

# Rugby: love of blood, sweat, fun and winning

By Rick Stolle

**W**hat makes a person want to run for two 40-minute halves, get bloody, muddy, sweaty and tired and then go out and have a party with the guys that he's been trying to beat up for an entire 80-minute contest?

It's a sense of tradition and camaraderie, said Bill Taute, president of the Texas A&M University Rugby club.

Rugby players, he said, enjoy contact, tradition, new things and partying. A rugby player is someone who is willing to give everything he has to get beat up, bloody, hurt, sweaty and win. They love every minute of it.

At the end of a rugby match, players are physically exhausted. Sweat runs off bodies in streams.

Bruises are a way of life in this rough game. But rugby players say it's all in a day's fun.

Taute said all the hard work, rough games and long practices

*The man on the ground is often kicked until he releases the ball.*

are worth it because of the enjoyment everyone gets out of the game.

"Most of these guys," he said, pointing to the players practicing on the drill field, "were athletes in their high school days. They have come out here to stay in shape and retain the competitive edge they had in high school."

Taute said the game makes the players feel good because they have to stay in shape.

"College students are noto-

rious for getting out of shape while they study," he said. "Rugby is the way we keep in shape."

The game requires no special equipment or talent. Taute said the biggest asset a rugby player

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can have is a quick-thinking mind.

"You ad-lib the whole time you play rugby," he said. "Each situation is new and you have to think quick, should you cut up field, pass or kick."

Practice sessions are long and hard. Taute said they give the team actual game-like experience and preparation.

The team scrimmages among itself at least once a week. The club has three teams. The senior division includes the most experienced players and competes against other club teams. The college division competes against other college teams and the club has a third team that is not recognized.

Club teams are groups that have taken up rugby as a hobby. The teams play and practice in the members' spare time and are usually men who work during the day and are looking for an active hobby to keep in shape.

Taute said it is not hard to find men 40 and 50 years old playing for the clubs.

"Those guys have been playing for years and know all

the little tricks of the game," Taute said. "They don't have to worry about tests or studying either. It's a hobby and they can spend all their spare time with the game and practice."

The Texas A&M Rugby Team practices Monday through Thursday, from 5 p.m. until dark. Mondays, Taute said, are conditioning days. The teams run stands and the ramps in Kyle Field to keep the shape they have worked so hard to get.

Rugby is a game that combines the roughness of American football with the speed and offense of soccer.

It is an old game. The first play was in 1823 when a student in the English borough of Rugby picked up the ball while playing soccer and ran with it instead of kicking it.

In 1871, the English Rugby Union standardized the rules of the game.

Rugby is played with 15 players: seven halfbacks and eight forwards. The field measures 160 yards long by 75 yards wide. The playing area is 110 yards long with a 25 yard endzone at each end. The backs carry the ball down the field, passing it from one to another behind them.

In rugby, the ball may be kicked, but not passed, forward to another teammate. The object of the game is to try to get the ball across the opponents' goal line.

**T**he ball is more round than an American football but retains the basic shape. It is easier to kick than an American football and easier to pass than a soccer ball. It is usually passed underhanded to put a good spin on the ball for a teammate.

A try (when the ball crosses the goal line) is worth three points. A conversion, kicked between goal posts, is worth two. A penalty kick and a field goal



Rugby is a game of blood and sweat, where every man is for himself when he has the ball, and plays with others as a team to gain possession of it.

Photo by Karen Kaley

are both worth three points apiece.

The ball carrier may be tackled by opponents but his teammates may not block for him. The carrier runs down the field and passes the ball off before he gets tackled.

Play is almost continuous in rugby. There are no substitutions. Should a player get hurt, the team must play short-handed until the athlete gets back into playing condition. If a team has

to play with only 14 players, the team has to make up the loss.

A kick-off, when both teams coming together to try to gain control of the ball, is used to begin the game and after each score.


**E**ither team may control the ball. The ball must go at least ten yards on the kick-off. Often the ball is kicked high in the air to try

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## COLLAGE

### The apology that wasn't

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — Staying home from a basketball game means never having to say you're sorry — at least to the president of the University of California-Los Angeles student government.

Fred Gaines didn't attend the UCLA-University of Southern California contest in Pauley Pavilion, so he wasn't around when Bruin fans pulled out toy guns and shouted "Shoot, Purvis, shoot" at USC player Purvis Miller. The chant referred to an allegation that Miller pulled a gun on a group of USC football players last summer.

John Sandbrook, assistant to the UCLA chancellor, was outraged and suggested Gaines write an apology for publication in the UCLA and USC newspapers. Gaines refused, saying he is not qualified to apologize for activity he didn't witness or participate in.

—Collegiate Hedlines