



Berwick RFC

Positive Introduction to Rugby

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Youth Girls – Positive Introduction to Rugby

- Started in Autumn 2018 with a handful of girls, two invested parents and an enthusiastic Development Officer.
- Active and established mini rugby section, but girls having no further rugby options from S1 onwards. High fall away rate from P6 onwards in mini rugby and Berwick wanted to provide a follow through route for female youth.
- A parent contacted our Development Officer through a local primary school to ask about further rugby opportunities. A parent with children in the male youth section contacted the Club about options for his daughter. She was getting frustrated by mini rugby and the boys not passing to her. In 2018 an after-school club dedicated to girls only from P7 upwards was created at Berwick Rugby Club. Two parents encouraged their daughters to bring friends and this resulted in a group of 12 girls from age 10 to 14. Social media promotion of the Girls Section happened in summer of 2019 with the creation of a Facebook page. Posters were handed out to all schools. The largest increase in numbers occurred in January 2021 after the pandemic and covid restrictions eased. This was simply due to other extra-curricular activities, such as ballet and drama being unavailable. Numbers plateaued again for the 22-23 Season as the players returned to their pre-covid activities or amazingly, decided to combine rugby with other sports and clubs.
- Feedback from our girls and parents:

“My mum and sister play so I guess I should be there – it’s family peer pressure! I enjoy rugby and it’s a stress reliever.”

“Rugby is my safe space.”

“Rugby and her growing friendships have been a saving grace...we’re grateful.”

“Rugby keeps me fit and it’s good for my wellbeing, I can get rid of my angry feelings.”

“My daughter is so very laid back and, although it might not seem like it at times, its nice to see her passionate about something. It’s lovely to see her love for the sport grow and I just really appreciate everything you do.”

“My daughter loves rugby. She said it’s given her new friendships, made her confident and her fitness has improved massively. She loves being part of the team.”

“I play because it’s fun and keeps me active. I can make new friends and I like going to other clubs to play against other teams. I’ve seen the international women play and I want to play at a high level in the future. I play at Berwick because it’s my local club and my friends play there.”

- What have we learnt over the past four seasons?
 1. Girls are busy. Rugby competes with multiple clubs, sports, commitments.
 2. Friendships are important. Complete player welfare is paramount. Happy players = thriving team.
 3. Our girls are ambitious. Not necessarily competitive.
 4. Fixtures are more important than training. Games provide all our players with a friendship network and competition opportunities.
 5. Parental involvement and support are vital.

- “If you have a pulse, then you can play rugby!”

At present we have 31 girls aged under 18 playing rugby with a total of 81 playing with us since 2018. We have an “Open Door” policy, previous players welcome back at any time via youth or senior rugby. We strive to create as many game opportunities as possible encouraging as many players onto the pitch at any one time. We support any players to participate in Player Development Hubs applicable to their age range. In order to do this, we put forward all and any players who wish to further their rugby skills, “talent” aside. We hire buses where possible to give all players equal opportunities to access games and time with their teammates. We aim to get as many boots on the pitch as possible at any one time. Coaches do not pressure girls to play contact and we continue to support players who wish to simply play social rugby.

- All in all... we aim to create a positive platform from which to build our girls’ rugby journey. Being part of the Club and building rugby friendships are the foundations of playing for Berwick. The Club’s focus is to have a throughput of youth to senior rugby creating a strong feed-in stream to the Berwick Black Diamonds.