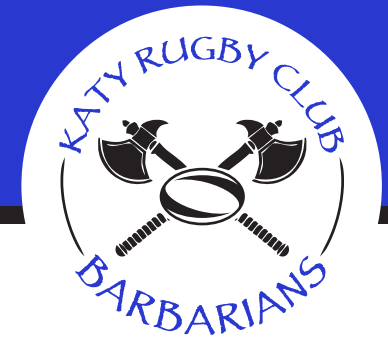




THE RUGBY CASE



A crossover sporting opportunity
for high school football players during
the off-season.



THE CASE FOR RUGBY

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RUGBY: AN INTRODUCTION IN HEADLINES

Home > Life > Digital Culture

Watch why the internet exploded over USA women's rugby Olympic bronze win in last-second play

USA rugby's first medal. Ever.

By [Tim Marcin](#) on July 30, 2024



Bronze for the U.S.! Credit: Cameron Spencer/Getty Images

> The Full Story

RUGBY WORLD CUP

Cities descend on Washington DC as interest in Rugby World Cup 2031 and 2033 ramps up

World Rugby, the international governing body for the sport of rugby union, and USA Rugby, the sport's national governing body, welcomed representatives from prospective US cities and States wanting to hear more about becoming official host cities for Men's Rugby World Cup 2031 and Women's Rugby World Cup 2033 as tournament progress continues at pace ahead of the showpiece events being hosted in North America for the first time.

> The Full Story

RWC 2023 30 JANUARY, 2024 · 4 MIN READ

Rugby World Cup 2023 was the most viewed rugby event of all time

Rugby World Cup 2023 in France was the most viewed rugby event of all time, further cementing its record-breaking legacy.

> The Full Story

SPORTS | NFL

What the NFL Can Learn From Rugby

As the World Cup begins in England, more football coaches stateside look to rugby to improve tackling

By [Jonathan Clegg](#) [Follow](#)

Sept. 15, 2015 12:41 pm ET

> The Full Story

How Pete Carroll's rugby-style tackle is changing college football

A new form of tackling -- the rugby-style Hawk Tackle -- is all the rage at Ohio State and could spread across the country. Oklahoma, Nebraska and others are hoping to learn more about it.



By [Jon Solomon](#) Oct 28, 2015 at 12:33 pm ET · 15 min read

> The Full Story

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RUGBY: WHERE IT BEGAN

Rugby was 'invented' in 1823, in England, when William Webb Ellis, a student of Rugby School, "with fine disregard for the rules of [soccer] picked up the ball and ran with it". **American Football later emerged from rugby in the 1880's.** Source: www.playrugbyusa.com

Two significant differences between rugby and American Football are the addition of the 'Forward Pass' and the allowance of blocking for the ball carrier. The laws of rugby allow for each team to contest possession at all stages of a game without a break in play for long periods. The fluid and rapid nature of rugby means that although teams practice and execute rehearsed plays and defensive schemes, **players must be quick thinking and tactically adept to cope with an unpredictable, fast moving game.**

Source: Wikipedia.org - Comparison of American Football to Rugby

Rugby is governed and officiated by standardized and strictly enforced laws, maintained and modified to support the principles of the game by the International Rugby Board. While all laws are intended to encourage fair play and eliminate safety risks, **specific law variations are followed at the youth level to further ensure player safety and minimize risk of injury.**



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RUGBY: BY THE NUMBERS

- **2016** – The first year rugby 7's was included in the Olympics Games, hosted by Rio de Janeiro
- **2024** – The year the US women's rugby won their first-ever bronze medal
- **1900, 1908, 1920 and 1924** – Years rugby was included as an Olympic sport; the USA winning two golds
- **50,000 registrations** of youth and high school rugby in 2024
- **15 players** on the field, per team
- **Two 40 minute running-time halves**, at the HS level
- Zero forward passing, Zero blocking, Zero stoppage at tackles – **play constantly recycles**
- **All players run with the ball and tackle**, and there's a position for everyone – Linemen, Linebackers, Defensive Backs, Backfield, Receivers, Tight-Ends, Kickers, Quarterbacks



U.S. Rugby Team Defends Its Gold – From 1924 | Photo: AP



U.S. Rugby Team Wins First-ever Bronze 2024

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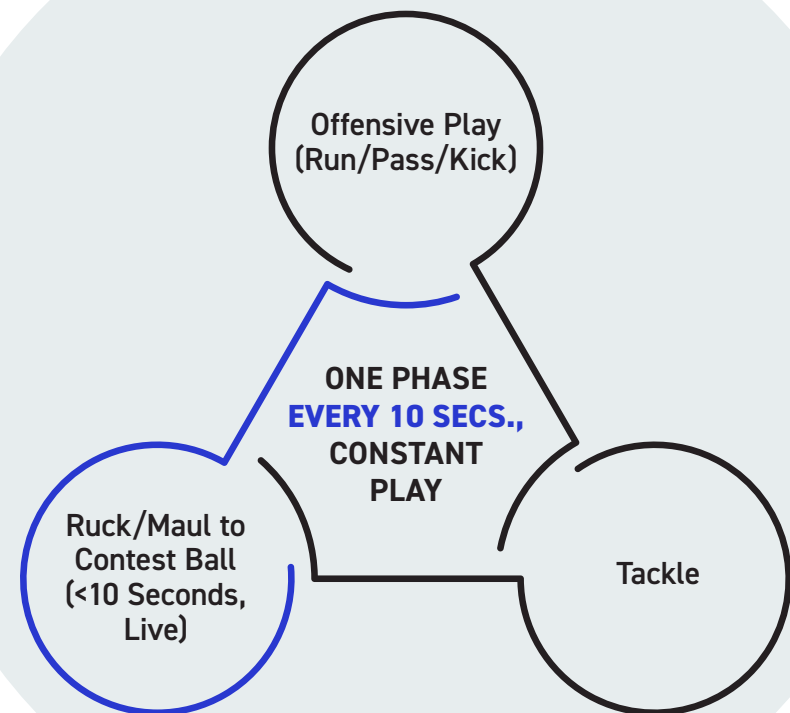


DIFFERENCE IN GAME FLOW

FOOTBALL



RUGBY



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COMMON SKILLS/ATTRIBUTES

Football Attributes Which a Rugby Off-season Would Maintain or Improve

SKILL/ATTRIBUTE	KEY COMPONENTS	FOOTBALL	RUGBY
Intensity	Competitiveness; Toughness; "Killer instinct"	X	X
Athleticism	Top Speed, Agility, Strength, Balance	X	X
Tackling	Success rate after contact; Tackle percentage	X	X
Conditioning	Minimize recovery time; Sustain peak work rate for duration of a game	X	X
Gaing Ground	Open-field running; Controlling contact; "Big" players running hard; "Fast" players breaking line	X	X
Ball-handling	Success rate in pass-catch; Ball retention in contact; "Big" guys able to create turnovers	X	X
Teamwork	Game plan execution; On-the-field communication	X	X
Character	Commitment; Team-first attitude; Sportsmanship	X	X
Creativity	Cognition; Creating & capitalizing on reactions	X	X

 "How Rugby Makes Better Football Players" published in *Gridiron Coach*

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RUGBY CROSSOVER ATHLETES IN THE HEADLINES

Around the NFL

Chiefs signing Welsh rugby star Louis Rees-Zammit from International Player Pathway program

Published: Mar 29, 2024 at 08:10 AM



Bobby Kownack
Digital Content Producer



> [The Full Story](#)

Houston Texans' Dieter Eiselen's journey from rugby in South Africa to being starstruck by Tom Brady



> [The Full Story](#)

Five other players who swapped rugby union for the NFL

David Skippers 17 Jan 2024 5:25 AM



Christian Wade of the Buffalo Bills, Hayden Smith of the New York Jets and Daniel Adongo of the Indianapolis Colts.

> [The Full Story](#)

INTERNATIONAL

The 4 rugby players confirmed in this year's NFL Player Pathway program

By Ian Cameron

200 days ago

> [The Full Story](#)



RUGBY: PERSPECTIVES

“How we teach this system of tackling was recently inspired by those who play rugby around the world. Rugby players have taken the head out of the game and truly exemplified shoulder tackling. You’ll see several clips of rugby tackling throughout the film.”

- **Coach Pete Carroll, Seattle Seahawks**
 - Super Bowl-champion head coach

[> Read Article](#)

“This off-season I will be recommending rugby for my players in order to gain a competitive edge. Two of my starting defensive line are rugby players, and showed separation from their teammates in competitiveness, quickness, desire and athleticism.”

- **Coach Chuck Gilbert, Defensive Line, Burnsville High School (MN)**
 - College All-American DE, Mankato State University (MN)
 - 10+ seasons as high school football coach

“As a highly successful football coach for over 30 years, at both the high school and university/college level, I encouraged every football player to play rugby in the spring. The carry over value to football, both technical and tactical, is huge. The conditioning far exceeds that which can be accomplished in the football off season.

Our football program at Highland High School was closely aligned with the Highland Rugby program in structure, expectations, discipline and philosophy. The programs worked hand in hand and complemented each other in a way that was a decided and distinctive advantage for both sports. **As a football coach, we never lost a player due to a rugby injury.**

I would strongly encourage every high school football coach and program to get involved with a current rugby program or start one themselves. Where else can you get this type of skill development, conditioning, team work and competition all the while teaching the core values of athletics and life. Done correctly, high school age rugby can be the difference in the degree of success attained in the football season. The benefits are tremendous and the risks are minimal.”

- **Coach Larry Wilson, Highland Rugby (UT)**
 - 19-time National U19 Rugby Champs

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RUGBY: PERSPECTIVES

“**Rugby is a sport like no other, requiring strength, speed, power, agility and the ability to repeat and recover from intense movements during a game.** The sport requires a series of movement patterns separated by intervals of running at various speeds utilizing both aerobic and anaerobic energy systems.

Because of the constant flow of the game and the positional specifics of a 15 man team, rugby requires superior levels of physical fitness. A typical game involves varying periods of both high-intensity work and active rest. **Rugby provides a perfect carryover to training for American football, as players rely heavily on a mix of both aerobic and anaerobic conditioning to enable them to repeat movement patterns and aid in recovery.** Explosive movements like rucking, mauling, line-out lifting, sprinting and tackling are anaerobic, utilizing the body's lactic acid system for fuel. This creates an optimal training for similar athletic movements involved in the game of football.

In my experience rugby players make excellent football players, as they often develop many of the technical skills required to effectively perform. Combining the improvement of athletic skills with the fitness benefits, I could not think of a better sport for football players to use as a training modality in the off-season. **Rugby will contribute to making them better all-around athletes, which is what may distinguish great football players.”**

— **Benjamin Brown, Owner, Body Systems Healing and Performance**

- Univ. of Arizona RFC, Red Mountain RFC (AZ), Arizona Men's All-Stars, USA Maccabiah
- Master of Science - Exercise & Wellness (Arizona State University)
- Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (NSCA)

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BEST/WORST CASE & RUGBY CASE

- Football teams need a way to maintain or improve players' conditioning, skills and athleticism during the off-season
 - **Best Case, without Rugby:** Players play another sport such as baseball, lacrosse, tennis, or track, and/or follow conditioning regimens.
 - **Worst Case:** Players do nothing athletic, or participate in dangerous unsupervised games, i. e. "pickup football."
 - **Rugby Case:** Players participate in a team sport requiring superior conditioning and using a similar skill set to Football (run/pass/tackle).
- Football teams need a way to maintain players' camaraderie, team spirit, character, discipline, and intensity during the off-season
 - **Best Case, without Rugby:** Players play one of several sports together.
 - **Worst Case:** Players socialize together, or do not interact until Fall.
 - **Rugby Case:** Players participate together in a sport known for its strong sense of community, team-first values, and intensely competitive nature.

BEST/WORST CASE & FOOTBALL CASE

- Rugby teams need access to the best athletes, who are often football players
 - **Best Case, without Football:** Players are recruited one-by-one to participate in rugby through friends currently playing.
 - **Worst Case:** Players are discouraged or prohibited from playing rugby by football coaches, who often hold significant leverage via college scholarships and playing time. This is a common problem experienced by many rugby clubs: Players often feel compelled to hide their participation from Football coaches, or disobey the coaches by participating.
 - **Rugby Case:** Football coaches encourage participation in rugby by players not otherwise committed to a spring sport. To assuage injury and other concerns, Football coaches are involved in conditioning, practices, and other aspects of the rugby season. Additionally, rugby clubs gain access to athletes who are accustomed to pushing each other to achieve success as a team.
- Rugby teams need better access to school or municipal facilities
 - **Best Case, without Football:** Rugby clubs struggle to find adequate practice space, obtain permits for games to be played near home area.
 - **Worst Case:** Rugby clubs are unable to secure space, and must play games in faraway cities or postpone until mid-April; This detracts from the legitimacy and viability of rugby clubs.
 - **Rugby Case:** Football coaches, in addition to being involved in various aspects of rugby club's operation, assist club in gaining access to field time, gym time, and other existing but unavailable resources.

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FOOTBALL ACTION ITEMS AND OUTCOMES

- Football Team/Coaches – Action Items
 - Encourage Football players to participate in rugby
 - Participate in pre-season planning, practices and conditioning sessions
 - Assist rugby club in obtaining practice and game facilities, and visibility on campus
- Football Team/Coaches – Expected Outcomes
 - Players to be more competitive, aggressive, confident, and “game-ready” in Fall
 - Players to be better conditioned, more athletic, and with better team camaraderie in Fall
 - Football team to have unique advantage through innovative off-season rugby program

RUGBY ACTION ITEMS AND OUTCOMES

- Rugby Club – Action Items
 - Recruit Football players in cooperation with Football coaches
 - Include Football players in team play from February through June, and possibly July/August
 - Improve skills and conditioning of Football players
- Rugby Club – Expected Outcomes
 - Benefit from cooperation with Football team by having access to top athletes, better facilities
 - Improve morale, team strength, depth of program by involving more players, parents
 - Experience improved discipline, cohesiveness, dedication by addition of elite athletes

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- **Mike Tolkin**, Head Coach, Xavier Rugby
- **Dave Hodges**, USA Eagles Forwards Coach
- **Matt Sherman**, USA Rugby
- **Mark Griffin**, Play Rugby USA, Director of Youth Rugby for USA Rugby
- **Rob Licopoli**, Owner, National American Football League
- **Larry Wilson**, Coach, Highland Rugby
- **Andrew Mase**, Univ. of Cal – Berkeley
- **Scott Henderson**, Burnsville U17/U19 Rugby
- **Chuck Gilbert**, Burnsville High School Football
- **Benjamin Brown**, Owner, Body Systems Healing and Performance