

Rugby Union - a game for everyone!

Welcome to the Rugby season. The following tips and tools are provided to assist your Club retain its members, making them feel part of your plans and assist attract new ones. All junior clubs will receive a season starter welcome pack for 2011. This will include a variety of collateral e.g. Qantas Wallabies posters, parent/junior player 'Welcome to Rugby' information flyer etc. In addition we have available the popular customisable fliers/posters to promote your club information to existing and new players. We hope you will find these helpful throughout the Rugby season.

We wish you a successful season both on and off the field.

Retention and Recruitment Strategies - click on the relevant links below

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Retaining members

It is easier to retain members than find new ones. It is important for all Clubs to take the time to think about what factors assist retaining their member's over time. Here are some ideas to consider introducing at your Club in order to retain members:

- Contact and communicate with current and previous seasons members
- Recognise and reward participants at your club
- Establish a sound player pathway – provides an opportunity to develop skills
- Offer further development to promising players
- Provide quality coaches to all teams
- Encourage and assist coaches and administrators to undertake further education courses
- Take time to get to know new members
- Foster a positive atmosphere and commitment within a Club
- Offer social functions on a regular basis
- Offer trips and tours both at the development and at the social level
- Open channels of communication
- Plan and coordinate effective meetings

A return of current players

It is important to ensure that you encourage as many players as possible to return for the next season.

- Send a newsletter or letter to players during the off-season break. This is an ideal way to keep both players and parents informed of in and out of season activities e.g. include registration date/s, general information on the season- appointment of coaches and managers, special occasions & opportunities – a list of dates for the diary and benefits and rewards e.g. loyalty discount for years involved or multiple children, partnership offers with local suppliers and sponsors etc.
- Have coaches/managers make contact with the players in their team during the off-season e.g. telephone call, Christmas card, etc.
- Prior to the sign-on month beginning, ensure that all players from the previous year are personally contacted and confirm that they are returning for the new season. Use the 'Call to Arms' customisable flyer.
- Follow up with current players who have not signed up for the new season with a letter and if necessary, a phone call.

Maintaining players

It is important to ensure that you make every effort to maintain your current players during the season. It is easier to maintain players than have to recruit new ones. A couple of tips:

- Communication is the secret to successfully retaining players. Ensure that all players/parents are communicated with throughout the season via e-mail, website, newsletters, mail-out, etc.
- Have a Club notice board in a prominent position (add the newsletter to this also), put up notices about coming events etc.
- Ask coaches and managers to make efforts to include new players in the team not just on the field. This is particularly important when a large number of the players have played together for some time and one or two new ones join.
- Engage as many junior parents as possible in team activities on and off the field.
- Have a number of social functions at the Club – not expensive, also include children. You could also try an evening function for parents only.

Recruitment

- ***Firstly decide if you need to recruit and if so for what teams/age groups.***
- **Secondly ensure you communicate and promote your recruitment message to the public.**

See the 'Call to Arms' customisable flyer and poster.

The responsibility of recruitment lies with the whole Club. All members should be involved and aware of the Club's recruitment strategy. Everyone working together to recruit new members will result in more success, than leaving the recruiting in the hands of a couple of committee members.

Junior members of a Club are important as potential long-term participants and as volunteers, future coaches, officials and administrators. Running a juniors or colts section within your Club allows you to develop your Club at grass roots level, providing the Club with a larger player base and more stability.

Recruitment should be seen as an ongoing program rather than a stop-start process and the following areas should be considered.

Recruitment officer(s)

To ensure a successful result, a dedicated recruitment officer(s) should be appointed from the committee. This person can then drive the recruitment strategy and activities for the Club.

It is vital that any new person to a Club is made welcome and that their contact details are recorded so that they can be made aware of selection, club procedures, etc. With the appointment of a recruitment officer, Clubs can make sure that new participants are taken care of and simple administration procedures are followed.

Friends of Players

This is probably the best way to recruit new players – current players encouraging their friends to join the Club. Suggest that all players talk to their mates about joining them in playing Rugby. The best time to do this is when the new school year has started, when you have an idea of how the team numbers are progressing. Perhaps offer an incentive scheme for the player who recruits a player or even the most players. This also encourages the retention of current players to the Club.

Parents

Parents also play a big role in retention and recruiting of juniors. Welcome parents and provide them with up-to-date information regarding training times, coaches and contacts, necessary equipment, club rules and fees.

Also ask parents to speak to neighbours who may have younger children and suggest that they consider Rugby as a safe team sport for their children. See if parents of current players can approach schools. We have produced an additional customisable flyer and poster aimed at parents of potential six and seven year old players. Check out the Kids Rugby Plays it Safe collateral.

Club-School Link

An effective way to recruit juniors is to bring these young people and your Club together by creating Club-School links. Schools are a great source of players and volunteers (e.g: coaches, officials, administrators, etc) for your Club.

Consider running promotions which involve local schools in pre-season recruitment activities, including:

- Addressing assembly or certain classes
- Distributing Recruitment fliers/posters to school and students (customisable fliers and posters)
- Putting Registration/Recruitment information in the school newsletter
- Requesting a link from the schools website to the Club's website
- Offering to organise some after-school skills/activities/training
- Fostering a relationship between the school and the Club to attract school Rugby players after the completion of school

Remember to always seek permission for these promotions and always confirm these promotions in writing with the school. State Unions may be able to provide assistance with contacts and further advice on recruiting in your local schools.

Club Open Day

Advertise that your Club is having an open day/season starter day where anyone can come to your Club grounds to watch training/games or have a barbeque and join in some Tag Rugby games. Ensure you have nominated Club personnel available to take visitors through the club and sport orientation and registration. This gives people who are interested in Rugby an opportunity to become more familiar with the Club prior to joining.

From the success of the open day, your Club should advertise in the local media, school newsletters, and post signage at your grounds promoting your sign-on day or include this on the open day.

Clubhouse Promotions

A number of things can also be done at the clubhouse to promote your recruitment program. It is also important to conduct these activities prior to the pre-season games commencing. Some ideas are outlined below:

- Erect signs/banners that can be seen from the road, advising when sign-on dates are to be conducted. Make sure you list a contact name and telephone number. Have a more detailed sign at the clubhouse. Ensure local council approval of the signage.
- A message can be placed on your answering machine at the Club regarding the dates for sign-on.

Local Community Promotions

There are a number of ways of promoting your Club in your community. Some ideas are listed below:

- Shopping Centre Promotion – Junior Clubs can conduct a sign-on day at the local shopping centre to promote the Rugby Club to parents and children. Make sure to first contact the shopping centre management to seek their approval and advice on conducting such promotional events. Remember, plan and seek approval in advance.
- School drops – Use Promotional Recruitment fliers and Posters (see **Tools** section below for ARU customisable templates) and have parents (and players) distribute them to local feeder schools that they have a contact in or around where they live. Target teachers and use the P&C network to find the key staff member to talk to. Additionally Mums of potential new players can be covered by small groups of parents at the start or end of the school day. It is wise to coordinate this promotion to ensure you cover all of your Club's catchment area.
- Window/notice board displays - Once again with a small band of willing workers you should be able to cover your area in a short time. Ask local shops to display a Recruitment poster displaying the information regarding the sign-on weekends to be conducted at your Club.

Promotional Material

A number of promotional items have been produced by the ARU and State Unions to assist Clubs recruit additional players to Rugby Union. These items are provided to Clubs at no cost and may include:

- Promotional Recruitment fliers and posters – Customisable pdf colour fliers and posters are available on the website. This features current Qantas Wallaby players, under the heading **'Your Local Rugby Club Wants You for the Season' and 'Kids Rugby Plays it Safe'**. These allow clubs to edit the bottom section of the pdf with information such as their name, registration and training information, age groups of teams that are available, home ground and contact details of club/persons. It ensures a high quality professionally

looking flyer that can be used for existing and new players. Simply follow the instructions on the document, edit and print.

- Welcome to rugby information flyer – parent and junior player information flyer outlining the new junior Australian Rugby pathway for players aged 6 to 12 years.
- Posters/stickers - **Featuring Australian players and Super rugby teams (where applicable). These are** great giveaways when players sign on for the new season and as prizes at shopping centre promotions.

Advertising

Your Club may wish to promote sign-on days in the local area. Refer to the ARU document **Media and Marketing Tips 101** for suggestions on how to approach this. It is worth always making contact with your local paper, radio station etc. They may have some good deals for clubs – e.g. occasionally radio stations will give two for the price of one etc.

Advertising in newsletters in your area is also helpful and may even be free. Make sure that your local council is aware of your Club and the current contact details.

Editorial space is ideal if your local paper is willing to write a story about your Club and the benefits it offers.

Make sure the details are correct; ask to proofread your ad, particularly check the telephone numbers. If you provide the details, have someone else check that it is easy to read and has no mistakes.

Suggested details to include:

- Club name and logo
- What you are advertising – e.g. sign-on day, looking for coaches, players etc.
- Telephone number and contact name
- Club location
- Email address

Follow-up

It is important to follow-up any leads that you are given regarding possible players. The names that are collected at shopping centres should be collated quickly with a letter going to them inviting them to join the Club, mentioning dates of sign-on etc. Any telephone enquiries should also be followed up as soon as possible with the details in writing regarding sign-on, training days, etc.

Make sure that this list is available on sign-on day and everyone registering participants has had a look at it. It is nice to welcome them to the Club and thank them for responding to your letter etc. Find out how new players and parents found out about your Club (survey).

After the first sign-on weekend, check your list of potential participants and follow up any that didn't sign and advise them when the next sign-on date is. If they don't sign this year, keep their name on file and send information for the next season via email, post or SMS.

Tools

For access to the following 2011 tools below visit www.rugby.com.au and follow the links to rugby season starter

- **Call to arms customisable retention/recruitment flyer**
- **Call to arms customisable retention/recruitment poster**

- Kids Rugby Plays it Safe customisable retention/recruitment flyer A4
- Kids Rugby Plays it Safe customisable retention/recruitment flyer A5
- Kids Rugby Plays it Safe customisable retention/recruitment poster
- Media and marketing tips 101
- Media release sample recruitment template
- Retention letter/email sample template
- School/community newsletter sample advertisement template
- Promotion timeline sample template

In addition, extra information can be found in the volunteer management and participation sections of *Running Rugby Program* www.rugby.com.au/runningrugby

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