

## **A ROOKIE PRIMER:**

Rugby is a sport, a passion, and a way of life for some. Sometimes it's described as a cross between soccer and football, but that doesn't *really* prepare you for what Rugby is all about. Rugby is a FULL contact sport that requires ball passing, ball kicking, strategy, strength, speed, and tackling. There is nothing like it on, or off, the field. The Belmont Shore Women's Rugby Football Club is dedicated to molding their rookies into well-rounded, competitive, and fun loving Rugby players. We value our rookies and take care that they are learning the game and are receiving the attention they need to gain important skills and achieve the fitness level necessary to play and enjoy the game as well as the culture.

## **WHAT IS RUGBY?**

The short story is that William Webb Ellis decided, one day during a soccer match at the public school in Rugby, England, to pick up the ball and run with it. Obviously, he was bored and wanted to liven things up. And liven things up he did! After more than a hundred years the sport is now enjoyed worldwide. Rugby is played in virtually every country in the world. The United States has both a national men's team and a national women's team, both of which compete all over the world. The Belmont Shore Women's Rugby Football club has had many players participate on the USA Eagles team over the years. No matter what level of play you desire to achieve - world class or socially competitive - Belmont Shore can offer you a better understanding of the game and a great environment in which to learn it. Even better, the year round nice weather in Southern California offers us the unique opportunity to master our craft any time we want.

## **WHAT WILL YOU NEED TO PLAY?**

Practice - When you come to your first practice (which will usually be in the evening) all you need is a T-shirt and shorts, and depending on the weather a sweatshirt and pants to go over them. Tennis shoes will be fine to practice in, but if you have cleats bring them too. Oh, and don't forget your water. Practice will be about two hours long.

Games - The team supplies you with a jersey and we can show you where to get your own shorts, socks, and mouth guard. Cleats are preferable for traction on the grass, but not really a requirement. There is other protective gear such as shoulder pads and headgear that high level, experienced players may sometimes wear, but you don't have to worry about that at this point.

## **WE PLAY ON A PITCH.**

It looks like a field and it is a field, but we call it a PITCH. It is preferably grassy and level, but we also will take what we can get (running down hill in the mud can be fun). Your rugby KIT is what you need to bring to the pitch. It consists of a sturdy rugby jersey usually provided by the team (not one of those polyester numbers from J.C. Penny), a pair of rugby shorts, matching socks, cleats or tennis shoes, water or Gatorade, and that's it! Well, maybe a little athletic tape for effect, a mouth guard so you'll look tough, and something for your hair so you'll look pretty in photographs. A tip for rookies: leave your jewelry at home. I wish I had a dime for the literally thousands of earrings and nose rings that have been lost forever in the linty recesses of people's pockets.

## **HAVE WE GOT A POSITION FOR YOU!**

Maybe you're one of those people saying, "I can't play, I don't know anything about Rugby!" Come on now, if we let not knowing about something get in our way, none of us would get anything done in any part of our lives! That's why we have the internet anyway, right? And, that is why you are reading this section after all. The following is a brief description of how the team is divided into 2 sub-units on the Pitch (playing field), the Backs and the Forwards. In these, there is a position for all types: the fast, the strong, the tall, the short, the thin, the stocky, the rugged, and the beautiful!

**THE FORWARDS:** These are a proud bunch . . . the worker bees, the relentless tide. It is their responsibility to scramble, chase, heave and ho in an effort to gain possession of the ball and then take it forward or present it nicely to the backs to do something else with. They are then expected to remain in dogged support of whoever carries the ball. Forwards tend to do a lot of pushing and shoving, and they typically do their work in groups, at slower speeds in heavy traffic situations. Nonetheless, their work is never done. Let's face it, in the story of the Tortoise and the Hare, the forwards would be the Tortoises of the rugby world. They are also referred to as the pack, or the scrum. A Scrum is also the name of the formal conglomeration of forwards who bind together in specified positions when a scrumdown is called. It is the basic set formation of rugby and occurs after various minor infringements of the law. It is a face-off, of sorts, and a favorite among forwards. Form and timing are more important here, and in other aspects of rugby, than brute strength (although we certainly don't mind a little brute strength).

**THE BACKS:** The speedsters, the golden hands, the glamour gals of rugby. Although required to ruck and maul when necessary (terms to be defined further later), to tackle and to do whatever is necessary to advance the ball, the backs play in a lot less traffic and have a lot more open space than the forwards do. These are the Hares of rugby. After the forwards have won them the ball, they are expected to juke, run, pass, kick, and score lots of tries (or touchdowns). They will work in conjunction with designated forwards to move the ball through a series of moves and plays up the pitch as quickly as possible.

Even within these two general groups, there are lots of different positions to be had, each of them requiring something slightly different. The bottom line is there is no one too small or too big for rugby. There is a position to fit every type of person - all you have to do is have the desire to play it. The Belmont coaching staff will help you understand the basics and find the right spot for you. That is our commitment to you.

### **TRAINING and FITNESS:**

"I can't play, I'm so out of shape!" Give me a break! Sure, starting out in shape is always preferable, no matter what sport you play, but never use that as an excuse to hold you back, especially from Rugby. A specific program can be designed for you to help you get to where you want and need to be. During the season players often get together outside of practice to help each other train at the gym and go for jogs. During the off-season there is touch rugby (non-contact) with our men's team and 7's games (only 7 lovely ladies on each side instead of 15, a slightly faster game good for developing ball handling and open tackling skills).

Rugby is a continuous, flowing game with natural ebbs and surges and no real time-outs except for injuries. It has both premeditation and spontaneity. The faster you can make things happen, the more likely you will be to score. All sizes and shapes of people can play but it is an aggressive and physically demanding game requiring a variety of physical and mental skills. Having 15 players on the field at the same time, though, allows us to share these requirements among all the players and makes it easy to fit any potential players into the team. FITNESS is mandatory and crucial to your success, as well as, the team's success, but it is NOT a prerequisite. The coaching staff, and the team, are here to help you achieve the fitness that you will need.

### **LAST BUT NOT LEAST, THE PARTY!**

If there is one thing that sets rugby apart from all other sports you've seen, or played, it is the after match party, where teams lay all of their differences aside to eat, drink and be merry together. There is an unrivaled spirit of camaraderie among rugby players. After all, it is a weird sport - nobody gets paid, you travel all over the place, sometimes you play in less than desirable conditions (remember that muddy hill?), and all you get as a reward is your collection of bruises. You've GOT to have a passion for Rugby and despite all the rivalries, it is a passion shared by everyone who plays it. The sport is unique and intense, and so are its players. Meeting people of all varieties from all parts of the world is one of rugby's greatest delights. Rugby is a lot of things to a lot of people - it is challenging, playful, exuberant and exciting. There are always new things to learn and old limits to push aside. Your rugby sisters will become some of your best friends and like part of your family. We hope you will join us and learn to love the game as much as we do.