

FRIENDS of FAIRFIELD RUGBY



Spring 2011 Newsletter

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Friends of Fairfield Rugby
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Red Rugger Alum:

Welcome to the second edition of the Friends of Fairfield Rugby newsletter!

After a LONG winter, it is finally springtime and that means the rugby season is starting. With the highly publicized IRB 7's tournament in Las Vegas, the game of rugby has sparked significant interest nationwide. Look for the USA 7's Collegiate Rugby Championship which will be held on June 4th and 5th in Philadelphia.

I am very pleased to announce that the men's team has successfully completed its remediation with the University and is ready to play a full spring schedule!

After a very successful 2010 season where the women's team won the Met Union title and competed in the National semi-finals, Coach Ryan Birge '05 and the lady ruggers are eager to resume their winning ways.

I encourage you to help us to provide support to the Fairfield University Rugby Club by becoming a member of our organization "the PID Fund for Fairfield Rugby doing business as the Friends of Fairfield Rugby." You can become a member by clicking on <http://friendsoffairfieldrugby.org/> and click on "become a friend."

Some of our actions have been as follows:

- We have a great relationship with the University administration as well as the current rugby players and coaches
- A committee has been formed to establish a networking vehicle to help the ruggers find employment after graduation
- The Friends of Fairfield Rugby is actively working toward having another Hall of Fame member inducted by the 50th anniversary
- New game jerseys were purchased
- Two contributions to the Lyons-Lademan (\$2,000 each) have been made

Thank you for your continued support of Fairfield Rugby!

Cheers,

Tom O'Connor '75
President
The PID Fund for Fairfield Rugby



FRIENDS of FAIRFIELD RUGBY

FriendsofFairfieldRugby.org



Mission Statement

The mission of the PID Fund for Fairfield Rugby (a non-profit charitable organization) is to provide support to the Fairfield University Rugby Club, while fostering the life-long camaraderie that was so cherished by twenty-year Club Moderator, Professor Paul I. Davis.

TAKE 5, GET 5.

We continue to work to update our database of FURFC alums. But the best resource for doing this is YOU.

We need your help.

Please take 5 minutes to forward this to as many Red Rugged alums as you can. Hopefully that's at least 5 people.

Tell them to become a member by visiting friendsoffairfieldrugby.org and click on "Become a Friend." This will allow us to maintain communication electronically, without the expense of printed and mailed newsletters. Also, please email us the names, class years and email addresses as well.

Email to: info@friendsoffairfieldrugby.org

We need you to help us get back in touch with as many rugby alums as possible. Please take 5 minutes to get us at least 5 new members today.



Rugby, Vegas-style. Paul Simko '89 & Todd Raymond '90 celebrating their annual trip to the USA Sevens.

SPRING 2011

Women's Schedule

March 12	Open
March 20	New York Rugby Club Clinic
April 2	@ Fordham (Round Robin vs. Fordham & Drew University)
April 9	@ Hofstra
April 16	@ Bard
April 28	Sacred Heart (Turf Field)

Men's Schedule

Saturday, April 2	vs. Sacred Heart 6:00pm, Alumni Field, Fairfield U
Saturday, April 9	@ Boston University
Saturday/Sunday April 16 & 17	Beast of the East Tourn. – Portsmouth, RI

GOT PHOTOS?

Send them our way.

Scan them. Download them. Send them to tdmato@noras.com and make them part of our archive and possibly future newsletters. Include caption info/names whenever possible. Help us "say it with pictures." No retouching allowed.





Men's Team Update *by Coach Matt Leonard*

As the saying goes, “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger” (and Nietzsche wasn’t even a rugby player). The FURFC is looking to come out of the deep freeze of suspension and tons of snow on Grauert stronger as a unit — on the field and off. We are emphasizing commitment — commitment to the club, to the game and to each other. Numbers are a little down but we have a dedicated core of experienced, passionate Red Ruggers who I am sure are up to the task.

Originally we were on track to have 4 home games this spring and attend the Beast of the East tournament. We may be able to travel for 1 or 2 games depending on the condition of Grauert. There are plans for a Friday night game at Alumni field against cross town rivals Sacred Heart. More details on dates will be forwarded as they become available.

As a coach and player who has been affiliated with some great rugby organizations I have learned that success is much more than being competitive on the field. Great teams have team pride, respect for the history of the club and many alumni who are committed to the success of the club. I am encouraging the current players to try and build on the great tradition of the FURFC by being better communicators, having more interaction with the alumni and staying involved with the club after graduation.

With a dedicated field, a strong women’s program and the Friends of Fairfield Rugby, we have an opportunity to create something special in the next 3-5 years. The coaching staff of me and Bob Ehlers (best FURFC center ever, I've been told) are getting better each year and we are seeing more freshmen coming in with rugby experience. There is a lot of work to be done but the basic building blocks are in place. Please get involved- we need alumni to pass down the traditions of the club to the current players and as always welcome anyone interested to come to a practice to help out or just put the cleats on one more time (no contact!). We hope to see you at a practice, game, or social event.

In Rugby,

Matt Leonard

PS: It was an awfully poor showing at the Alumni game — it was no fun watching the current players run around us like we were standing still — and then having to listen to them talk about how good they were! Let’s change that going forward.



Lady Ruggers Fall 2010 Recap

The Fairfield University women ruggers stormed through the regular season in the METNY Rugby Football Union with an undefeated record.

The Stags finished with a perfect 6-0 record, advancing to the METNY Rugby Championships as the number one seed.

In the semi-final match, Fairfield defeated Columbia 29-7 to advance to the championship round on November 6. With a sizeable crowd on hand at the Lt. Hans Grauert Memorial Field, the Stags went on to defeat Sacred Heart in overtime 5-0. This win qualified the club for the Division III USA Rugby National Championship Tournament for the first time in program history.

The Ruggers' season came to an end in the national tournament semi-final round to Bentley College.

For the first time in the history of the women's program — we had three representatives selected to try out for the MetNY All-Star Teams. Sophomore Inside Center, Elizabeth Cortez '13, will be trying out for the MetNY U23 team on March 27th. Freshman Scrumhalf Becca Ponessa '14, & Freshman Winger Maggie DeMoura '14 will be trying out for the MetNY U19 team on May 14th. If selected, they will represent MetNY in various all-star tournaments over the summer.

Come out to support the team and see some first-rate rugby this Spring!





John Sullivan '65

Submitted by Jeff Campbell '65

When you first hear the news that an old friend has died, you never know where your first recollections will take you.

When the news came in January, the first memory that came back to me was of a day in the late summer of 1965, after we'd graduated from the U. John and I were down "the Jersey shore," bodysurfing a few days after a big storm when the waves were large and disordered and the lifeguards nowhere in sight. It was late afternoon and the beach was deserted. The sky was gray and threatening.

There were just the two of us in the water... and after a while, we had drifted further and further apart until John's head was barely visible to me as it appeared and then disappeared amid the wind-driven waves. I began to notice that there was a current sweeping me lengthwise along the shore and out to sea.

The thought came to me with an almost electric charge: "You are about to die. Here's what the newspaper article will say." I could see the paper in front of me. That's all I needed. I began to stroke mightily toward the shore. 50 yards away, Sull was having the same experience.

We each struggled out of the surf at about the same time, crawled the first few yards up the beach. After a few minutes we looked up and locked eyes. Sull began to laugh... and I joined him.

That was the relationship.

John Sullivan and I were friends in a semi-distant sort of way: closer when in school together; hanging on by a few threads over years of separation, many a full continent apart. The advent of e-mail and the Internet made it easier.

We had been classmates at Fairfield, played rugby together, ran in the same social circle back in the day. We thought the world — and its people — were funny in similar ways. We thought we got the joke.

After graduation, he went to work at Brooks Brothers and roomed with his Fairfield buddy, Don Reddington. I used to visit them at their apartment on Waverly Place in Manhattan where Sull would shoot pigeons on neighboring window ledges with his BB gun and the Budweiser cans were stacked high against one wall of the apartment.

Now it all begins to come back to me in a series of images: John "borrowing" a tractor on campus in the fall of 1961, just after we'd arrived from high school, and being briefly entertained by the Fairfield Police; John, in the summer of '65, at his parents' home in Fair Haven, N.J. talking to me while I could see his aging but still doting father out on the back yard,

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FURFC Alumni Profiles

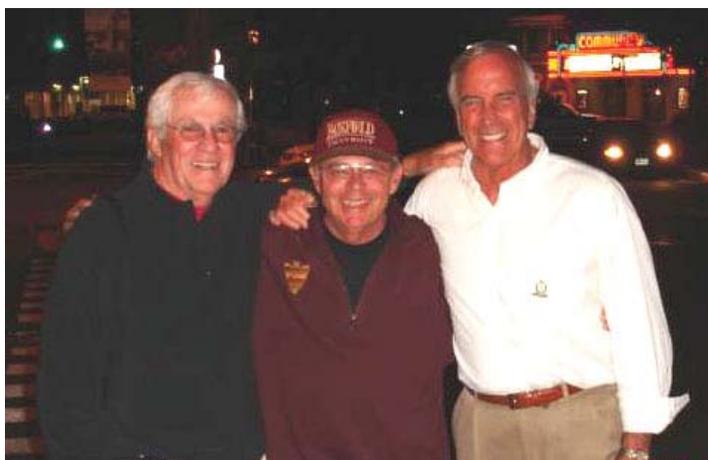


John Sullivan '65

continued

playing a painfully patient game of “catch” with his younger — and severely retarded — brother; surfing together in Puerto Rico on Spring Break in 1965 until an aggressive barracuda suggested we take a short break on the beach. (We got there quickly.)

Then there was the wonderful day in 2009 when John, Bob Beaugard and I met at Fairfield. We had scheduled a few beers at the old “Naut” (now The Sea Grape) and dinner but spent our first two hours together walking the campus and reminiscing. It was a beautiful June afternoon and the campus had never looked better. The opportunity to spend time like that with old friends was priceless... all the more so in retrospect. (We talked a young woman in one of the stores on the Post Road to snap our photo that night after dinner. That's Sull on the left.)



John Sullivan, Bob Beaugard, Jeff Campbell — all class of '65

John had a sense of humor that was out there on the edge. He featured a dry sort of wit and a taste for practical jokes. He had a gift for mimicry and his impression of one particular Jesuit still stays with me (“What’s your name, meester?”). That was going to be my opening line when I saw him this summer on a trip back east. Alas, that visit was not to be.

In a final phone call with Bernie Casey, another classmate from '65, Sull told Bernie that he had no regrets in facing death because he'd had such a full and wonderful life.

I hope we can all take our departure with such grace.

John Sullivan was a terrific friend, a very good man, and a great classmate. I'm proud that we were able to stay connected over all those years... and grateful for it.

FURFC Alumni Profiles



Pete Ferrara '73

Pete Ferrara (aka Super Petey) played for FURC from 69-73. Pete was born to be a Rugby center. Although not necessarily the fastest guy on the field, Pete had the uncanny ability to accelerate to top speed after only one step. This combined with the great cutback ability that every great runner has, whether you are talking rugby or football, made Pete a threat to score on every play.

The skill set that Pete brought to the rugby pitch were excellent for 15's but even better suited to the wide open play of 7's. One Thanksgiving weekend Pete went to Randall's Island for the annual 7's tournament. He was supposed to meet with several FURC players to put a team on the field. Unfortunately only one other FURC player showed up. Some have theorized that the others were too hung over to play but this has never been corroborated. Regardless, Pete hooked up with some 2nd side players from New York Rugby Club. Singlehandedly Pete carried this group of misfits to the final round of play, ultimately losing a close match for the championship. Between kicking and scoring tries Pete scored over 30 points in one day. Pete played 1st side for 3 years and also was captain of the backfield.

The best part of the ruby experience for Pete was the lifelong friendships that he made playing and traveling all over the East Coast. The infamous Bahamas & Wales trips were definitely the most memorable trips.

Pete continued to play a bit after college but was limited due to graduate school at Georgetown. The sad realization that his rugby playing days were over came to Pete in his final alumni game at Grauert Field, as family and work became bigger priorities.

Pete still follows FURC, attends alumni games and has lived in Fairfield for 30+ years. Always a fierce competitor, Pete now focuses his interests on golf. Not being able to get enough golf, due to the winters in New England, he recently became a member of a golf club in Florida. Together with his wife Chris, of 30+ years, he has four daughters Kristin, Kate, Susan & Margaret. Pete has owned his own dental practice in Westport, Ct for many years.

FURFC Alumni Profiles



Chris Moore, '81

Chris “Honcho” Moore couldn’t really help becoming a Fairfield Rugby player. Two of his older brothers were rugby players for the Connecticut Yankees which practiced and played down the street from Fairfield University. So it was no surprise that Chris started playing with Fairfield right from the first practice, where the Dolan School of Business is today. “That land mass was better suited to mogul skiing there were so many bumps and small hills on it. We were glad when we moved over to the Hans Grauert pitch. One of the best rugby pitches we would play on in our college careers.”

Chris notes that, “The first guy I met on the team was Barney Haylon, another freshman. There were only a few other freshmen out for the team, like John “Doobers” Walsh and Scott Bilby. Later James “Deano” Wean, Eddie Wilk, Don Robinson, Sean Splan, Matt Stanwood, Kenny Elmer and the late David “Gus” Palmgren joined the team and made up what would become some of my closest friends while at Fairfield.”

“Barney and I seemed to have a special status as being among the first freshmen on the team. Upperclassmen like Tom Kearns, John Regan, Owen Buckley, Tom Fanning, Jimbo Wehr, Artie McCoy, James Langley and Bobby Ehlers took us under their collective wings and taught us how to play rugby and more than that, how to thrive at Fairfield.”

“During our four years we got to play at Seton Hall, Holy Cross, Lafayette, West Point, and Georgetown and experience some of the best campuses in the northeast as only rugby players could. During the spring of our junior year our team always seemed to be the smaller of the two on the pitch. Yet we had a knack for staying in the game late and then with our speed pushing over a score to win. The culmination of the year was making it to the finals of a big tournament held at Seton Hall during the spring. We were led by captains Rick Flynn and Kevin Cochran.”

“In our senior year we had to take over the jobs that Tom Kearns and John Regan had when we were freshmen. Barney was the match secretary and I was the scrum captain. There were guys like Tim “Yogi” Sheridan, John Seeberg, Tim Burke, one of the many Seans on our team that we had nicknamed “Mudshark”, and Mark Ryan.”

“I am proud to say that Fairfield Rugby has brought a lot of good things to my life. As a captain of the team I developed the skills necessary to lead a group of 55 players. With no adult involvement on the pitch, we were able to practice 3 times a week and put a competitive team on the field each week. Also I met my wife, Tricia, at Fairfield while playing rugby and to this day she still cannot escape the game because our son is playing # 8 first side for Fordham as a sophomore.”

Chris currently lives in Trumbull with Tricia — and his children Chris, Erin and Jack. He remains a solid supporter of the program that has been a big part of his life.

“One day a good friend that we had played rugby with on the Yankees after graduation commented on how close Fairfield graduates seemed to each other and that he was only in contact with a few friends from his college in Pennsylvania. Even from outside our circle it was obvious that being a part of Fairfield Rugby was something special.”



Victor (Tory) Ridder '96

Victor (Tory) Ridder '96 made his mark on Grauert field with solid play at outside center, earning him a regular spot on the A-side during the 1994-1996 seasons. His on-field prowess coupled with his post-game skill-set led to his election as Club President in 1995-96.

Widely regarded as the preeminent drink-up performer of his day, Ridder fondly remembers the Fairfield University Rugby Club and its history of on and off-field dominance. Ridder credits former coach Jeff Bouvier for schooling him in the fine art of post-game superiority as Bouvier ensured that his players were well versed in both the classic and modern Rugby songs and competitions.

Ridder proudly recalls the first try he scored on Lt. Hans Grauert field as a visiting high school player when his Fordham Prep squad took on Fairfield Prep. "I was immediately drawn to that field," recalls Ridder, "and was lucky to call it home for my four years as a Red Rugger."

Ridder described upperclassmen Tommy Kramer '93, Jim Bagley '93, Ed Ruggemer '93, and Ed Panzella '94, as "beasts on the field who couldn't have been more welcoming" to younger players and how they dutifully "instilled the club's history and traditions in us."

"There was a palpable shift in attention that the team got about midway through my rugby career," noted Ridder. "During the 1994-95 stretch, women started showing up to our matches in droves. This was surely a credit to teammates such as Chachi, Jon Baumstark and Bob "The Legend" Stanley who were quite popular with the ladies." According to Ridder, the women were so determined to interact with the Rugby team that they formed their own squad in 1995. "We did everything we could to help them out including coaching, refereeing their games and mentoring them in the selections process."

Ridder's career highlights include the 1995 Bahamas trip, scoring the winning try versus Providence to unseat the host from their own tournament, and a last minute try to beat Southern Connecticut State in 1995.

Tory also greatly enjoyed the opportunity to play rugby with his younger brother Mark '98, whom Tory said "played hard and never asked for special treatment". Although there may be some debate as to which Ridder brother was the better rugger, Tory takes all the credit for changing Mark from a high school lacrosse loser to college rugby stud.

Ridder's only regret is that he couldn't stop the younger generation from eschewing the corduroy rugby jackets that adorned the legends before them. "My class was the last to wear the classic FURFC jackets and we did so with great pride."

Today, Tory resides in Mt. Vernon, NY, and is happily married to fellow Fairfield alumnae Vanessa (Senn) Ridder '96. They are the proud parents of Wolfe, 5, and Kasper, 3. Ridder remains in touch with a number of his former teammates, continues to check the website for updates on the current team, and still attends the occasional alumni event. Speaking to Tory, one can definitely sense his pride at being a rugger and one can bet he can still even sing a rugby song or two.



Matthew Greenstein '03

Few people embody the spirit of Fairfield Rugby like Matthew Greenstein '03.

On Saturday April 5th, 2003 he accepted the Doug Ciacci Most Valuable Player award in front of a crowd of distinguished FURFC alumni. He then delivered arguably the most memorable speech in Fairfield Rugby history. While hundreds watched, Matt eloquently spoke of brotherhood, friendship, and loyalty. Those present for the team's 40th anniversary celebration that evening left with a reaffirmation that the team was headed in the right direction.

The MVP award was the culmination of Matt's decorated rugby career. Matt's four years with the A-side included victories over Boston College, URI, Providence and Quinnipiac. As captain of the forwards his senior year he led the squad to a championship in the St. Patrick's Day Tournament in Rockaway, New York. It was the first time in the history of the club that Fairfield hoisted the trophy at that event. Everyone who played in that tournament remembers Matt's efforts on the field as well as in the bar during the post game celebration.

He loved Fairfield Rugby so dearly that he returned to coach the team in 2004. The team made great strides that year under Matt's watch. Uniforms were upgraded, a scrum machine purchased, and the administration was convinced that the team shouldn't have to line the field by hand before games. As coach he also organized a spring break tour in the Bahamas where his Red Ruggers played Scranton, Indiana, and the Bahamian National Team. Matt's disciplinarian, "no-nonsense" attitude kept the team in line and out of trouble for the entire trip.

Matt stated that joining the rugby club was one of the highlights of his time at Fairfield. He credits the upperclassmen (especially Bob Sacramento '01) for introducing him to the beach community and making the transition from high school to college much easier. He has fond memories of bus rides to the games, Rugby Christmas parties, and Thursday night selections. Matt also stated that "Without Fairfield Rugby I would have never had the pleasure of knowing Paul Cantrell or Dean of Students Mark C. Reid on a first name basis."

His advice to current Rugby players is to cherish the brief time that they have together. He hopes that everyone has the opportunity to develop the same lifelong friendships that he was able to. He is thrilled to see the efforts of the Friends of Fairfield Rugby because it is a place for those who love the school and the sport to unite.

Matt currently works as a Manager with the Alexander Group. He lives with his wife Julia (nee Martin) '03 in Stamford, Connecticut. They are expecting the arrival of their first child in April.

FURFC Alumni Profiles



Colleen Gibson, '09

Colleen Gibson walked on Grauert Field for her first ever rugby practice as a freshman in the Fall of 2005 — unbeknownst she would be a part of many “firsts” for the FU Lady Ruggers. That season would be the first ever led by a coach (Ryan Birge, '05); the women would earn their first trip to semi-finals; and Colleen would be the first to wear a scrum cap, replacing the usual head gear of a Lady Rugger — a red ribbon.

She may have been the shyest freshman to join the Lady Ruggers in the Fall of 2005, but she was nothing less than fierce on the pitch. Coach Ryan Birge remembers her as “a ‘Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde’ player: an incredibly nice, soft spoken, intelligent person off the field and an aggressive, tough player on it; making monster tackles and carrying three opponents with her into try zones.” Every match, Colleen exploded with strength and inherent skill that was unique to this team. Though it was not her official nickname, Colleen definitely earned the title “Animal” because of her drive and motivation on the field. While most of the girls would form a ruck with much reluctance and fear of getting hurt, Colleen was the girl who would come up from behind and in, pulling, rather than binding onto her teammates, and plowing over the ball to win a ruck.

This led Colleen to be awarded Forward MVP in both 2006 and 2007. Because of her leadership on the field, she was Forward Captain for both the 06-07 and 07-08 seasons.



Colleen suffered a concussion spring of her freshman year. While most girls on the team would have quit when told the only way to keep playing was to wear a scrum cap, Colleen broke the mold and was the first Lady Rugger to don a scrum cap on the field. An ACL tear her junior year (Fall '07) prevented her from playing. Though she does not continue playing rugby, Colleen is still very supportive of the Lady Ruggers and was able to support them at Nationals in Cherry Hill, NJ this past fall.

Rugby was one of several involvements of Colleen's time at Fairfield. She was also very involved with Campus Ministry, co-leading Eucharistic Ministers and Kairos 12. She worked on anti-death penalty campaigns with Students for Life and coordinated domestic & international service trips with destinations including the Philippines, Australia, New Orleans, Washington DC, & Bridgeport.

Colleen graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a double major in Religious Studies & American Studies, with minors in Sociology & Catholic Studies. She was valedictorian of Class of 2009 and delivered the valedictorian address. She won the Alumni Association Humanitarian Award, the Mary Irene Gallagher Theology Medal and American Studies Department Award.

Gibson is now Assistant Director of the Cardinal Bevilacqua Community Center in Philadelphia, where she is in charge of program development, social concerns outreach, running a local food pantry, coordinating volunteers, and ministering to the local community. As the first female player profiled here, Colleen represents the best of the Lady Ruggers, a champion and class act, on and off the field.