



INFORMATION PAGE

Week of November 19th, 2004

1 IRB Invests in Rugby's Future

Today's press release from the IRB Council - Interim Meeting November 2004

The Interim Meeting of the International Rugby Board concluded in Dublin today and was described by IRB Chairman, Dr Syd Millar, as the most important Meeting of the IRB Council since 1995 when the game of rugby went open.

The Council unanimously approved a new strategic plan for the IRB incorporating a new governance structure. Rugby has undergone profound change since 1995 and the strategic plan recognises the fact that the game's policy-making and delivery mechanisms required modernising to reflect the changing requirements of the game.

IRB Vice Chairman Bob Tuckey, Chairman of the Governance Working Party established by Council in 2003, said, "In consultations with Member Unions and other stakeholders a common message was prevalent, that the IRB needed to review the way in which it conducts its business to ensure that it remains relevant to the changing needs and imperatives of all Member Unions."

Key features of the strategic plan include a £30 million investment commitment over the next three years to new development initiatives for Tier One and Tier Two Nations, a move to greater democracy and enhanced decision-making capabilities.

"This is not change for change's sake but represents a change in culture for the organisation. The IRB will be more accountable to its stakeholders, the Executive Committee will be charged with swifter decision making and we will have additional finances of over £30 million for development initiatives to drive the growth of rugby and to ensure Rugby World Cup grows in competitiveness," said Dr Millar.

"The IRB is on the road to change. However, this is not a race and today's meeting, while historic in laying key foundations for the future, is the beginning of the future development of the game."

"The IRB recognised the need for change for the future prosperity of the game and the new governance is focussed on working together, trust, integrity and an understanding of our values and traditions," added Dr Millar.

The five major goals identified by the strategic plan are:

- Strong and effective leadership by the IRB
- Maximise the profile, profitability and value of Rugby World Cup
- Increase the number and competitiveness of Unions at Tier 1
- Increase participation in Rugby Union worldwide
- Rugby Union rejoining the Olympic Games

The newly constituted Executive Committee will meet on a regular basis and was established to improve efficiency and to speed up the decision-making process. It will comprise of the Chairman and Vice Chairman and seven Council representatives. Future trust funding for Unions and tournaments will be allocated in line with the strategic plan and Executive Committee members will become Directors of the IRB Services company in this regard.

Commenting on the changes IRB Chief Executive, Mike Miller said, "The adoption of the new strategic plan is an important milestone for the organisation. The IRB Council will remain the ultimate legislative body and will include for the first time all six Regional Associations. This means Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas and Oceania will all have representation on Council."

The IRB has also reduced the number of standing committees from seven to four. The new committees are: Rugby; Regulations; Audit and Risk; and High Performance.

The Council also received a report from consultants Deloitte Touche on the issue of an integrated season. The feasibility study stressed the importance of the international game in revenue creation for Member Unions and the game's development.

It was agreed that the three major international tournaments - Rugby World Cup, Six Nations and Tri-Nations - had a significant bearing on the development of an integrated season in terms of economic importance and timing. No defined blueprint has yet been developed in what is clearly an evolutionary process, but in the next few months the IRB will embark on a detailed financial analysis on the economic impacts of an integrated season.

IRB Executive Committee

IRB Chairman, Dr Syd Millar (independent)

IRB Vice Chairman, Bob Tuckey (independent)

Bill Beaumont (England)

Jock Hobbs (New Zealand)
 Carlos Tozzi (Argentina)
 Bill Nolan (Scotland)
 Bernard Lapasset (France)
 David Pickering (Wales)
 Brian van Rooyen (South Africa)
 Mike Miller (Chief Executive Officer)

1 **IRB Trainers of Officials in the USA**

I am delighted to announce that in recent courses the following have attained the status of IRB Trainer.

Mark Aitkenhead	Davey Ardrey	Tom Barr
Kevin Baskin	C.C. Buck	Bruce Carter
Mike Cobb	John Curry	Chris Davis
Joseph DeFina	Gary Devoe	Gerry Fitzgerald
Stephan Glentzer	Kevin Griggs	Chris Grove
David Haines	Eric Haug	Charlie Haupt
Jim Kautz	Knute Knutson	Mark Koiwai
Jay Lee	Paul Lumia	Jeff Lynch
Ken Muir	Don Musacchio	Tony Nichols
Mark Ormsby	Craig Parish	McKay Schwenke
Rick Sims	Dixon Smith	Seegar Swanson
Jeremy Turner	Jerry Vandetti	Ken Watkins
Kurt Zorn		

They are qualified to facilitate IRB Officiating courses. In addition, they will be able to help clubs, schools, referees' societies and Unions with:

- Evaluation
- Facilitation
- Training course design, and
- Planning

They join their fellow countrymen Harry Laws, Mike Malone, Don Morrison and Peter Watson who previously attained IRB Trainer status at courses in Dublin.

Another IRB Officials Trainer course is planned for January 2005 in Toronto

2 **From the IRB website - Rugby versus the volcano**

By Seb Lauzier

In St Vincent and the Grenadines the biggest worry isn't a lack of rugby balls - although they could always do with more.

Neither is it the debates and discussions that occur in every rugby union in the world; it is not even necessarily a lack of players, and certainly not a lack of enthusiasm.

It is a volcano.

Due to the fact that a large amount of the island is intermittently cleared by white-hot magma flung up unannounced from deep beneath the earth's surface – latterly in 1972 and 1979 - only a modest part of the island is actually considered inhabitable, and because the mountainous volcanic island rises sharply up out of the sea, there is precious little ground to accommodate a rugby pitch.

Finding a solution

Anyone subscribing to any kind of ritual belief in 'fatum' might have given up by now, admitting that rugby, or any other sport for that matter, just wasn't going to be possible. But not so. For the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Rugby Union the natural solution was to divide the inhabitable part of the island into four quarters: In doing so not only do you build four new rugby communities, but you also have four teams, or a league as they like to call it.

These are long odds, and they are alone in defying them. Jamaica, the largest of the Caribbean islands currently in IRB membership, is a tourist paradise for the rich and famous, but in its core is an island population battling against social and political difficulties.

Under the chairmanship and guidance of Union Chairman Jacob Thompson, though, the rugby base has far exceeded the roots initially afforded to it by an expatriate population.

21 senior club teams, 94 high schools and 34 primary schools playing rugby may not sound much from a population of three million but, against the odds, rugby has become a community-binding force that transcends the dangers of an inner-city life. Rugby has become part of the Jamaican national fabric.

Youth development symposium

It is against this backdrop that the Caribbean Nations Youth Development Symposium and Planning Session will be held in Kingston on 20-22 November 2004.

Delegates and staff from all the unions in the Caribbean will come together to hear presentations on best practice, receive IRB materials, share experiences and expertise, team build, and prepare or refine their youth development plans.

“The Caribbean nations have never had an opportunity to gather and discuss development in this way,” said Tom Jones, IRB Regional Development Manager for NAWIRA (North America and the West Indies Rugby Association). “The Unions are very different, and all at varying stages in their development.

“Besides choosing Jamaica as a logical venue for hosting the event, I also wanted everyone to come to Kingston to see a game of junior rugby, to see the way the children’s faces light up with the excitement of playing.”

The countries attending the symposium are Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cayman, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos.

Varying roots of the game

The diversity among these Caribbean nations is striking. In many the impetus for rugby came initially from expatriate communities, many of which left the islands during the late sixties and early seventies when independence was secured by many of the nations.

Other islands do still have significant expatriate communities, while in others locals have continued to take up the challenge. Each island has a different cultural context, but all have to deal with challenges of low profile, finance, lack of sponsorship support, minimal exposure of rugby on television, and expensive travel over short distances.

With a population of 1.3 million Trinidad and Tobago is smaller than Jamaica, but is arguably the most established country in terms of rugby. The union was founded in 1928 and joined the IRB as a full member in 1992.

TAG rugby has been used to attract the young into playing the game and now the island boasts a healthy number of players, and most notably played in last year’s Los Angeles leg of the IRB Sevens.

Other individual success stories are hard to ignore: Cayman once featured an exclusively expatriate community for rugby’s exposure, but now the game is played in all schools, which means that well over 1,000 boys and girls in an island of only 30,000 have direct access to the game.

The American-influenced Bahamas have employed a technical director to bolster some already strong facilities and numbers, while cricket-mad Guyana - despite having a small rugby population and impoverished economy - has deservedly won the last two Caribbean Under 18 men’s championships.

With added jokers in the pack such as Cuba and Mexico, both of which hold a vast latent potential mostly untapped up until now, the overall outlook is great.

Sharing experiences

“Some are so early on in their development that they do not even have a strategy yet, but we have asked them all – big or small – to bring along what they have as a starting point. I’m delighted also that some of the unions who have already achieved great things will be speaking and sharing their experience. That includes Bahamas, Cayman, Jamaica, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana,” said Jones.

“The important thing is that the advice and guidance will mainly be coming from a Caribbean best practice perspective, for use within a Caribbean environment. We could bring in the likes of New Zealand, England, France and Australia, but with the best will in the world their advice would bear minimal relevance to the situations here.”

It is widely accepted that, no matter which region, meaningful competition is the essential for the game to grow, but under what guise for rugby in the Caribbean region?

In cricket the islands of the British West Indies come together to take on the best in the world, and for many years were unbeatable, the likes of Vivian Richards, Clive Lloyd, Joel Garner, Malcolm Marshall, Desmond Haynes and Gordon Greenidge all coming from their own islands to represent the collective. Soccer has taken another path, with each of the individual countries competing on an equal footing under FIFA rules.

The majority of West Indian countries would like to see a West Indies rugby team, similar to that which has happened in cricket, and the large number of talented players across the region means that pooling resources could create a strong team.

As in every region, however, there are disagreements and alternative and equally persuasive arguments.

“Last year Trinidad and Tobago went to the Los Angeles Sevens and performed admirably against some very strong teams,” continued Jones. “This year it has been decided that a combined West Indies side will be invited to the same event, and I’m also delighted that Mexico – an IRB Associate member union – is also going, along with what is hoped will be a large number of Mexican supporters!”

“The alternative scenario might be to have an annual West Indies championship, with the winner going on to represent the region in Los Angeles. But this would be challenging from a financial point of view.”

Either way this is only the sixth year that IRB funding has been pumped into the region and, while the overall standard is not yet to be compared with most other world regions, structures are being set to get the best out of some major talent and athleticism. This Symposium can only help in setting wheels in motion.

Best wishes to all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'T'.

Tom Jones
Regional Development Manager