/Tot
Youth/HS Stay	39.52%	42.12%	37.33%	39.05%	38.72%	40.39%	41.16%	39.83%
Youth/HS to College	4.01%	2.70%	3.65%	4.54%	4.39%	4.12%	4.15%	4.01%
Youth/HS to Senior Club	1.30%	0.89%	1.17%	1.10%	1.15%	1.22%	1.16%	1.15%
Youth/HS Leave	55.17%	54.30%	57.85%	55.31%	55.73%	54.27%	53.52%	55.01%
YOUTH/HIGH SCHOOL	17,297	19,510	21,699	25,138	28,268	32,002	36,549	180,463
College Stay	48.97%	44.00%	38.65%	45.52%	43.65%	43.03%	43.43%	43.89%
College to Senior Club	3.05%	2.61%	4.23%	5.69%	4.59%	5.19%	4.40%	4.25%
College Leave	47.97%	53.39%	57.12%	63.67%	51.76%	51.78%	52.17%	53.98%
COLLEGE	24,852	25,653	17,983	22,895	28,366	30,487	31,847	182,083
Senior Club Stay	57.83%	53.62%	48.61%	57.20%	57.25%	56.38%	56.52%	55.34%
Senior Club Leave	42.17%	46.38%	51.39%	42.80%	42.75%	43.62%	43.48%	44.66%
SENIOR CLUB	19,118	20,101	17,266	18,231	21,468	23,304	24,616	144,104

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:

ANNUAL YEAR-TO-YEAR RETENTION

Source: USA Rugby Senior Club and Membership Departments

	Year	High School Ever	College Ever	Senior Club Ever	High School to College to Senior Club
High School	2005	100.00%	17.55%	9.90%	4.90%
High School	2007	100.00%	18.36%	7.04%	4.00%
College	2005	0.93%	100.00%	21.33%	0.28%
College	2007	6.68%	100.00%	19.92%	1.95%
College	2011-12	15.45%	100.00%	4.53%	1.60%
Senior Club	2010-11	7.68%	25.45%	100.00%	3.17%
Senior Club	2011-12	9.34%	26.82%	100.00%	3.74%

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:

LONG TERM RETENTION / TRANSITION BETWEEN LEVELS

HIGH SCHOOL

- ▶ 38.79% returned to HS rugby the next year
- ▶ 40.55% played HS rugby again by 2016-2017
- ▶ 12.87% made it to college by 2016-2017
- ▶ 4.35% made it to senior club by 2016-2017

HIGH SCHOOL AGE GUESS

- ▶ 6.67% returned to HS rugby the next year
- ▶ 16.33% made it to college by 2016-2017
- ▶ 6.44% made it to senior club by 2016-2017

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:

RECENT TRENDS IN RRT: EXAMINATION OF 2013-2014
PLAYER MEMBERSHIPS

COLLEGE

- ▶ 43.5% returned to college the next year
- ▶ 46.66% played college again by 2016-2017
- ▶ 15.09% made it to senior club by 2016-2017

COLLEGE AGE GUESS

- ▶ 25.08% returned to college the next year
- ▶ 22.59% made it to senior club by 2016-2017

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:

RECENT TRENDS IN RRT: EXAMINATION OF 2013-2014
PLAYER MEMBERSHIPS

Source: USA Rugby Senior Club and Membership Departments

SENIOR CLUB

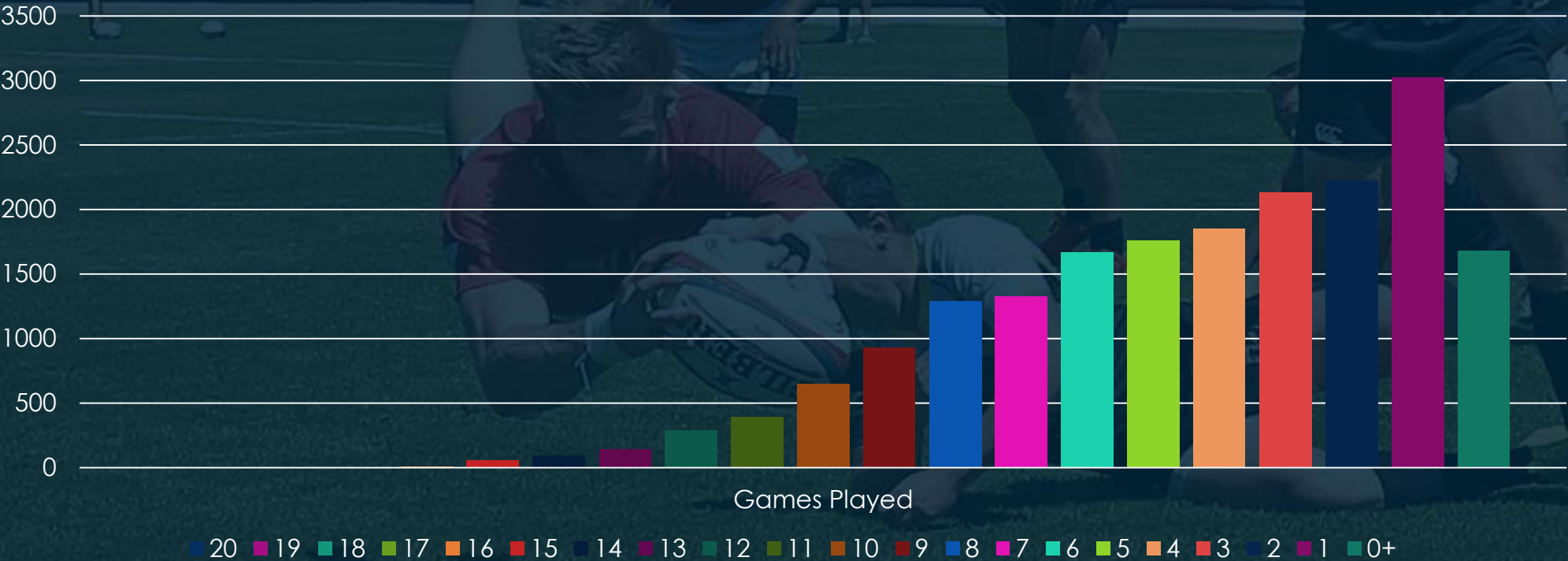
- ▶ 54.28% returned to senior club the next year
- ▶ 61.02% played senior club again by 2016-2017

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:

*RECENT TRENDS IN RRT: EXAMINATION OF 2013-2014
PLAYER MEMBERSHIPS*

Source: USA Rugby Senior Club Department and USA Rugby Competition Management System

Number of Competitive Games Played, by Senior Club Player



Number of registered players to senior clubs who were rostered for NO competitive games exceeds 11,000

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:

INVESTIGATION OF SENIOR CLUB PARTICIPATION RATES

Source: USA Rugby Senior Club Department and USA Rugby Competition Management System

Number of Games Played	Number of Players	Percent of Players on Rosters	Percent of Total Senior Players
15+	82	0.42%	0.26%
11+	1,004	5.14%	3.24%
7+	5,200	26.60%	16.77%
5+	8,628	44.14%	27.83%
3+	12,615	64.54%	40.69%
1+	17,862	91.38%	57.62%
0+ (Rostered)	19,547	100.0%	63.05%

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:

INVESTIGATION OF SENIOR CLUB PARTICIPATION RATES




**WHY DO WE PLAY? WHY DO WE STOP
PLAYING?**

- 
- ▶ Perceived competence
 - ▶ Constraints on participation (intrapersonal, interpersonal, structural)
 - ▶ Sense of community
 - ▶ Social ties to rugby (friend influence/participation; family influence/participation)
 - ▶ Identity
 - ▶ Motivation to play rugby (intellectual, social, mastery, escape)
 - ▶ Club commitment
 - ▶ Subcultural fit
 - ▶ Social infrastructure
 - ▶ Interest in alternative game forms
 - ▶ Satisfaction with competition structures

WHY DO WE PLAY? WHY DO WE STOP PLAYING?

VARIABLES KNOWN TO AFFECT ATHLETE RETENTION

- 
- ▶ **The sport itself**
 - ▶ **Physical nature of the sport**
 - ▶ **A 'Game for All'**
 - ▶ **Accepts players of 'all shapes and sizes'**
 - ▶ **Unique subculture**
 - ▶ **Social, intellectual, mastery, escape**
 - ▶ **Social ties and sense of community**
 - ▶ **Friend of family influence**

WHY DO WE PLAY?

THE SPORT ITSELF





Often a combination of factors

- ▶ **Other time commitments and life priorities**
- ▶ **Injury and recovery time**
- ▶ **Non-fit with subculture**
- ▶ **Expectations of participation**

WHY DO WE STOP PLAYING?

THE SPORT ITSELF

YOUTH PLAYERS

Variable	Stayers	Leavers
Motivation¹		
Intellectual	1.20	1.20
Social	1.23	1.00
Mastery	1.25	0.73
Escape	0.78	0.75
Rugby Identity¹	1.10	0.37
Perceived Competence¹	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

¹Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree

²Scale: 0=never; 1=rarely; 2=occasionally; 3=somewhat often; 4=often; 5=very often; 6=always

³Scale: 0=not at all important; 3= neither important nor unimportant; 6=extremely important

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS

Variable	Stayers	Leavers
Motivation¹		
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

¹Scale: -3 = strongly disagree; 0 = neutral; 3 = strongly agree

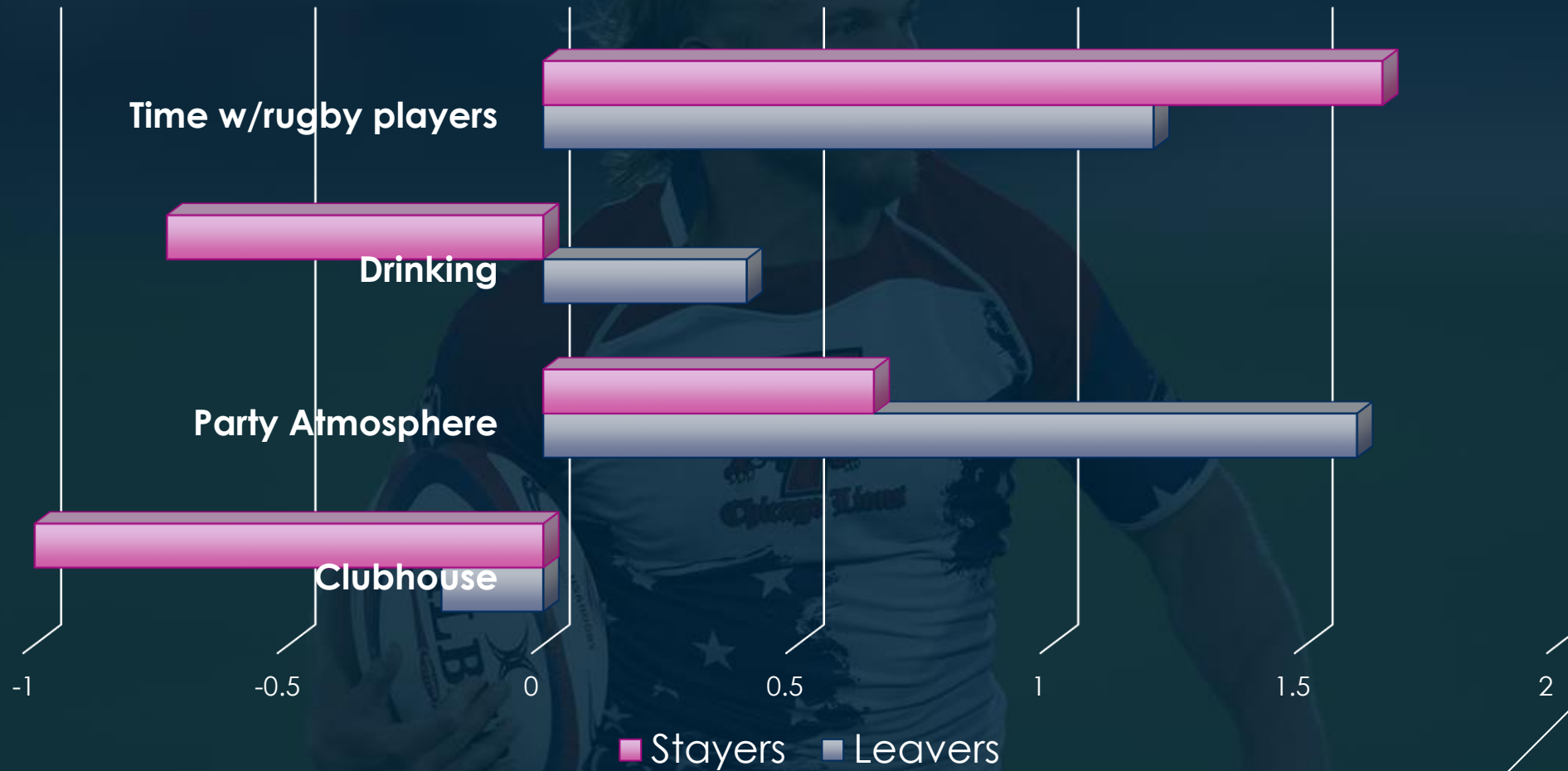
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Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS

Importance of Social Infrastructure



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

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

COLLEGE PLAYERS

Variable	Stayers	Leavers
Motivation¹		
Intellectual	1.32	1.26
Social	1.45	1.33
Mastery	1.48	1.37
Escape	1.26	0.72
Rugby Identity¹	1.14	0.93
Perceived Competence¹	1.01	1.02
Perceived Constraints	How often a concern? ²	How important in decision to quit? ³
Fear of injury	1.76	2.73
Recovery time	1.16	1.92
Team takes too much time	1.11	2.34
Too many other things to do	1.49	2.82
Poor skills	1.11	0.89
Friends don't play	0.51	0.86
Significant other doesn't support	0.49	0.6
Cost to play	0.98	1.05
Club not convenient	0.54	1.95
Too much travel	0.71	1.34
Don't fit in	0.5	0.68
Don't enjoy off-field activities	0.4	1.34

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Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITIONED HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS

Variable	HS to College	HS to Senior Club
Motivation¹		
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 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

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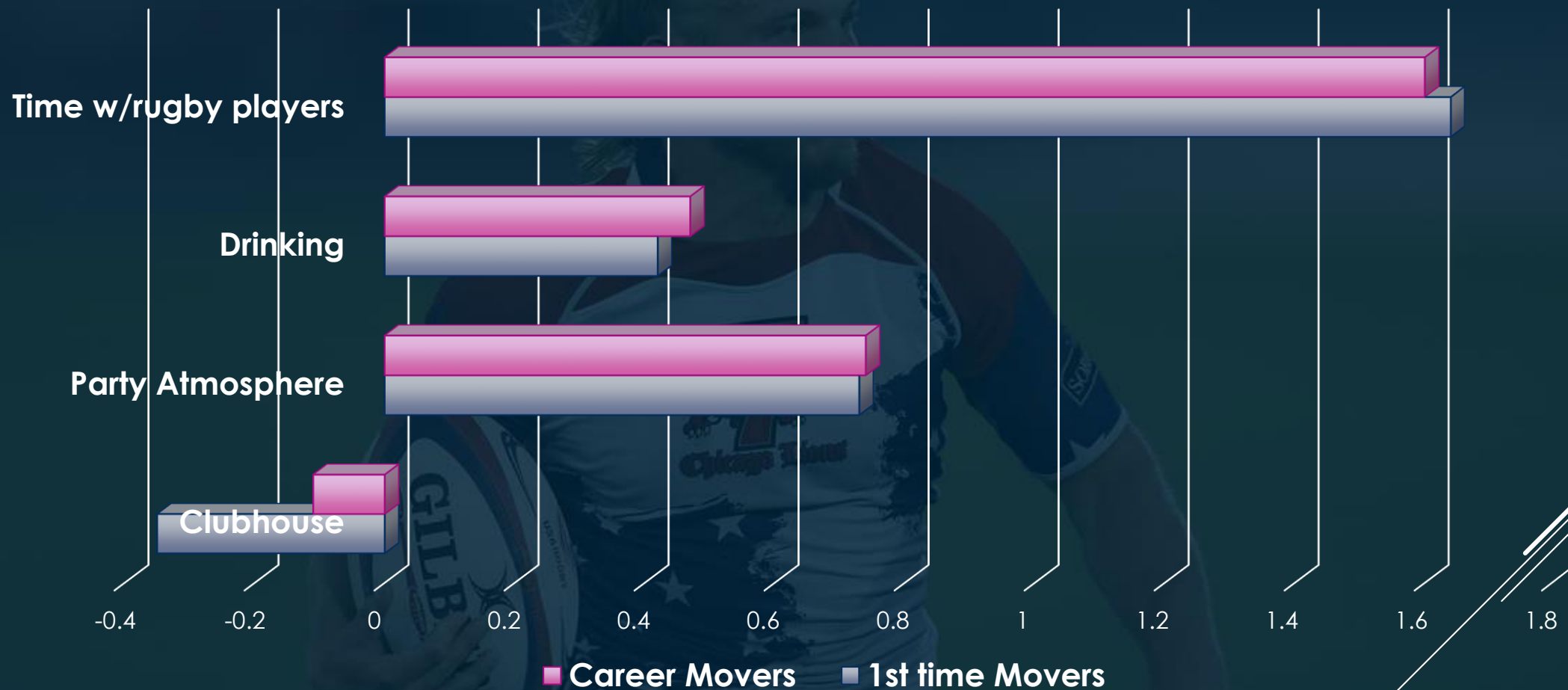
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Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

COLLEGE PLAYERS

Importance of Social Infrastructure



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Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

SENIOR CLUB PLAYERS

	CURRENT PLAYERS				LEAVERS			
Variable	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
	Club Only		Career		Club Only		Career	
Perceived Constraints	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 takes too much time	1.45	1.72	1.75	1.91	2.71	2.89	2.90	3.32
Too many 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
Significant other doesn't 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
Don't enjoy off-field activities	0.41	0.53	0.49	0.57	0.66	1.16	0.71	1.11

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Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITIONED COLLEGE PLAYERS

Variable	First Time Movers (CL-CB)	Career Movers (HS-CL-CB)
Motivation¹		
Intellectual	1.04	0.87
Social	1.47	1.38
Mastery	1.66	1.58
Escape	1.22	1.09
Rugby Identity¹	1.44	1.41
Perceived Competence¹	1.58	1.53
Perceived Constraints	How often a concern? ²	
Fear of injury	2.02	1.83
Recovery time	1.8	1.63
Team takes too much time	2.0	1.86
Too many other things to do	2.2	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	0.4
Don't enjoy off-field activities	0.58	0.41

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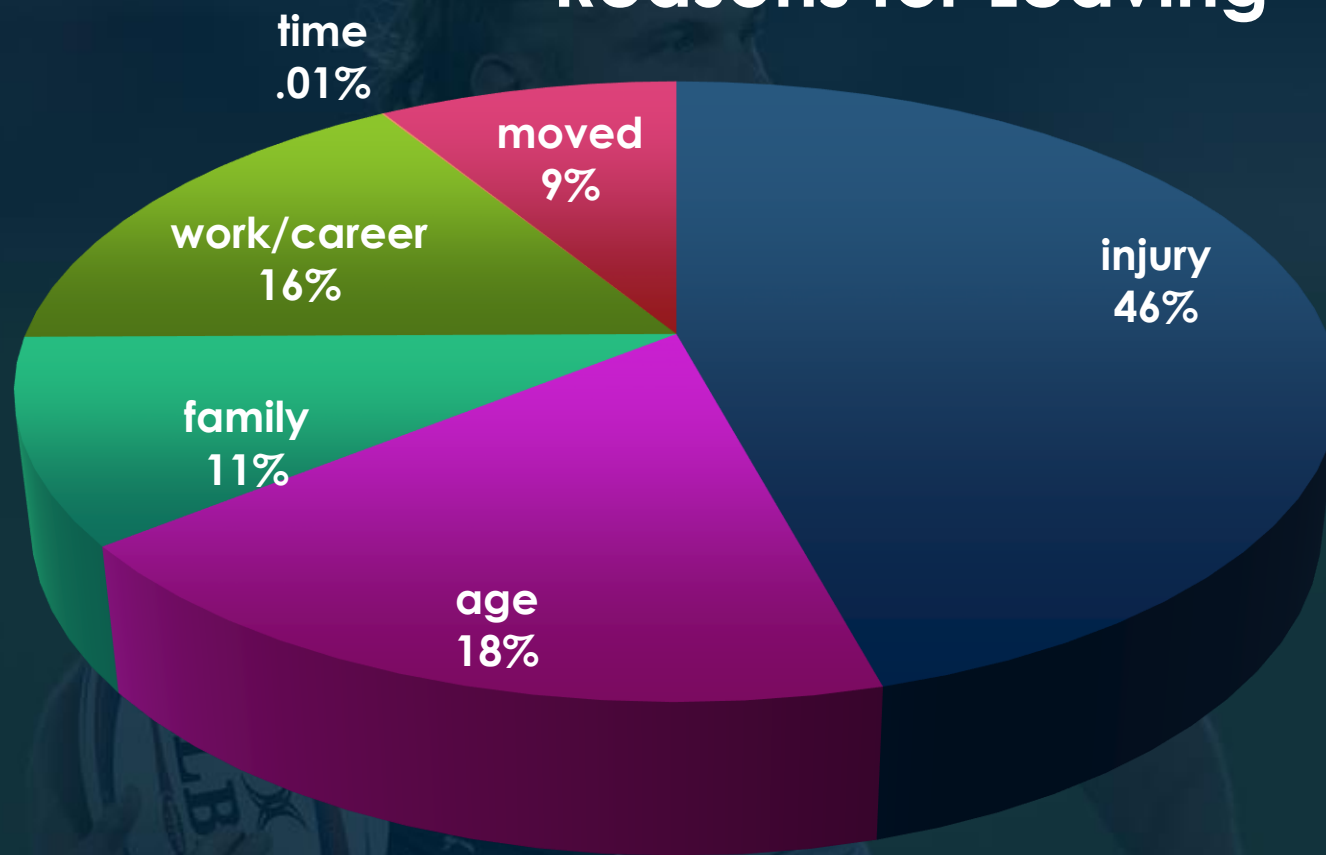
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Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

SENIOR CLUB PLAYERS

Reasons for Leaving



Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby




Overall, there four major perceived constraints that are consistent with every level:

- ▶ Fear of injury
- ▶ 'Too many other things to do'
- ▶ 'Team takes up too much time'
- ▶ Recovery time

WHY DO WE PLAY? WHY DO WE STOP PLAYING?

PERCEIVED CONSTRAINTS TO PARTICIPATION



Where do we see major differences between those who stay to play and those that leave?:


- ▶ Players who stay are more likely to say their friends play
- ▶ At higher levels, 'fear of injury' is a bigger concern for those leaving than those staying
- ▶ 'Cost to play' is a bigger concern for those that stay than those that leave
- ▶ There are four perceived constraints (fear of injury, recovery time, team takes up too much time, too many other things to do) that tend to be larger for those that leave than those that stay; additionally, for women, clubs not being convenient and travel also tend to become concerns – particularly at the adult level

WHY DO WE PLAY? WHY DO WE STOP PLAYING?

GENERAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THOSE WHO PLAY AND THOSE WHO STOP PLAYING

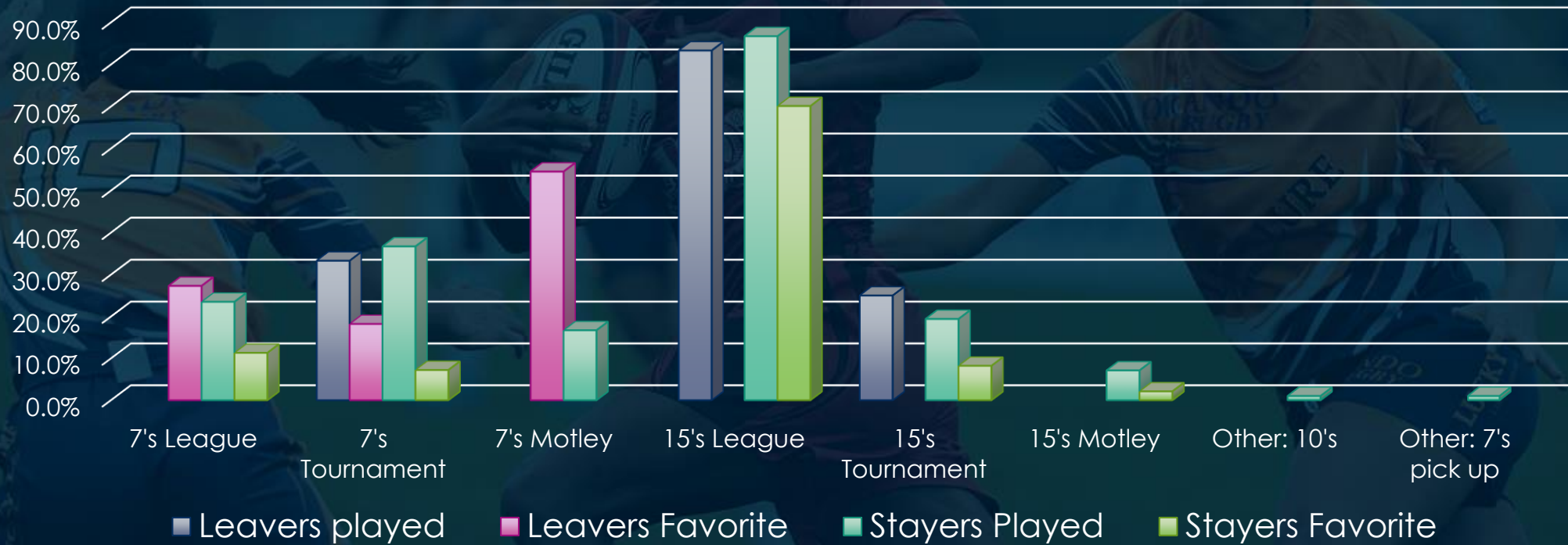


CHALLENGES TO THE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND TRANSITION OF RUGBY PLAYERS

- 
- ▶ Traditional players who transition through the levels, and those that stop playing, sometimes have different preferences, motivations, and perceived constraints
 - ▶ Players have different motivations and perceived constraints at different levels
 - ▶ There are connectivity issues between levels
 - ▶ Variation of club cultures
 - ▶ The game is changing and some aren't reacting
 - ▶ We are forgetting, or failing to execute, the simple basics of recruiting
 - ▶ Player development opportunities
 - ▶ Physical preparedness and player welfare

OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING, RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

High School Playing Format Preferences



**OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING,
RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS**
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 'STAYERS' AND 'LEAVERS'

Variable	HS 'Stayers'	HS 'Leavers'	College 'Stayers'	Senior Club (Club-Only)
Motivation ¹				
Escape	1.13	0.02	1.26	1.69
Perceived Constraints	How often a concern? ²		How important in decision to quit? ³	
Recovery time	0.92	1.33	1.16	1.56

Example table, recovery time constraint and escape motivation

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Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING, RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEVELS

- 
- ▶ **Connectivity issues between levels**
 - ▶ Partly an educational piece; 71.5% of senior clubs believe they make regular contact with high school clubs
 - ▶ **Variation of club cultures**
 - ▶ **The game is changing and some aren't reacting**
 - ▶ Players look for opportunities afforded them at previous clubs

**OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING,
RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS**

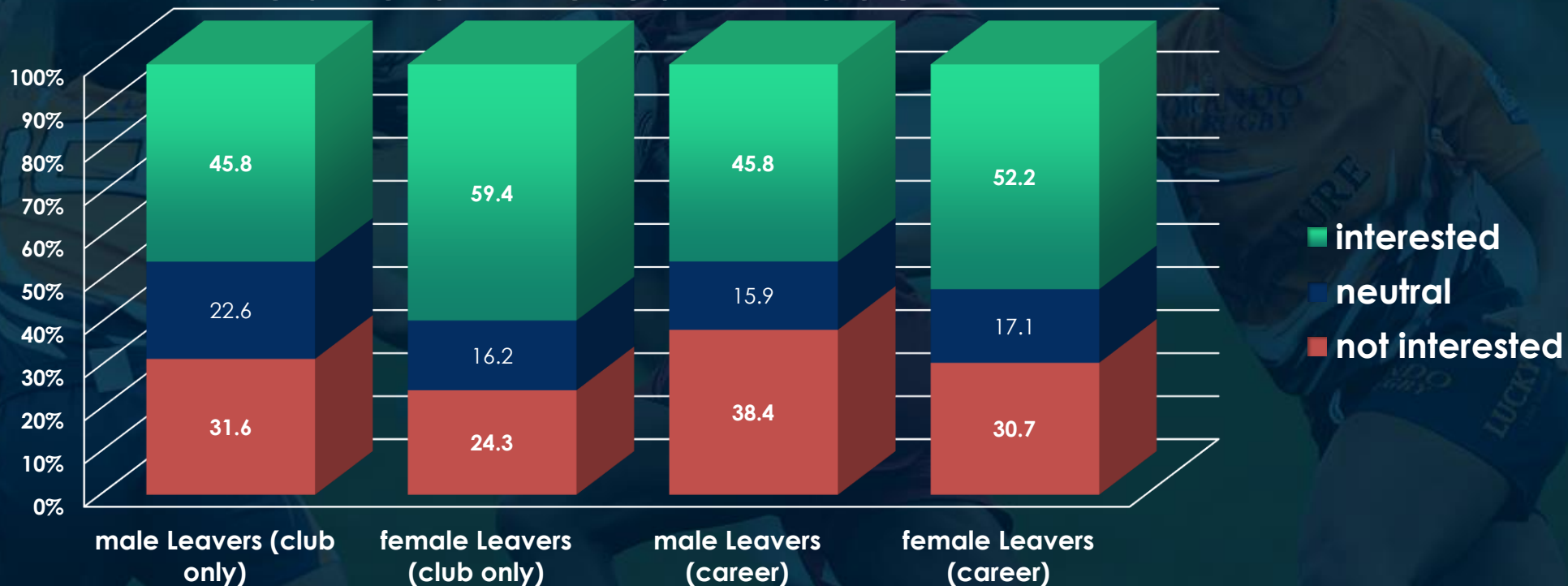


Current Players' Interest in Touch




**OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING,
RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS**

Leavers' Interest in Touch



**OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING,
RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS**

- 
- ▶ Forgetting or failing to execute the basics of recruiting
 - ▶ Player development opportunities
 - ▶ Playing time and opportunities
 - ▶ Physical preparedness and player welfare
 - ▶ Age-grade differences and rest/recovery

OVERALL CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING, RETAINING, AND TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

- ▶ 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)

OVERALL CHALLENGES FOR RUGBY IN THE UNITED STATES

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

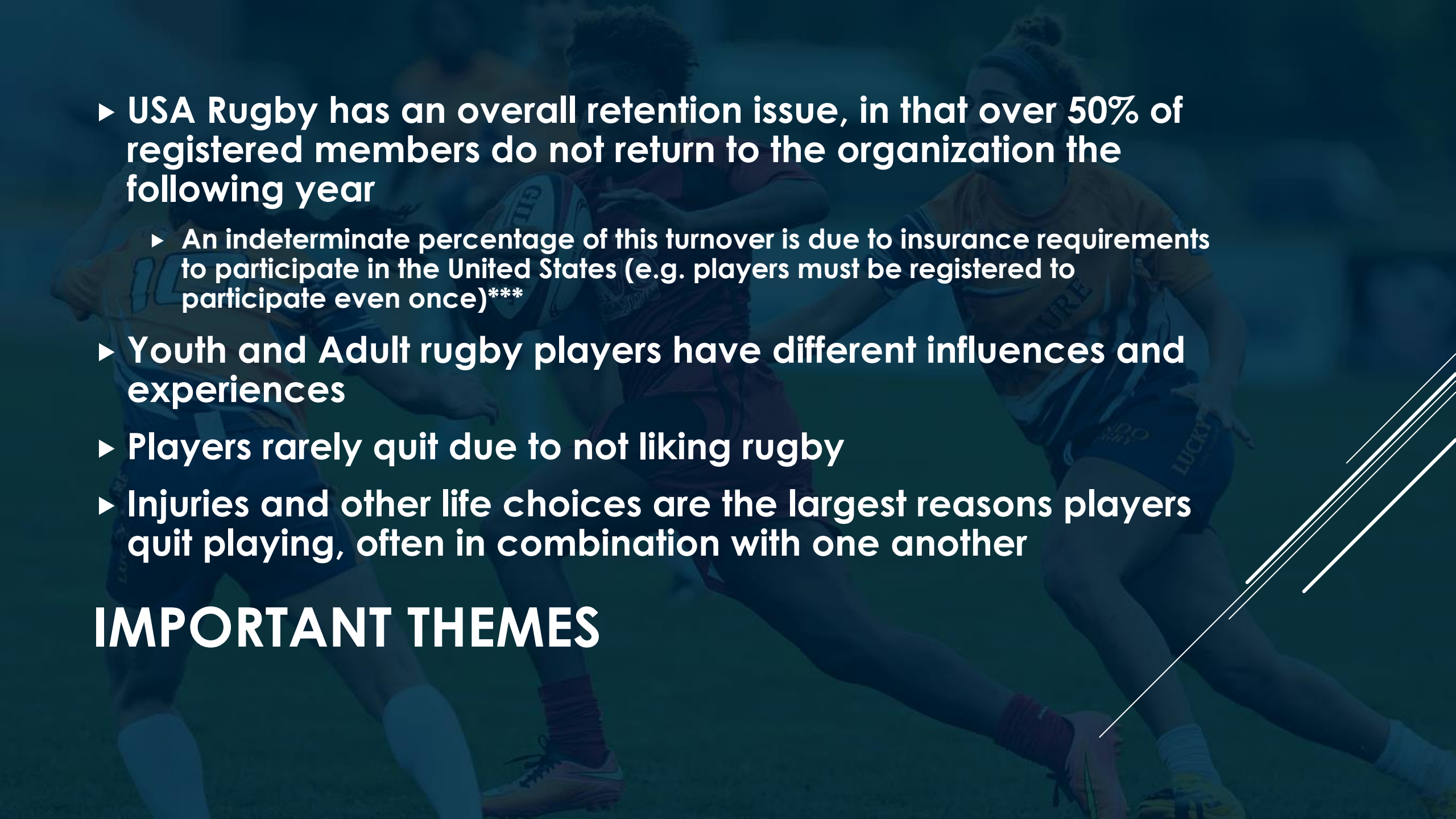
- ▶ Culture of belonging/social group/camaraderie
- ▶ Opportunities for all physique/skill levels
- ▶ Gender equal
- ▶ All ages/levels/commitment
- ▶ Adaptability of game type
- ▶ Low cost resources required / affordable
- ▶ Organization/championships/programs are in place nationally
- ▶ Can enter sport 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

OVERALL STRENGTHS OF RUGBY IN THE UNITED STATES

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

- ▶ Rugby World Cups and the Olympics
- ▶ 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

OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RUGBY IN THE UNITED STATES

- 
- ▶ USA Rugby has an overall retention issue, in that over 50% of registered members do not return to the organization the following year
 - ▶ An indeterminate percentage of this turnover is due to insurance requirements to participate in the United States (e.g. players must be registered to participate even once)***
 - ▶ Youth and Adult rugby players have different influences and experiences
 - ▶ Players rarely quit due to not liking rugby
 - ▶ Injuries and other life choices are the largest reasons players quit playing, often in combination with one another

IMPORTANT THEMES



SUCCESSSES:

- ▶ Multi-side initiative at the senior club level
- ▶ Youth and high school minutes-played caps
- ▶ Cost is not as serious a concern as some think
- ▶ Many solutions are low-cost and/or not time-intensive to implement

OBSTACLES:

- ▶ Player welfare challenges (multi-match weekends; short windows between matches)
- ▶ Opportunities for non-collegiate adult athletes
- ▶ The 'usual suspects': Seasonality, Eligibility, Scheduling, Coaching/Admin availability
- ▶ Club density to reduce travel/cost, particularly for women

SUCCESSSES AND OBSTACLES

A photograph of two male athletes running on a grass field. The athlete in the foreground is wearing a green and white jersey and is holding a football. The athlete behind him is wearing a blue jersey. The background shows a blurred stadium with banners, including one for 'Serevi'. The image has a dark blue overlay.

STRATEGIES FOR ATTRACTING / RECRUITING / RETAINING PLAYERS



FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING/RETAINING/TRANSITIONING PLAYERS


- ▶ Nail the basics
- ▶ Offer multiple divisions and/or competitive types of play
- ▶ Offer multiple types of play
- ▶ Foster an inclusive culture
- ▶ Spread out time commitments
- ▶ Assist with life transitions

STRATEGIES FOR ATTRACTING / RECRUITING / RETAINING PLAYERS

- 
- A background image of two soccer players in action on a field. The player in the foreground is wearing a light blue and white jersey, while the player behind him is in a dark blue jersey. They are both running towards the left. The image is overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent layer.
- ▶ Fundamental of recruiting/retaining/transitioning players
 - ▶ Organizational structuring for fostering of recruitment and retention
 - ▶ Retention of existing players

STRATEGIES FOR ATTRACTING / RECRUITING / RETAINING PLAYERS


Three parallel white diagonal lines on the right side of the slide, pointing towards the bottom right corner.

- 
- ▶ **Direct contact**
 - ▶ Presence at matches, tournaments, trainings, etc.
 - ▶ **Low-cost and often-overlooked recruiting principles**
 - ▶ Flyers, fairs, interest forms, etc.
 - ▶ **Need to end reliance on passive recruiting**
 - ▶ **Need to stop only relying on 'gatekeepers'**
 - ▶ **Generally not advisable to play against those you're recruiting**
 - ▶ Sometimes successful; sometimes disastrous
 - ▶ Shouldn't play across levels in many instances

FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING / RETAINING / TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

NAIL THE BASICS



- 
- ▶ More divisions/types of play, more opportunities
 - ▶ Skill gap and physicality
 - ▶ Transitioning players often look for club 'like mine'
 - ▶ For women, this interacts with density issues
 - ▶ Success of multi-side initiative at senior club level
 - ▶ Over 15% of senior clubs run multiple sides competitively
 - ▶ 7s more popular at youth levels; needs more offering at senior club level


FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING / RETAINING / TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

OFFER MULTIPLE DIVISIONS AND/OR COMPETITIVE TYPES OF PLAY

- 
- A background image of two soccer players running on a field, overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent filter. The player in the foreground is wearing a light blue and green jersey, while the player behind him is in a dark blue jersey. In the background, there are banners for 'SEREVI' and 'USA'.
- ▶ Clubs should engage in non-contact opportunities to the extent that is operationally possible
 - ▶ Separation of skill levels
 - ▶ Social / motley participation opportunities

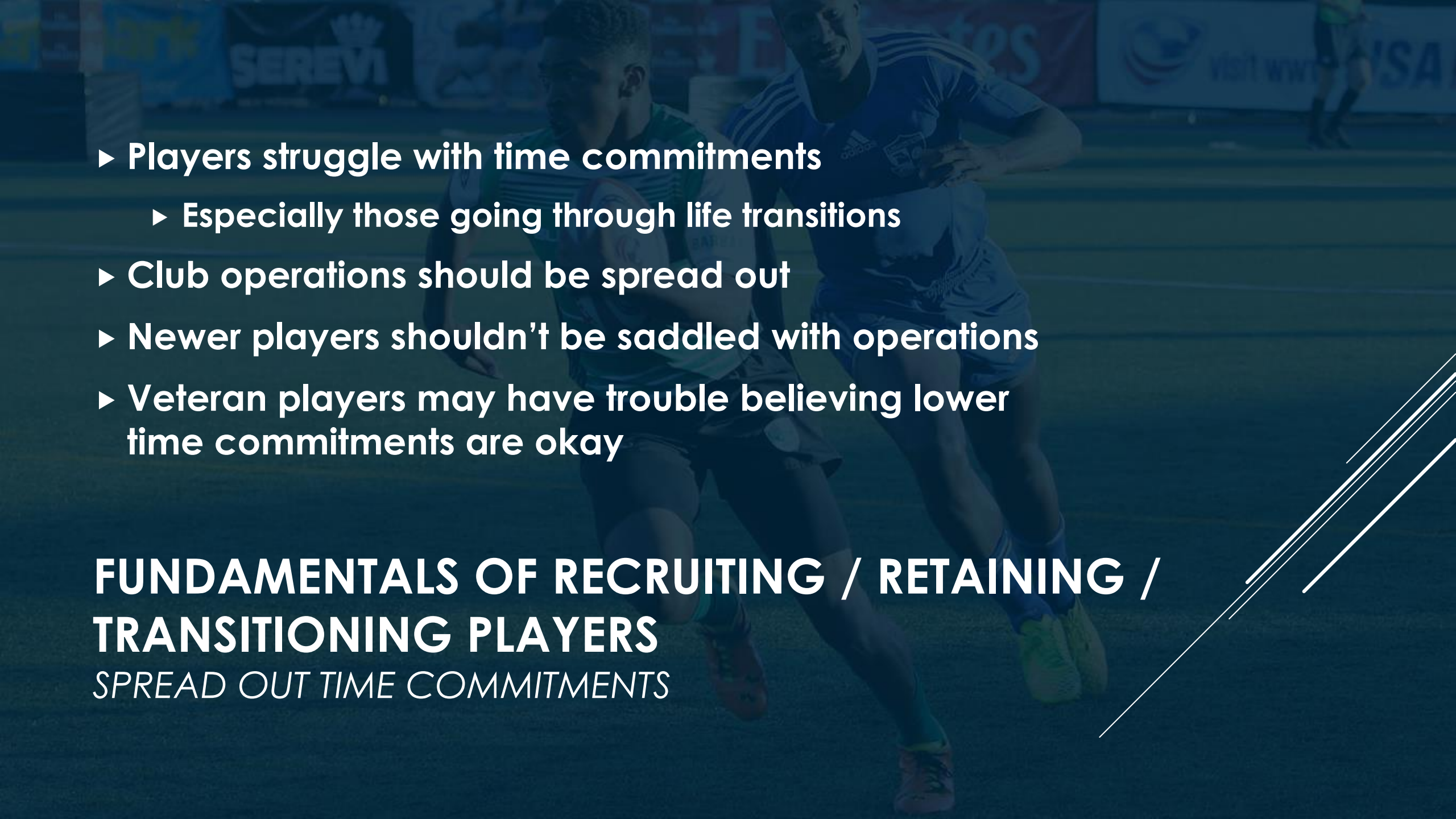
**FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING / RETAINING /
TRANSITIONING PLAYERS**
OFFER MULTIPLE TYPES OF PLAY

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- 
- A background image of two rugby players in action on a field. One player in a light blue jersey is running with the ball, while another player in a dark blue jersey is tackling him. The image is overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent layer.
- ▶ Rugby is a 'game for all'
 - ▶ Social infrastructure and sub-culture of rugby
 - ▶ Inclusive cultures have positive impact on life transitions
 - ▶ Differing time commitments
 - ▶ Don't split up teams at training
 - ▶ 'Time spent with rugby players' is very important

**FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING / RETAINING /
TRANSITIONING PLAYERS**
FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE


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- 
- ▶ Players struggle with time commitments
 - ▶ Especially those going through life transitions
 - ▶ Club operations should be spread out
 - ▶ Newer players shouldn't be saddled with operations
 - ▶ Veteran players may have trouble believing lower time commitments are okay

FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING / RETAINING / TRANSITIONING PLAYERS

SPREAD OUT TIME COMMITMENTS




- 
- ▶ Often takes 1-3 years to fully integrate into a club's organization and culture
 - ▶ Roles for players change over time
 - ▶ Major life transitions affect player availability
 - ▶ Family, work, relocation, physical changes, aging, graduation, etc.
 - ▶ Be mindful of players' lives outside of rugby

FUNDAMENTALS OF RECRUITING / RETAINING / TRANSITIONING PLAYERS


ASSIST WITH LIFE TRANSITIONS



- 
- ▶ Understand what direct contact is
 - ▶ Have an organizational plan for direct contact
 - ▶ Short-term and long-term planning needed
 - ▶ Opportunities to be in front of people
 - ▶ Pitch strategy and pitch materials
 - ▶ Opportunities for follow-up
 - ▶ Volunteer plan

ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION

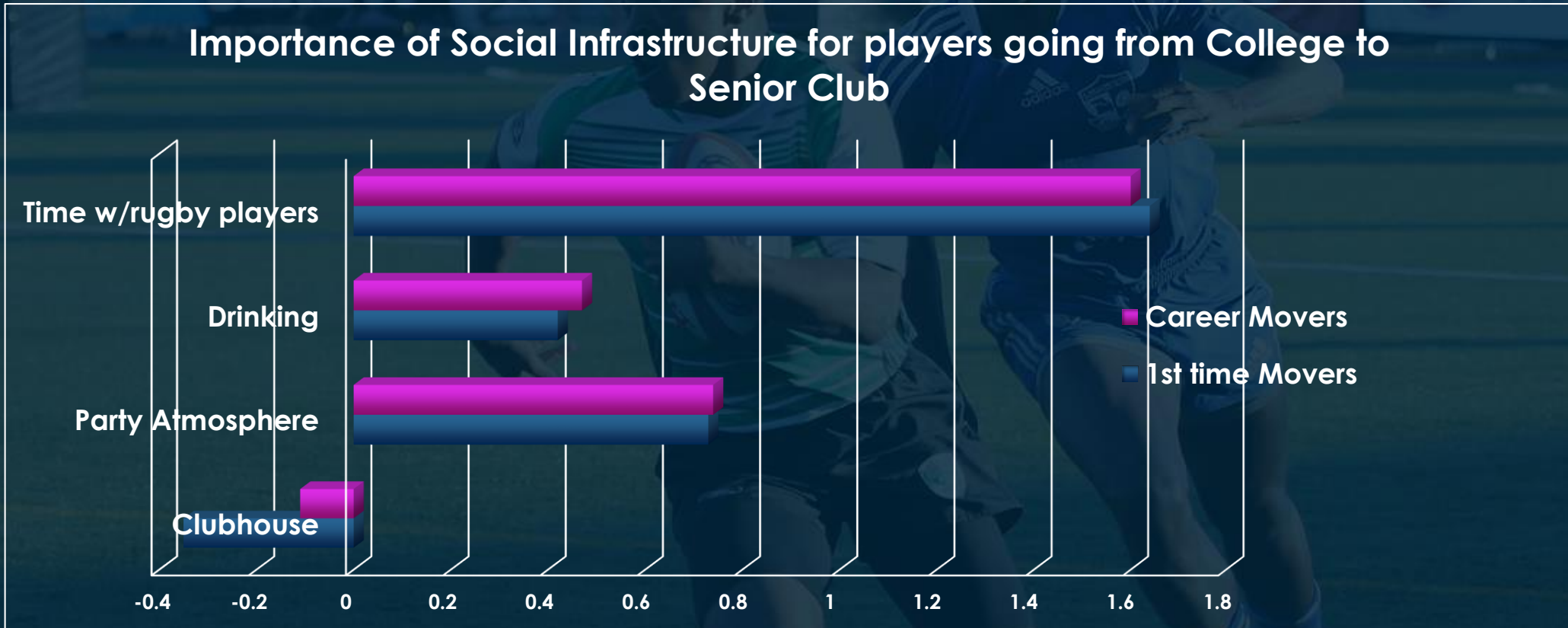
NAIL THE BASICS

- 
- ▶ **Involve former players and identify key influencers**
 - ▶ **Players enjoy spending time with other rugby players, and alumni networks are strong methods of recruiting**
 - ▶ **Activate alumni in areas living outside of your location**
 - ▶ **Offer low-time-commitment administrative and operational opportunities**
 - ▶ **Have updated, modern, and current media platforms**

ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION

NAIL THE BASICS

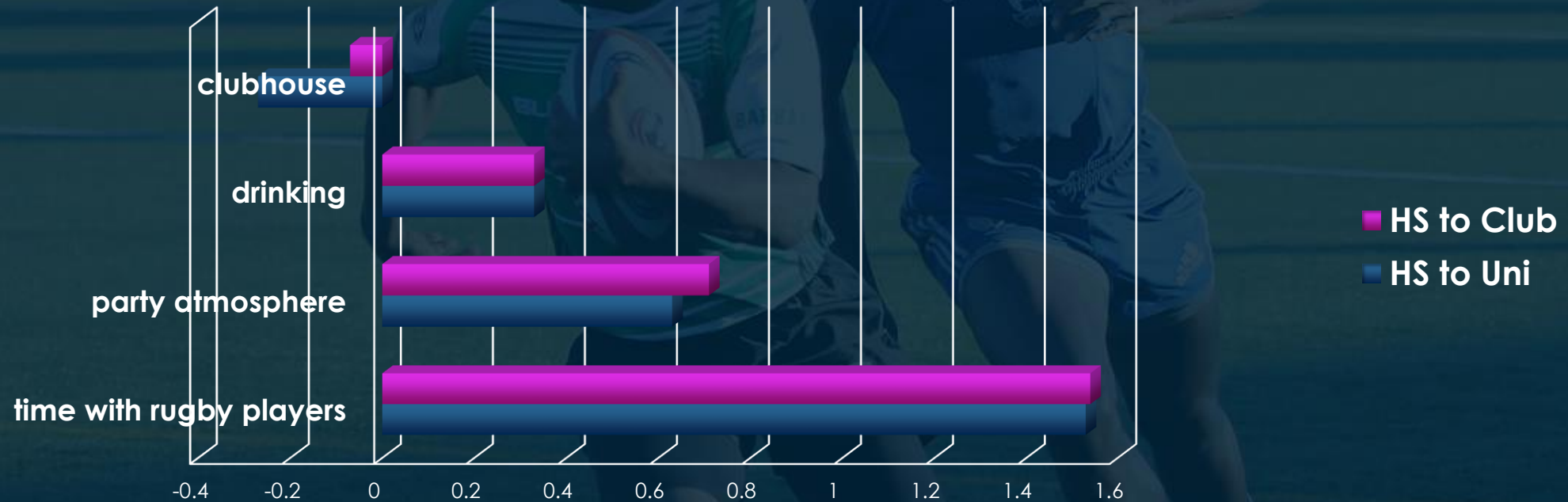
Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby



**ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION**
NAIL THE BASICS

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

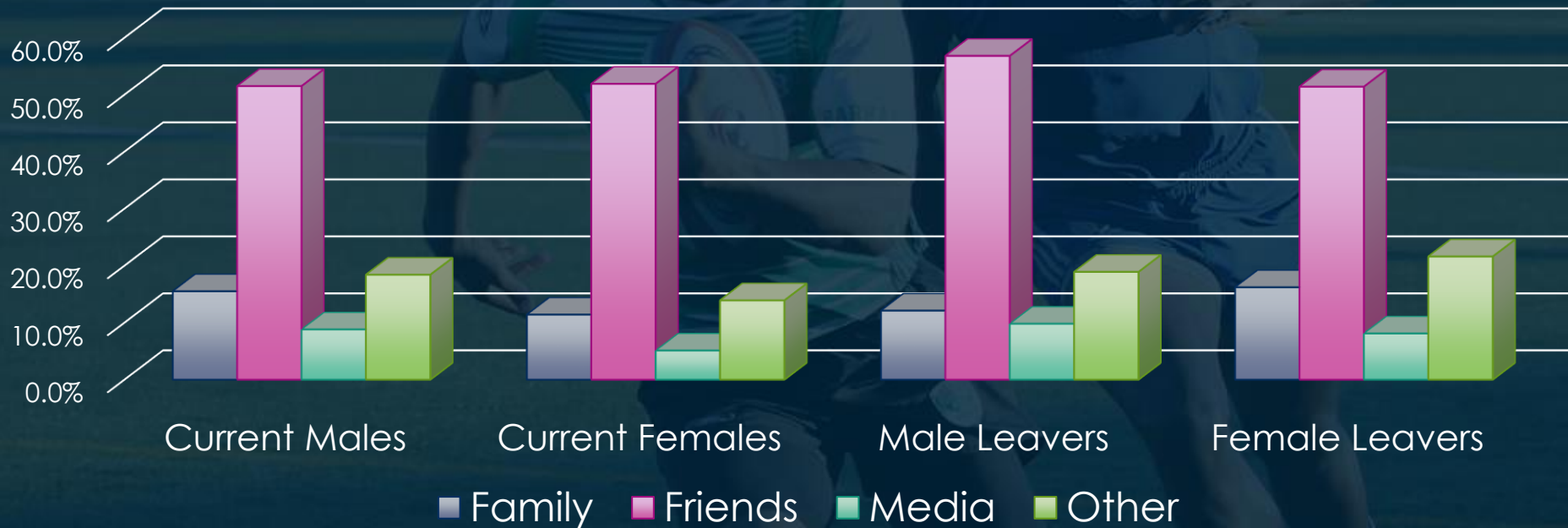
Importance of Social Infrastructure for transitioning High School players



**ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION**
NAIL THE BASICS

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

Recruitment into Club




**ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION**
NAIL THE BASICS

- 
- ▶ Partnership opportunities with clubs of the opposite sex
 - ▶ Clubs from others sports and other community organizations
 - ▶ ‘More like Madison’ – Madison United as a powerful example of cooperation
 - ▶ Acknowledge partnerships in writing and communication
 - ▶ Curtain raisers, joint social and community events, cross-club non-contact, sponsored workshops/camps, etc.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION

FOSTER LINKAGES BETWEEN CLUBS WITHIN AND ACROSS LEVELS

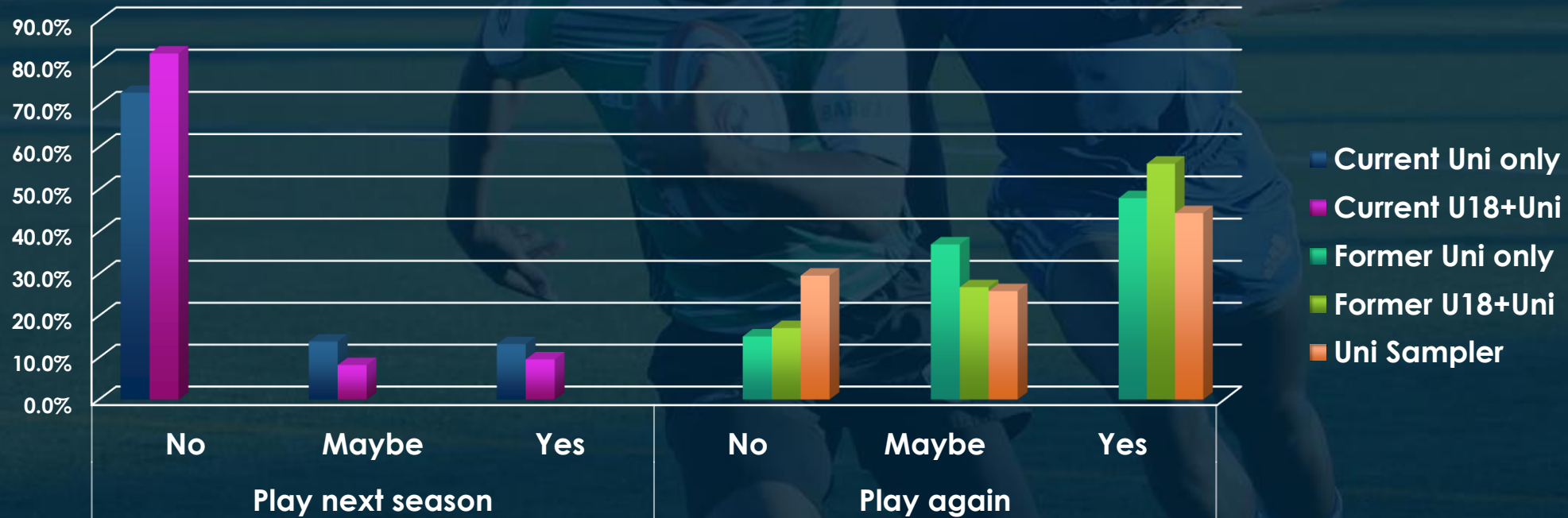
- 
- A background image of two soccer players in action on a field. The player in the foreground is wearing a white jersey with green accents and is holding the ball. The player behind him is wearing a blue jersey with white stripes on the sleeves. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent blue overlay. In the background, there are banners with logos, including one that says 'SEREVI' and another with 'USA'.
- ▶ **Mentorship of new players**
 - ▶ **Formal affiliations with organizations to assist with common areas of need**
 - ▶ **Operating mentality that life transitions are important part of individuals' journeys**
 - ▶ **Check in on players with outside commitments**

**ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION**
FORM PARTNERSHIPS TO ASSIST WITH LIFE TRANSITIONS


Three white diagonal lines of varying lengths and positions, located on the right side of the slide, pointing towards the bottom right corner.

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

College Player Interest in Playing Again




**ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION**
FORM PARTNERSHIPS TO ASSIST WITH LIFE TRANSITIONS

- 
- ▶ **Create additional roles**
 - ▶ Differing levels of time commitments
 - ▶ **Includes multiple opportunities for participation & support staff**
 - ▶ **Low-commitment opportunities off the pitch**
 - ▶ Scoreboard operators, defined training interactions, etc.
 - ▶ **Opportunities for coaching and officiating**


**ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION**
CREATE A DYNAMIC, MULTI-ROLE ORGANIZATION



- 
- ▶ Identify what club should look like, and build a plan accordingly
 - ▶ Don't be afraid to seriously address costs related to player dues
 - ▶ Models must have a value proposition
 - ▶ Don't just 'do enough to get by'
 - ▶ Player ROI is part of fostering attachment


ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION

BUILD A FINANCIAL PLAN

- 
- ▶ Programs such as age-grade teams require cooperation between levels
 - ▶ Maintain positive relationship with competition organizers
 - ▶ Assists with scheduling of multi-side clubs
 - ▶ Partnerships with schools and community/sports groups
 - ▶ Activities leagues, intramurals depts., P.E. programs


ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION

*PARTNER WITH OTHERS TO FOSTER MULTIPLE PARTICIPATION
OPPORTUNITIES*

- 
- A background image showing two soccer players in motion on a field. One player is in a light blue jersey and the other is in a dark blue jersey. They are running towards the right. The image is overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent layer.
- ▶ Injury and 'fear of injury' are major perceived constraints
 - ▶ Clubs should monitor participation and have periodization plan
 - ▶ Having trainers/doctors/etc. present at matches & trainings
 - ▶ Health assessments and screenings of players
 - ▶ Standards for rest at tournaments
 - ▶ Adherence to World Rugby player welfare guidelines


ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION

TAKE PLAYER WELFARE SERIOUSLY

- 
- ▶ Sell success off the field as much or more than success on it
 - ▶ Celebrate non-rugby success
 - ▶ GPA average, work accomplishments, etc.
 - ▶ Philanthropic involvement
 - ▶ Sell uniqueness of club and/or location
 - ▶ Value of living in city, academic credentials of school, etc.

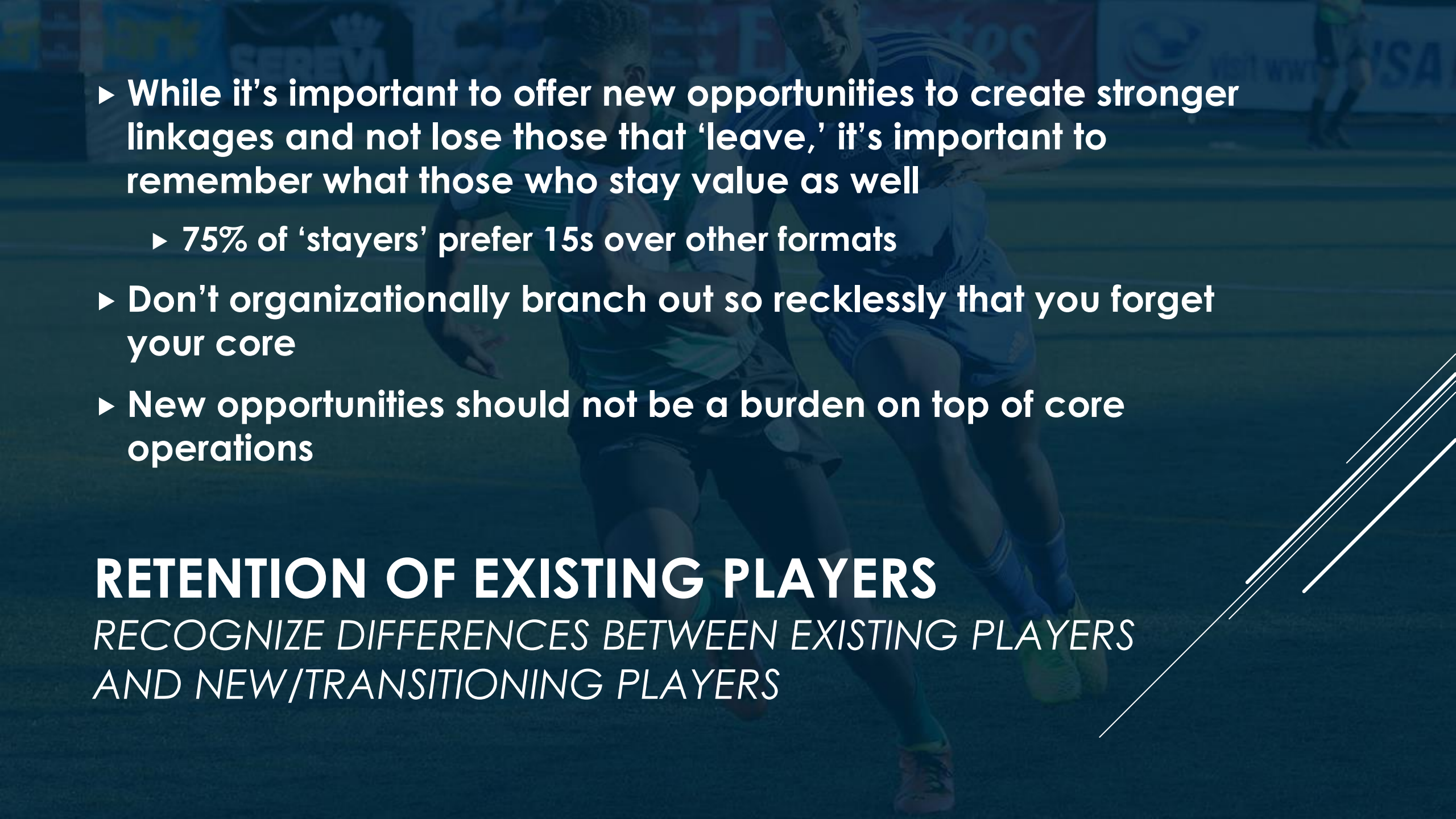
ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION

*DON'T FORGET TO SELL YOURSELF; DEVELOP AND CELEBRATE A
POSITIVE RUGBY CULTURE*

- 
- A background image of two rugby players in action on a field. The player in the foreground is wearing a blue jersey with white stripes on the sleeves and is running towards the right. The player behind him is wearing a green and white jersey and is also running. The background is slightly blurred, showing a stadium setting with some banners.
- ▶ Increase value of participation
 - ▶ Make trainings meaningful
 - ▶ Don't repeat the same drills repeatedly
 - ▶ Should be skill-acquisition-oriented
 - ▶ Reminder that players enjoy spending time with other rugby players

**ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR THE
FOSTERING OF RECRUITMENT AND TRANSITION**
MAKE RUGBY EXPERIENCES MEANINGFUL

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- 
- ▶ While it's important to offer new opportunities to create stronger linkages and not lose those that 'leave,' it's important to remember what those who stay value as well
 - ▶ 75% of 'stayers' prefer 15s over other formats
 - ▶ Don't organizationally branch out so recklessly that you forget your core
 - ▶ New opportunities should not be a burden on top of core operations


RETENTION OF EXISTING PLAYERS

*RECOGNIZE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EXISTING PLAYERS
AND NEW/TRANSITIONING PLAYERS*

- 
- ▶ Proactively anticipate all trainings, matches, social events, and other activities prior to a season beginning
 - ▶ Assists with ability to create low time-commitment operational opportunities
 - ▶ Also assists players with lifestyles and outside time commitments
 - ▶ Stick to the plan!


RETENTION OF EXISTING PLAYERS

CREATE AND MAINTAIN AN ACTIVE OPERATIONAL PLAN

- 
- ▶ Identify transitional roles
 - ▶ Identify players and members encountering typical transition points
 - ▶ Be proactive in guiding members through their options
 - ▶ Focus on retention and filling an organizational need
 - ▶ Play to member interests. If someone enjoys lining the field, play to that interest – but don't forget to keep them integrated socially!

RETENTION OF EXISTING PLAYERS

IDENTIFY NON-PLAYING AND/OR LESS TIME-CONSUMING ROLES


- 
- ▶ Identify transitional roles
 - ▶ Identify players and members encountering typical transition points
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RETENTION OF EXISTING PLAYERS

IDENTIFY NON-PLAYING AND/OR LESS TIME-CONSUMING ROLES



LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

- 
- ▶ Nail down the basics of recruiting (interest forms, club fairs, flyers, direct contact)
 - ▶ Use existing players/personnel as influencers (multi-school)
 - ▶ find out where existing players come from; recruit there
 - ▶ Resources into coaching and education
 - ▶ Offer multiple types of play
 - ▶ non-competitive and competitive
 - ▶ 15s and 7s
 - ▶ non-contact
 - ▶ Offer multiple divisions of play
 - ▶ Active alumni engagement facilitates more roles for all
 - ▶ Focus on mastery of skills over wins & losses
 - ▶ Relentlessly promote rugby's values and positive imagery of the game
 - ▶ Incorporate activities to socialize players into rugby values


LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

OVERALL THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

- 
- ▶ Physical presence at youth events
 - ▶ tournaments (RCTs, States)
 - ▶ training and matches
 - ▶ Non-contact rugby at P.E. and in local camps/organizations
 - ▶ Flyers:
 - ▶ recreation centers
 - ▶ schools
 - ▶ Strategies should focus on selling parents and faculty on benefits of playing
 - ▶ Actively work with student-athletes about grades and life choices; engage school and team regarding successes
 - ▶ Engage parents
 - ▶ key to enrollment and learning about sport and its subculture
 - ▶ Create an alumni/supporter culture
 - ▶ Host curtain-raisers for youth programs; do not play against youth programs
 - ▶ Actively 'push' players to college or senior club rugby

LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

YOUTH AND HIGH SCHOOL

- 
- ▶ Specific targeting to middle school athletic events and other HS athletic events, regardless of active rugby at those levels
 - ▶ Take advantage of ‘captive audience’ that schools provide
 - ▶ Opportunities for athlete pools, areas to post flyers, etc.
 - ▶ Family influence is far more important than friend influence at younger levels of rugby

LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

YOUTH AND HIGH SCHOOL

- ▶ “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.”
- ▶ “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.”

Source: Recruit and Retain Study Report to USA Rugby & World Rugby

LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

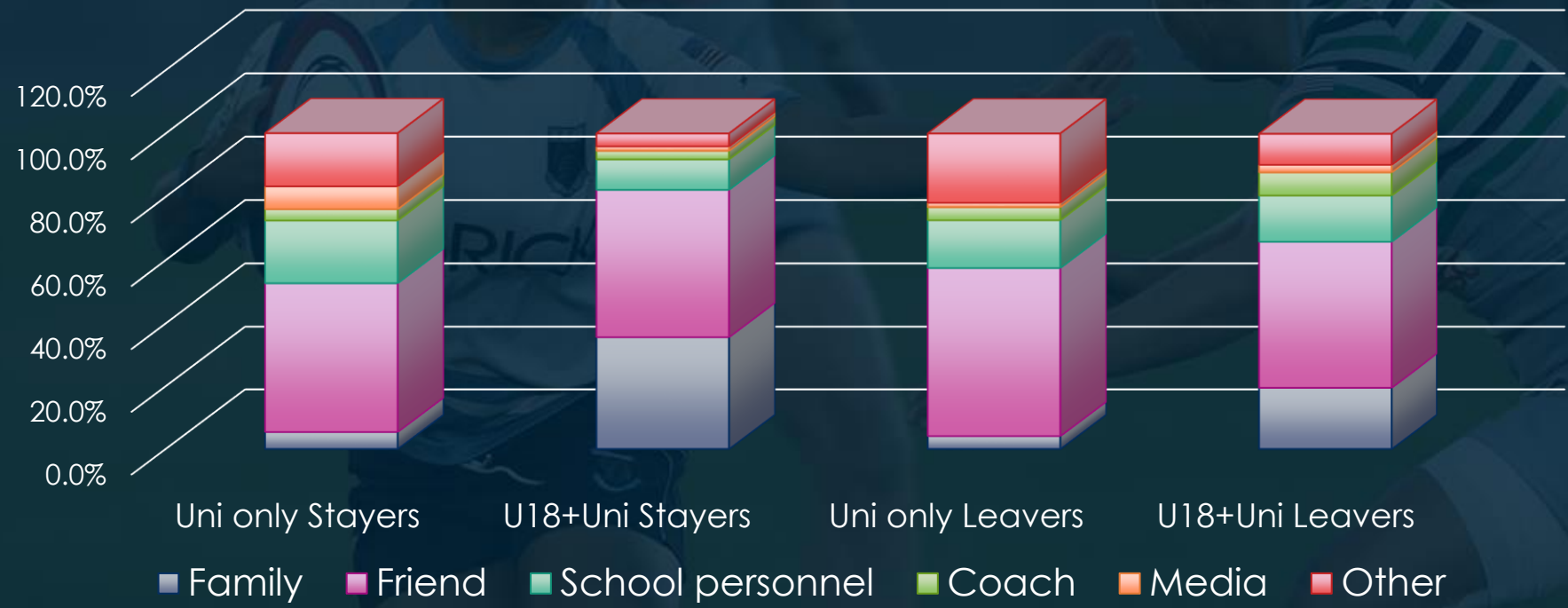
YOUTH AND HIGH SCHOOL – FAMILY INFLUENCE

- 
- ▶ Physical presence at HS events
 - ▶ tournaments (States, RCTs)
 - ▶ training and matches
 - ▶ Non-contact rugby as part of intramurals/sports clubs
 - ▶ Flyers:
 - ▶ student recreation area
 - ▶ dormitories
 - ▶ Actively work with student-athletes about grades and life choices; engage school and team regarding success (States, RCTs)
 - ▶ training and matches
 - ▶ Strategies should focus on selling faculty, parents, and alumni on benefits of playing
 - ▶ Engage friendship networks
 - ▶ Create an alumni/supporter culture
 - ▶ Host curtain-raisers for high schools; do not play against high schools
 - ▶ Actively 'push' players to senior club rugby
 - ▶ Facilitate assistance with life transition from HS to College
 - ▶ Start a U20 team
 - ▶ critical to development of younger players

LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS


COLLEGE

Initial Recruitment into College Rugby



LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

COLLEGE

- 
- ▶ College is a key level to begin paying attention to life transitions
 - ▶ Take advantage of long histories on campus (if they exist)
 - ▶ Alumni networks as well
 - ▶ Lots of direct contact opportunities given the current size of HS rugby
 - ▶ Consider adoption of U20 team
 - ▶ College is a key source of linkage


LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

COLLEGE

- 
- ▶ Physical presence at Collegiate events
 - ▶ tournaments (Conf. POs; 7s)
 - ▶ training and matches
 - ▶ Non-contact rugby as part of local meet-up group/league
 - ▶ Flyers:
 - ▶ local gyms
 - ▶ local recreation centers
 - ▶ Strategies should focus on selling employers and families on benefits of playing
 - ▶ Actively work with players regarding normal life transitions in their 20s and 30s; celebrate successes as a club
 - ▶ Engage friendship networks
 - ▶ Create a supporter/old boys/old girls culture
 - ▶ Host curtain-raisers for colleges and high schools; do not play against colleges or high schools
 - ▶ Facilitate assistance with life transition from College to being a working professional
 - ▶ Start a U20 team
 - ▶ Use 7s as a pathway to connect with college players and their social networks during the summer Club 7s season
 - ▶ Create a family culture
 - ▶ Use media recruitment, which is more important than at other levels

LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

SENIOR CLUBS

- 
- ▶ Take advantage of shifting competition formats in lower levels
 - ▶ Summer 7s as key time to capture players transitioning levels, or within levels during the summer
 - ▶ Adoption of U20 programs
 - ▶ Facilitate life transitions
 - ▶ Create a community/family culture

LEVEL-SPECIFIC THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

SENIOR CLUBS