

MIAA Rugby Committee Meeting

Thursday, October 24, 2024 @ 10:00 AM

Minutes

1. Call to Order

- a. Introductions/Attendance
Jeff Sperling, Mike Mocerino, Peter Elenbaas, Tom Arria, Tom Conley, Ryan Madden, Geoff Zini, Todd Warmington, Scott Hutchinson, Kate McCabe, Grace Nealey, Greg Bruce, Sarah Greeley, Don Jennings, Amy Daniels, Phil Napolitano.
- b. Conflict of interest
- c. Election of officers
 - Chair- Jeff Sperling (Motion by Greg, 2nd Tom) **Approved 14-0**
 - Vice Chair- Kate McCabe (Motion by Greg, 2nd by Tom) **Approved 14-0**
 - Secretary- Ryan Madden (motion by Tom, 2nd Kate) **Approved 14-0**

2. [Minutes of March 7, 2024 meeting –](#)

- Motion by Todd 2nd Tom– **Approved 14-0**

3. New Business

a. Review of the 2024 MIAA Rugby Tournaments

- Amy Daniels
 - Reported on the positive feedback for tournament and praise of Curry and their staff
 - Bill Good Sportsmanship Award Presentation with his family was impactful
 - Success of partnership with Next Level Rugby – live stream. Showed clip of a game.
 - Kate- reiterated the visibility was amazing with Next Level Rugby
- Other feedback
 - Greg- Curry does an amazing job hosting and the experience is great for everyone. Wondering if it would be possible to find a dedicated rugby field that is grass as it is safer. would love to find a grass field.

b. Regular Season update

- Update from league representatives
 - Tom- looking to work with other conferences for aligning leagues into one league (CRC) and scheduling together.
 - Greg requested schedules sooner than later.
- 2025 Rugby Alignments- Weymouth moved to Division 1
- [MIAA Sport Limitations Information Sheet](#)
 - First allowable practice date- March 12, 2025
 - Cut-off date- Saturday, May 24, 2025 (new)

c. Growth of Rugby

- Prospective schools adding rugby
 - Phil reached out to Oliver Ames, Norwood and St. Mary's to see if they plan to offer rugby teams
 - Ryan- Needham struggling with numbers on both sides. Reached out to Newton, Wellesley, Natick to co-op but no interest so far.
 - Jeff- Good momentum in Canton (35 kids signed up 50/50 split with boys and girls). We have a coach. Neighboring Norwood and Oliver Ames, so if we cannot be a single varsity team, we could co-op. Goal is for 2026 spring.
 - Kate- could see an upswing in female interest due to the Olympics. Remind boys coaches to be ready for girls who wants to join. Willing to offer girls to practice with them.
 - Tom- Reached out to Watertown and Somerville to see interest in co-op

d. Other

- Colton Cariaga – Harvard University Rugby Coach
 - Head Coach for the past year. Also National 7s coach. Won 6 National Titles in his coaching career
 - Impressed with Massachusetts commitment and approach.
 - Willing to offer skill development to motivated rugby players
 - Want to share ideas with high school coaches to build a network
 - Fast approaching- U18 Boys and U18 Girls going to New Zealand in December 2024. A few spots remain open for some MA boys and girls. Would love to have some nominations and present it as an opportunity to them.
 - Harvard has a rugby specific grass facility that isn't used in June, July. Rugby lines, press box, Wi-Fi, good parking. Officials tower, 3 other practice fields.
 - Greg- Happy to share whatever you want with coaches, including skill development and New Zealand.

4. 2025 Rugby Tournament

- 2025 Rugby Tournament Format (draft) – attached tom/Mike Unanimous (14-0)
 - Qualifying criteria on page 2 of the Format
 - Discussion on adding language to limit the number of qualifying teams to a maximum of 8, which fits into the 3-week tournament window with one contest per week.
 - Tom Arria believes this is important to put a cap since we are limited to 1 match per week
 - Questions on if any other sport would set a cap like this?
 - Football also caps the number of teams regardless of those above .500 win%
 - Ryan- doesn't love using Power Rankings in a sport like Rugby when you are trying to grow the sport, which would make schools think twice about wanting to play newer programs with weaker opponent rankings. SO few teams and games skew rankings so drastically that one weak team can make a huge difference.
 - Tom Conley- Clarification on tie breaking process outlined in C-3
 - Phil- process is universal across all team sports. Adopted by TMC
 - Kate had a question about forfeited games.
 - Phil- Language is universal per TMC

Proposed language to add to format:

- Teams that are not power ranked in the top 50% but have achieved a winning percentage of 50% or greater will be eligible for tournament consideration. However, no more than 8 teams will qualify for the postseason in each division. In the event of a tie for the final seed(s), the tiebreaking process outlined in item C-3 below will be followed.

Motion to approve the 2025 Rugby Format by Tom A, 2nd by Mike – Approved 14-0

- Championship site discussion – Curry, Harvard, Free Jacks.
- Interest in a D1A Tournament – Rugby committee has no interest in having a D1A tournament.
 - Pete E- certainly opens up additional opportunities to win championships but Rugby does not have enough teams at this time.

5. Coaches Input

- Sarah Greely will circle back with coaches
- Greg- Concerns last year from Marshfield not being able to drop down. They are hoping this happens during the next alignment cycle
- Kate- Coaches interested in revisiting substitution rule.
 - Phil- recommends you gather data from coaches and what the proposal would look like. It would go through the rule change process.

6. Officials Input/Rule Changes

- The tackle height is now the sternum (no longer arm pit). Officials will be strict on this and will implement cards associated with high tackles.
- Tournament Feedback- Went very well but we certainly need more officials. Last year we did compete with 7s National Tournaments.
- The safety of officials is most important.
- Outlined scholarship programs for officials.
- Greg- There is a NERS feedback form for coaches to provide feedback to officials?
 - Don- NERS is more focused on MYRO, may be able to use Arbiter to gather feedback

7. 2025-27 Alignments

- a. Sub-Committee will convene over the winter to put together alignment proposals
 - i. **Jeff, Kate, Greg, Scott, Todd and Tom**

8. [2025-27 MIAA Rule Change Proposals](#) – Committee voted on proposals.

9. Next Meeting- March 18, 2025

10. Adjournment: 12:20 PM