



sport

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Rugby Club Zurich and the Sport in CH

Rugby Club Zurich is one of the two oldest clubs in Switzerland

The RCZ represents all that the game of rugby is traditionally about: international diversity, physical team play, sportsmanship and a strong social network. With over 16 countries represented within the club, including an English president, a Canadian captain and a South African coach, RCZ is exceptionally multicultural. The lingua franca of the club is English, although you won't make it through a training session without hearing Swiss-German, French, Spanish and Afrikaans. Over half of the members of the club are Swiss, and since the Rugby World Cup last year in France, the number of new local members has increased dramatically.

To add to the cultural diversity of the club, there is also a wide range of ages and a very successful ladies' team, the Valkyries, who often have to cross Swiss borders to find adequate competition. The ladies are the reigning Swiss Champions and are favourites to repeat this feat this year (having scored 242 points and conceded only 17 in four games this season). The RCZ Gnomes represent the senior players in the club whose motivation has moved from competitiveness towards a more social focus. The Gnomes travel internationally to play in "Golden Oldies" tournaments and traditionally hold training sessions at the local pub. The only restriction to joining the Gnomes is that you must be at least 35 years old; there is no



age cap. The club also has a growing junior rugby program which is aimed at introducing children to rugby from an early age.

Including the two men's teams, the ladies team, the golden oldies, the juniors and the passive members, RCZ boasts a membership of over 120 people. That's impressive for a sport that is relatively unknown in Switzerland. The size of the club is helped by the international nature of Zurich, but is also a testament to the appeal of the sport itself.

Rugby in General



The simple fundamental rules and lack of specialized gear makes rugby a reasonably easy game to take up. New players are quickly able to understand the basic strategies and tactics of rugby, but mastering these and honing their skills can take a bit longer. The subtleties of the game make it a great sport for tacticians, with evolutions in game tactics often coming from the traditionally stronger southern hemisphere nations like New Zealand, Australia and South Africa. Not to be outdone, the northern hemisphere countries also make their mark on the game, with the French being known for their flair and the English for their grit.

One of the key aspects of the game of rugby is mutual respect, as well as



the highest regard for the referee's authority. Referee abuse, both verbal and physical, is absolutely prohibited in rugby and may result in anything from game to lifetime bans, depending on the severity of the offence. This is in stark contrast to the way that referees may be treated in some other sports.

Rugby is a contact sport that requires the players to understand the physics of contact to succeed in the sport and avoid injury. Technique plays a very important role here, allowing much smaller players to compete on equal terms with much larger or stronger opponents. All players on the pitch must play in both attack and defence, but all 15 positions require some degree of specialization. The various positions also lend themselves to certain body types, with the stockier and taller players more often playing in the scrum ("forwards"), and quicker, leaner players doing more of the running and kicking ("backs").



The physical nature of rugby allows a player to push his or her perceived physical and psychological limits. It is a physically demanding sport that requires fitness, mastery of skills and quick tactical thinking. It also provides a constructive medium to release built up stress and tension. While it can be an aggressive sport, rugby provides a great opportunity to mix brute force with strategy, resulting in a surprisingly elegant sport.

One of the most unique elements of rugby in the sporting world, especially considering its highly physical nature, is that the two opposing teams will meet for drinks following a game. Irrespective of how physically gruelling or intense a game was, the maxim of “what happens on the field stays on the field” is customarily respected. The rugby community also has a very strong social tradition. Most rugby clubs have a bar in their clubhouse (or as their local sponsor) and members will usually meet up for a few pints after a tough training session.

This means that rugby also provides a great environment for professional networking. Since rugby attracts people from all walks of life, it follows that there are players that represent a great diversity of professions. This mix, combined with the team focus of rugby, helps to cultivate a tight-knit community of people who are willing and happy to help out a fellow teammate in need. For example, RCZ has members who are academics, lawyers, bankers, sports professionals, builders,

physicists, computer scientists, veterinarians, accountants, translators and journalists, to name just a few. I have personally received help from a floor-layer and a head-hunter in the past, and have also used many rugby contacts when searching for a new job.

Rugby in Switzerland

Played in over 120 countries across the world, rugby presents a unique opportunity to experience different countries, cultures and personalities, all founded on a common interest. Rugby is a contact sport, unlike common Swiss sports like soccer, curling and skiing, but with some similarities to handball, ice hockey and schwingen.

Like most team sports, rugby provides you with an opportunity to meet interesting people with whom you would not normally cross paths with, and presents a social environment unlike any other. These connections can lead to both invaluable business partners and lifelong friends.

Playing in a rugby club also gives you an opportunity to travel both nationally and internationally. The majority of national league A teams are from the French-speaking region, and tournaments are held nationwide. What’s more, Rugby Club Zurich organizes tours each year to foreign countries, the most exotic being a 12-day tour of Brasil in 2002, where we narrowly lost 5-3 against the Brazilian national team in our third and final game of the trip. Other tour destinations in recent years have been Edinburgh, Berlin, Amsterdam and

Haifa, with trips to Stockholm and Madeira planned for this year.

Rugby is a rapidly growing sport in Switzerland and it is exciting to be part of this metamorphosis. With the right professional attitude, some creative marketing and a few more sponsorship agreements, Swiss rugby has a great opportunity to rise and challenge some of the stronger European nations. This process starts in the individual clubs and Rugby Club Zurich is dedicated to making this happen. Potential players living in or near Zurich are welcome to join training and find out more about rugby. People interesting in watching a local game should come to the Allmend Brunau for one of our home games on April 13th, April 27th or May 18th. More details about the club, training and upcoming games can be found on www.rugbyzurich.ch.



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is 34 and moved to Zurich from his home town of Vancouver in 2000, after completing his studies in Computing Science. Josh started playing rugby at 14 and to date has represented Switzerland in six international games. He is the current club captain of Rugby Club Zurich. Josh is married and has a young daughter.