



CALGARY RUGBY UNION

Box 5888, Station "A", Calgary, Alberta T2H 1Y4

Office: 403-255-9199

Fields 9025 Shepard Rd SE

MEMBER
Canadian Rugby Union
Alberta Rugby Union
Sports Alberta

CRU Presidents Report 2023

Overall, 2023 was a very strong year for both The Calgary Rugby Union (CRU) and the Calgary Rugby Park (CRP). This success is one that came about due to the hard work and passion of the staff at both the CRP and CRU, our board members, volunteer coaches and club members, players, parents, and the larger rugby community. As this is my third year at the helm of the union, I know I am proud of every stride and success there has been in the past three years taken by both the CRU and CRP. In my third year the focus now was on facility utilization and strengthening the local rugby programs with higher numbers and lots of opportunities to engage in rugby activities.

Rugby

As with all rugby seasons this started back in late 2022 and a lot of the major planning and building occurred in the months that led up to our Try Rugby kickoff weekend of April 29th. The past few there were lots of learnings and uncertainties that are too fresh in the memory to not have a few plans heading into this season. Unfortunately, some clubs did not see the player growth as much as they anticipated which did cause some stresses of last-minute changes to many of our senior leagues and some creative groupings at our junior ranks. The CRU can be proud that we did reach our goal of providing a large magnitude of opportunities for registered players to engage in rugby this season. We had try rugby days, pre-season tournaments, full season fixtures, seven's tournaments, touch rugby ruby, masters games and even an Oktoberfest 10's tournament. This was due to some hardworking staff, volunteers, players, coaches, clubs, and fans! It is great to be able to report that overall, the 2023 season was a great success in Southern Alberta!

Minis and Juniors

The minis festivals continued for 2023 which are always awesome to see as all the little ones are running around each Saturday morning filling the fields with future ruggers! We did see our mini registration numbers skyrocket to pre-covid numbers, which is great groundwork for future years to come. The year started off again with a bang with a very successful try rugby day event which has continued to grow in numbers annually. Kids were able to enjoy rugby, bouncy castles, get rugby balls and eat hot dogs.

Junior rugby also saw a great success with numbers growing by over 10% for the third year in a row and we are hoping to get back closer to pre-Covid numbers during the 2024 season. d active festivals for all to enjoy. Our Program Manager Kim and assistant Aden White were a great team worked very closely with club managers and coaches on a weekly basis to put together meaningful games for all junior players.

The major take-away for the CRU is that going into the 2023 season will be focused on increasing our mini and junior rugby membership. As we want to eclipse our mini numbers from 2023 and increase our junior numbers. By increasing our junior numbers for each club, it will allow us to run a robust league throughout the spring and summer months. To do so we will need support from and to work with Rugby Alberta, AJRA, and each of our clubs. This is a great challenge but not one this community cannot take on!



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	2023	2022	2021	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Minors U5-U11	553	463	351	538	563	455	419	350
Juniors U13-U18	959	839	731	1347	1156	1099	858	785

Senior Rugby

This year, with strategic planning, we ran three divisions of Men's and two Women's rugby successfully. At times we continued to use 'Game On' rules in third division men's and second division women's when needed. With the goal that rugby wins, we got off as many games as possible. There were some stumbling blocks with teams pulling out late causing scheduling changes or some teams not being able to field teams at all causing more forfeits than we anticipated. Ultimately the CRU and the clubs pulled together to run a great season.

We continued to value the input of our clubs and ran pre, mid and post season information sessions. As well each VP of men's and women's worked with Rugby Alberta along with our Program Manager to put together a solid season for our top divisions of AC and AWP respectively. Overall, I am very proud of their efforts, and it was great to see rugby played at each of these levels every Friday night and Saturday afternoon!

The Women's season ran Competitive (2 teams AWP), and Developmental (8 teams SWD) divisions. The competitions were fierce at times but with a late team pulling out of the competitive and some number issues there were some gaps that will need to be filled in future years. Some of these gaps can be filled by recruiting more players but also helping to hold clubs accountable to realistic goals and helping them reach them.

For the Senior Men there were three distinct levels with Recreational (9 teams 3rds), Developmental (7 teams 2nds), and Competitive (3 teams AC). At the recreational level we tried to increase the number games each team played but due to lack of numbers for some teams had a few too many forfeited games. This is something we are planning to be proactive about moving into 2024. The season really had four competitive teams with the Bow Valley team being the city champs and the de facto provincial champs as the ERU was unable to provide a team for the competition.

The Developmental level had 7 teams involved and as usual some great contests throughout the year. The division had the Rams take out the top of the tables Hornets Team in the City finals and play the St. Albert team in the Provincial Finals. The top division of rugby had 3 teams submitted from both the CRU. As the season went on the South teams started to shine and out of the south the Hornets finished top of the table and played the LT's in the final. Just as the women had done in August the men also beat the LT's to become the 2023 Provincial Champs.

This year was the second year for a falls U23 men's league in which we ran under our Maverick Colt's banner. This league was in conjunction with Edmonton Gold, and the Alberta Universities (U of A, U of C, Mount Royal, SAIT and U of L). It was great to see this age grade playing games in the fall and look forward to this continued development.

Our goal of increasing the player base at the senior level was not as successful as we would have hoped. It is great to see that we maintained the numbers we got back in 2022 but we are still too far away from the numbers we saw nearly a decade ago with only 243 senior women in



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2023 versus 341 in 2015. Same as with only 550 senior men in 2023 compared to 848 in 2015. It will be imperative that the CRU and Rugby Alberta work closely together to look at a 1-year, 3-year and 5-year plan to increase these numbers. We need to be thinking long term overall to create a sustainable pool of players. To accomplish this the CRU will be working with all our stakeholders on building our player base.

	2023	2022	2021	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Minors U5-U11	553	463	351	538	563	455	419	350
Juniors U13-U18	959	839	731	1347	1156	1099	858	785
Senior Women	243	248	221	221	214	331	269	341
Senior Men	550	540	463	589	653	776	706	848

Facility

The Calgary Rugby Park is a facility run by the Calgary Rugby Union. The park and union have continued to have great financial success for the second year in a row due to lots of hard work from our board, employees and of course with the buy in from our rugby community. This is something the board is quite proud of and glad to have such an active board and dedicated employees. This success is setting a strong foundation for years of rugby success and we will be looking not only making improvements within the park but by looking at ways to build a strong league and expanding the opportunities for our members to engage in rugby activities.

By being financially stable the board and the park were able to start to look forward into new ventures and planning. The board challenged the facility to utilize the park in times that rugby is not always played there, and this challenge was met.

It started off with hosting of the high school try rugby day in early May which was attended by over 300 athletes and 30 local coaches. Then in early June the High School Rugby Provincial tournament was hosted with well over 1000 athletes in attendance. As we headed into the summer months the CRU and ARU hosted the Western Canadian Championship (WCRC) sort of as it did grow to having teams come from all parts of Canada. Due to the robust facilities at the CRU, it is a great venue for such a large tournament that the CRU went after and secure in 2022 for the 2023 season. This was originally set out to be a combined venture between the CRU and ARU but there were lots of communication issues with dealing with ARU and we hope with future events and additional employees at the ARU we can work collectively better. As the summer rolled on the CRU put on multiple summer youth camps that were a huge success both financially and rugby wise.

The park also finished the playing season off with its annual Oktoberfest 10's tournament and tent party. As 2023 was a year of the World Cup the CRU jumped on the opportunity to show case the games each weekend and as the games intensified so did the crowd s making it a roaring success and starting to allow our community to know that anything rugby related can be found at the CRP. Overall, a huge success bringing many new bodies through the park and its facilities when we typically do not have them.

Each weekend of rugby we saw substantial numbers coming back to the park and we had record sales at the bar most weekends. Players, coaches, and families continued to share their love and passion for our game weekend after weekend. As well this year the CRU and CRP were the host of all Provincial finals. The were great games from U18's, senior women, and



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senior men. Unfortunately, there was not a 3rd division provincial final yet again and it appears that there was some lack of understanding on the part of the ERU or lack of communicating with their clubs about the game. We do hope this game gets played in 2024 as it is a legacy final in which these 3rd division clubs would like to compete for a provincial title. The CRP continues to evolve its practices to allow for more growth of both the sport and community.

Conclusion

For a third straight year I am grateful for the board members and staff that work countless hours for rugby to run as smoothly as it has been in Calgary.

Board Members

- Secretary's Report (Luke Demeter)
- Treasurer's Report (Martin Rejman)
- Commercial Director (Thomas Calvert)
- Discipline Director (John MacDonald)
- Junior Rugby Director (Roger Duurtsema)
- Men's Rugby Director (Matt Suter)
- Women's Rugby Director (Catherine Laing)
- Representative Rugby Director (Amanda Schmidt) Stepped down in August
- CRURS Director's Report (Peter Zajiczek)

Key Employees

- Dan Kazakoff – Facility Manager
- Kim Endicott – Program Manger
- Aden White – Asst. Program Manager
- Kyla Arneson – Kitchen Manager

This is no easy feat but an appreciated one. We hope that next year in 2024 we will be able to grow rugby in all aspects of the game and work cohesively with all partners in rugby including the ARU and ERU. Grass roots rugby is where we need to focus our time. Thanks again to the rugby community and I look forward to the 2024 season!

Peter Rowe
President
Calgary Rugby Union