

RUGBY CLUB CASE STUDY

SUBJECT: EDUCATION LINKS

CLUB: FIVE WAYS OLD EDWARDIANS RFC

Introduction and desired club outcomes

Recognising that so many players between 16 and 18 years of age were dropping out of the sport, the club decided to try to engage students who were not participating in student sports teams. With the University of Birmingham campus-based population of around 30,000 students nearby, the chance to retrieve lost souls on campus was evident.

How they set about it

The club sought to engage students on the fringes of university sport and provide a supportive and flexible environment in which they could enjoy the game and develop their core skills. The challenge was how to achieve this without detracting from the University Club's activities and the solution was the creation of a University Club Link and a Coach Development Link.

Three students became involved in coaching the club U13s team, volunteering to help with several tournaments. The club made every effort to welcome the three and they were soon joined by five friends who soon recruited more. Before long, 22 students were signed up.

Results

This student recruitment enabled the club to sustain two regular senior men's XV's with a third XV planned. Before long, a student was elected First XV captain. The club is talking to University of Birmingham Medics, Engineers and other colleges.

Now there is even an annual "Varsity Match" between the club and University of Birmingham.

Factors critical to success

- 1) Teamwork – The participation of Club Coach Coordinator, volunteer activator, Rugby Union Student Liaison Officer and University of Birmingham rugby representatives made this possible
- 2) Quality of experience – Had the initial students not been made to feel so welcome, the additional recruits would not have come along
- 3) Innovation – Looking for a solution to suit both the club and university club as opposed to simply trying to poach players

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CLUB: GLOSSOP RFC

Introduction and desired club outcomes

Glossop RFC is a thriving club in the North West, and over the past few years the club has been successful in starting and cultivating a highly successful ladies and girls rugby section. In the local area, there is little provision for women's sport and therefore the opportunity is enormous and the club is looking to capitalise on this.

How they set about it

Initially, a small team of recruiters persuaded a core group of girls to join and this has now grown to over 50 ladies from 8 years old upwards. The club already has girls representing Cheshire and the North.

The next step in the schools programme is to actively target girls in the 9 to 11 age group with the goal of developing an active feeder scheme for the senior teams. Based on a three week programme of skills training and practice on the school premises, the girls are then taken to the club for a schools mini rugby tournament where different schools compete against each other. Each child is then invited to come along to a formal practice session at the club and to get fully involved in the active training and development programme that the club runs.

Following this, the club intends to implement a similar scheme introducing the 12 to 16 age group, implementing a "train the trainer" initiative in supporting some of the senior girls at the club to complete the level 1 coaching certificates.

Results

The club has a thriving ladies section and ambitious plans to continue this development.

Factors critical to success

- 1) Identify the needs of particular age groups – During a pilot programme with 12 – 16 year old girls that many were reluctant to participate with male coaching staff. Therefore some of the ladies took their level 1 coaching certificates and these ladies were more successful at establishing bonds
- 2) Quality of experience – From an initial group of players, the quality of their experience has led to a thriving ladies section
- 3) Identify the needs of the schools – Providing support and resources to the schools helped to form successful partnerships and a genuine desire to support the club

RUGBY CLUB CASE STUDY

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CLUB: NOTTINGHAM MODERNS RFC

Introduction and desired club outcomes

Nottingham moderns RFC had been facing a steady decline in its playing numbers since 2000. Whilst a junior section established in 2007 boasted 120 members, a valuable source of senior players had dried up: links with the local universities, the closest of which is Nottingham Trent University.

How they set about it

The club set out a 2 year plan which would benefit both the club and the university, starting with a promotional campaign at the Freshers Fair.

The club's playing and development committee met with the university's sports development officer and both parties signed up to a club / university link which provided:

- Playing and training opportunities for university students (men and women) to use the floodlit training facility on Monday evenings (at reduced rates)
- The university 4th and 5th teams train with the club on Tuesday nights
- The club provides the university with a coach and also committed £1,500 to a Community Rugby Coach with a remit to develop further links with local further and higher education institutions
- The club hosts the university 3rd team and women's fixtures on Wednesday afternoons and also provides playing opportunities for students on Saturday afternoons

In addition, the club also set up the following initiatives:

- Pitch-up-and-play social rugby, as well as an introduction to the club, its members and the facilities
- Student skills night introducing some skill development work and the chance to meet the club and RFU coaching staff
- A 3-for-2 player subscription offer, effectively reducing subscriptions to £20 for the season
- A reduced rate taxi service negotiated with a local taxi firm
- Free physio sessions and post-training meal

Results

As a direct result of these initiatives, 22 students have signed on which has enabled the club to run 4 senior teams on a regular basis. In addition, a plan has now been hatched to develop the club's touch rugby offer.

Factors critical to success

- 1) Identify ways in which club and university can help each other
- 2) Quality of experience – Critical to retaining players
- 3) Provide money saving options to appeal to students