USA

History of Rugby

On May 5, 1874 Harvard University hosted Montreal’s McGill University at Cambridge, Mass., in the first recorded rugby game on American soil. While there are no records of the match and no one remembers who won, the game sparked an interest on college campuses nationwide.

As American rugby’s popularity began to grow, rugby was soon included as a sport in four Olympic Games (1900, 1908, 1920, 1924), and the United States claimed victories in both the 1920 and 1924 games.

Shortly after the 1924 Olympics, however, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) removed rugby as an Olympic sport. Without the Olympic incentive, the sport’s growth in America collapsed and the game remained dormant for the next half century.

However, the sport then enjoyed a renaissance, beginning in the 1960s and continuing through the 1970s. This created the need for a national governing body to represent the USA in the international community. Four territorial organizations gathered in Chicago, Ill., in 1975 and formed the United States of America Rugby Football Union, (now known as USA Rugby). Today, the USA Rugby is made up of seven Territorial Unions (TUs) and 37 Local Area Unions (LAUs), and supports more than 50,000 members.

US National Teams

USA Rugby’s national teams are nicknamed the Eagles. The National Men’s Team first took to the field in 1976, competing in international tournaments like the Churchill Cup and Pan American Championship, as well as specially scheduled matches against world powers such as France and Ireland. The Eagles qualified for four of the five Rugby World Cups, most recently at the 2003 World Championship in Australia.

The National Women’s Team, launched in 1987, claimed the first Women’s Rugby World Cup in 1991 and finished second at the ’94 and ’98 World Cups. The Women’s National Team also competes in the Churchill Cup and against world powers like New Zealand and England.

USA Rugby also fields a Boys’ Under 19 team, a Girls’ Under 19 team and Women’s Under 23 team, as well as Men’s and Women’s 7s National Teams - an abbreviated version of the 15-a-side game.