

Man, I Feel Like A Woman
The Joys of Rugby Are Finally Being Discovered by the Female
by
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Whoever thinks a girl can't have two black eyes and feel great about herself doesn't know the first thing about the hottest up and coming sport for women today. Ladies: imagine being able to liberate yourself from the pressures of class and stressful relationships and all in a matter of hours, plus the benefits of coming out a more fit and healthy woman. You can call yourself a "hooker" with pride, and smack someone's face straight into the dirt, all the while having it remain completely legal too. Well - that is of course, unless the ref catches you passing forwards while doing it and gives the other team possession of the ball.

While for hundreds of years men have been able to enjoy the rush of tackling and touchdowns all over the world, the growing popularity of women's rugby - especially on American soil, seems to be paving the way for it to become the nation's newest and trendiest sport for college women. Finally girls across the country have the chance to feel the same tingle of glory after knocking someone straight down to the ground for the benefit of the team.

If you're a girl who desires to get in shape, have a great time doing it, but doesn't know quite where to get started - women's rugby may just be the activity you've been looking for. Offering a competitive atmosphere minus the harsh hours and stressful nature of playing a varsity sport, a great number of girls tend to find rugby as a simple solution to many of their needs. And with the increasing number of college campuses adding such a club sport to their athletics department, finding a team to play on may be just as simple.

Rugby can be thought of as a slightly warped version of American football, albeit a bit more confusing and minus all the padding and helmets. It's played with fifteen girls on a field at one time from each team, consisting of eight "forwards" and seven "backs." The ball used resembles a football, but is almost twice the size and must be passed in from one player to another by using an underhand swing pass that shoots it out slightly behind one's body. In other words - all passes must be backwards in rugby! It sounds complex, but player beware it can only get worse. For instance, you'll eventually have to adopt a wide range of vocabulary, which includes such words as "scrum," "mall," and "ruck," as well as master the names of positions dubbed "prop," "flanker," and yes - "hooker." However, as crazy as

it is learning the game itself can eventually turn into a great deal of fun for the new "rookie."

Another joy of rugby - unlike many other sports, is that it entails no discrimination against height, weight or ability. For instance, although girls who choose to competitively partake in basketball or crew tend to be on the much taller side and gymnasts on the shorter, there is a rugby position available for every type of girl out there. Several teams may have players ranging in height from 4'11" to 6'5," possessing various levels of strength, endurance and most especially - experience. In fact, you can almost be guaranteed that all the members of a certain team had barely even seen a game before they joined that respective one. In short, besides the desire to have a whole lot of fun - rugby requires no prerequisites.

So, do people get hurt you ask? Well - possibly. Like most sports that athletes dive whole-heartedly into, some injuries are bound to occur. Also, for every tackle that you add to your list, someone else is bound to tackle you all the same. And the first one may be a shocker. I, myself found this out while making my debut on a rugby field three years ago. Suddenly realizing that the ball was heading straight towards me during the end of the first half of the game, I quickly got rid of that "deer in headlights" look and ran straight for it with all the energy I could muster. Yet it must have been no sooner than ten seconds later that I found myself dead flat on the ground, with at least five other girls on top of me - all fighting for the ball themselves. Not only did I not have enough time to process the idea that I had caught the ball, but I couldn't see a thing and there was definitely more than one person stepping on my hair. How's that for initiation.

But all the same, after I wiped the dirt from my eyes and wobbled off onto the sidelines for half time, I found myself feeling more proud and alive then sore and weak. In fact - I felt fantastic. It was a rush like no other sport had provided before. And if I wasn't hooked yet - I surely would be after soon discovering the series of events that traditionally take place after a game. The concept - to not only have fun on the field, but off it as well. Nonetheless, this is carried out after almost every game when both teams come together to socialize with one another and attempt to turn former opponents into best buds in a matter of minutes. Needless to say, the results are priceless. Besides finding out that the girl you hated so desperately two hours ago shares your major, it's definitely the only time you'll find over fifty people crowded into a single room singing "The Twelve Days of Rugby" over a few beers.

Women's Rugby continues year-round, with fall remaining as the dominant competitive season and the spring being the time to partake in several tournaments with your team. As well as this, the game still continues on during the summer months, where players can get in shape by playing in tournaments of an abridged version of the sport called "Summer Sevens." It is here where the senses are heightened and reflexes are sharpened by creating a seven-on-seven match, consisting of four forwards and three backs, for seven minute halves. Nonetheless, getting involved in any of these seasons may be as easy as a quick phone call or internet search. First and foremost, check with your school to see if they already have a club team in the works. If not, there are hundreds of women's rugby teams that have been developed around the country in varied number of cities, and most of them probably have their own web sites.

It's fun, it's dirty, it's raunchy and it's risky, but it also may be one of the best things that's ever happened to you. With visions of yesterday's drills dancing in your head, you'll find that a little bit of toughness can go quite a long way for a self-esteem. So give it a try - I promise you'll discover that playing a "man's" sport will make you prouder than ever before to be a woman.