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Finnish Rugby Federation, Annual Report 2006

1. Administration

The FRF board has held six meetings since the 2006 AGM.

The officials at the end of the year are:

Bro Bannatyne, Chairman

- Board Members:

Tytti Yli-Viikari, Vice-Chairman

Ville Kaukolampi

Mark Roper

Stevan Thorne

Laura Laakso, Women's Rugby Coordinator

Thierry Demoulin

- Deputy Board members:

Djamal Amalou, Youth Coordinator

Sampo Mälkiä

- Treasurer:

Esa Launis

- General Secretary:

Frederic Lavialle

- Referee coordinator:

Esa Launis


- League and Competitions' Manager:

George Mossford

- Sponsorship Manager:

Janne Turunen

The FRF updates and manages a website (www.rugby.fi). The website manager is Jarmo Huttunen. Communication is also done directly to clubs via e-mail (generally to the President and Vice-President of each club, depending on the topics.). General information is also posted on the Finnish Rugby Forum.

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During the year Bernard (Ben) Nel resigned from his Board position as he returned back to South Africa. At the Extraordinary General Meeting in September, Laura Laakso was elected to replace him.

2. Finances

Due to the previous board resigning without closing the 2004 and 2005 accounts, the FRF board members prepared the closure of both the 2004 and 2005 accounts in 2006. The 2004 and 2005 accounts were validated in the Extraordinary General Meeting of September 2006. The 2005 accounts' closing balance was 81,44 euros.

The Finnish Rugby Federation received a development grant from the International Rugby board of a total of 17 256 euros for the year 2006. This included a grant of 9 000 euros allocated towards the salary and expenses of a Development Officer. However, the Finnish Rugby Federation did not have a nominated Development Officer in 2006 and therefore the money was used towards traveling expenses for development activities throughout Finland. This use of the Development Officer money was reported to the IRB in August 2006, during the application process for the 2007 IRB grant.

In 2006 the FRF applied for government support for the National Team travels for international games. 4.800 € were received from the Ministry of Education in May 2006 towards the men's European Cup's Greek away match and the scheduled Baltic Cup games. Upon a request from our part, the Ministry of Education allowed us to use the grant towards the Luxemburg game instead of the Baltic Cup matches. These had to be cancelled due to the proposed re-scheduling of the games. A further demand was addressed to the Ministry of Education for the men's European Cup matches against Luxemburg and Bosnia-Herzegovina in October and resulted in receiving a further grant of 5.500 €.


The closing balance of the FRF accounts in 2006 was 85 euros.

3. Sponsorship

The FRF's sponsorship manager is Janne Turunen. His remit is as the main contact person for potential sponsors interested in sponsoring Finnish rugby in general – excluding clubs. The FRF hopes to build up long-term contracts with sponsors.

So far the sponsorship has been excellent in comparison to before. The biggest lacking area is "general sponsorship". We hope to be able to find sponsors for Finnish Rugby and not purely the National Teams.

We have received sponsorship in various formats: M-Real has agreed to become the first official sponsor on kit. The new shorts have their name on them. Logo Sports (UK) has donated money. Logo Sports is the company where much of the official clothing comes from. Webb Ellis has given discounts on their products, as have C &

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K Sports. We have also received cash sponsorship from Specialvalimo OY and France & Fromages and Arctic Rugby.

The RFU helped us with the men's National Team training camp in the United Kingdom in Spring 2006.

We have also received sponsorship in the form of goods. The FRF received products from L'Oréal, Unilever, Kraft and Cloetta-Fazer for the women's rugby camp in June and the women's tournaments in September 2006. BSN (Beiersdorf Smith Nephew) have also given us a supply of medical kit and have offered us a major discount on medical purchases in the future. They have offered to sponsor medical supplies required for both the men's and women's National Teams in 2007. National Team sponsorship income and goods' total value was 12.000 €.

4. Juniors

The FRF youth coordinator is Djamal Amalou. Youth work is only starting in Finland and most clubs do not have any young players or a strategy for recruitment and coaching. The FRF strategy is based on first developing the skills of coaches in the whole country and then giving support to clubs who start youth work.

The FRF organised a youth coaching course in May 2006. Ten people attended. The following week the FRF youth training day was to take place but was cancelled due to a severe lack of players.

The FIRA-AER U17 course in June in Norway also had to be cancelled due to a lack of players.

The FRF sent 5 coaches to the FIRA-AER training course in Norway in June 2006.


The FRF organised two "How to introduce rugby to youth in schools"-presentations in Helsinki in the fall 2006, gathering 15 participants.

A Development Plan for 2007 will be discussed with Club Chairmen in January 2007 and the FRF hopes that this will lead to greater development throughout Finland.

5. Women

Women's rugby has developed very well in 2006. The FRF organised a very much appreciated women's rugby camp in June, with 40 participants and coaches from four clubs.

The first women's Finnish Cup took place in three tournaments during summer 2006. Jyväskylä Rugby Club Ladies won the Finnish Cup, Warriors Rugby Club from Helsinki coming 2nd before Helsinki Rugby Union Football Club.

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Two Finnish women's teams participated in the Stockholm Ten's tournament in Sweden.

The two national team coaches and 13 players, of which 5 under 21-yearolds, participated in the Nordic women's rugby camp in Sweden in October 2006.

The player numbers developed at a very fast rate in 2006, reaching 90 active players in the end of the season. 70 players have registered in the three clubs with complete teams, whilst two other clubs (Lahti, Tampere) are currently growing. The women's championship was held over 3 tournament weekends with the winners deservedly coming from Jyväskylä.

6. Men

Men's rugby has built on previous years' experience, with ten teams registered in nine cities all over the country. The number of players has not increased from last year, but there are more coaches and 4 new referees. Tampere Rugby Club won the Finnish Championship for the first time. They narrowly beat Helsinki RUFC into second place. Between these top two sides there were only 3 points from their two games separating them. Warriors Rugby Club from Helsinki came 3rd and last years champions, Jyväskylä Rugby Club, came in 4th place.

The 2nd division managed to kick off, offering new players a possibility to gain game experience. The development league did not however maintain its vigour throughout the season, with many games cancelled due to a lack of players and club commitment.

7. National Teams


Men

The men's National Team has continued under the coaching supervision of Bro Bannatyne. Bernard Nel left in August and was replaced by Luke Prowse. Frederic Lavialle was appointed as NT Manager in August.

The team had three open trainings in Finland and a training camp in the UK. In May 2006 the team won against Greece both in Athens and in Jyväskylä, Finland. This meant that Finland qualified to play in pool 3C of the men's European Nations Cup.

In July Suomenniemi played the Universidad de Zaragoza in Tampere where they lost by 5 tries to 1. However, Finland NT players scored 2 of the 5 Zaragoza tries.

In September the team travelled to Luxemburg and played their first match in the 2006/7 ENC. A very close game ended up with Luxemburg as the victors with a score line of 16-8. The team was pleased with their showing against a much more

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experienced team, but knew they could have done more and probably should have won.

The following weekend the team travelled to Bosnia-Herzegovina. A thrilling match ended up with Finland as the winners by 7-14. This victory enabled Finland to move off the bottom place in the International Rugby Board's official standings – the first time this had ever happened since joining the IRB in 2001.

These two matches have shown our team's potential for this 2 year group. Next year we play Slovenia on the 26th May in Helsinki and Israel on the 2nd/3rd June in Jyväskylä. In the autumn 2007 we are scheduled to play the final round of home and away games. We hope to have one home and one away game in the autumn 2007, followed by one home and one away in Spring 2008. Venues and teams will only be decided in June next year at the FIRA-AER General Assembly in Monaco.

Women

The women's National Team started in the winter 2005, with Tytti Yli-Viikari and Katja Rahkola nominated as Women's National Team coaches. Three open trainings and one National Team training were organised. The first 15-a-side full contact match took place before the men's game against Greece in May and served as a practice game for the National Team candidates. The women's national team took part in the Stockholm Ten's tournament in July and came second in the Shield, bringing home one victory and many encouraging tries.

The women received physical preparation training in November and will participate both in the European Cup 15's and 7's tournaments in spring 2007.

8. Referees

The FRF referee coordinator Esa Launis organised a refereeing course in April 2006. Seven referees participated, of which four were beginners.


One referee took part in the FIRA-AER refereeing course in Norway.

Three new referees took part in the Championships' refereeing in 2006.

There are 14 referees in Finland, most of whom do not take part actively in official refereeing. More referees and opportunities to gain experience are needed. During the Finnish Championship every game had an independent referee.

Clubs failed to submit the referee match report cards to the League Manager in the vast majority of cases. This must be rectified for season 2007.

9. IRB

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IRB official Mr Pierre Villepreux visited the FRF for a country review in May 2006. IRB is the single most important financial contributor to the FRF budget. The IRB gives financial support for rugby development work.

Mr Villepreux underlined the necessity of building on schoolwork in order to develop rugby in Finland. Clearer youth development strategies are needed both at the FRF and the club levels and more dedication towards youth coaching.

Financial matters were also openly discussed. It was agreed that the FRF accounts must be cleared as soon as possible in order for the FRF to be considered for Finnish state aid.

Mr Villepreux also met with coaches and club officials.

10. FIRA

The FIRA-AER distributed sets of balls, cones and bibs for mini-rugby (up to 9 years). These were handed out to clubs doing/intending to do junior work in schools.

6 people took part in the FIRA-AER refereeing and coaching course in Norway. No under 17-year olds took part, although 26 places were initially available. Due to the lack of youth players, the FIRA course did not take place in Helsinki (this was also suggested by FIRA given the expensive travelling costs of the course in Norway).


Bro Bannatyne attended the General Secretaries course held in Sopot, Poland in September. Unfortunately none of the other GS's from the nations we deal with most were in attendance. However, there were over 30 participants in total. This is an important course to attend and is generally totally funded by FIRA.

Tytti Yli-Viikari participated in the FIRA-AER women's rugby national team coach expert's training in Belgrad, Serbia in November.

Tytti Yli-Viikari and Bro Bannatyne attended the FIRA-AER AGM in Paris in December. This is an important meeting for the Presidents to attend, as it is here that decisions are made for the following year.

It was noted that the mid-year General Assembly must be attended in the future. Many important decisions were made in June 2006 at the General Assembly in Italy.

11. Finnish State

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In 2006, the FRF applied for and received its first state aid for National Team travelling expenses for international games. We hope to apply for similar grants in 2007.

The FRF hopes to be considered for state aid in 2008.

12. The Finnish Sports Federation, SLU

The Finnish Sports Federation SLU offers administrative services for sports' federations. This can include general account and administrative support services. The SLU membership would also enable us to apply for a very attractive quote for a sports licence and insurance policy.

The FRF has conducted discussions with the SLU regarding a possible affiliation. The FRF needs to fulfil certain criteria before being considered for affiliation. These criteria include a good accounts' situation, nationwide activity, full-fledged junior, women's and men's activities, and an important level of registered players and clubs. (Currently the general criteria are 20 clubs and 800 players).

In order to apply for SLU membership, the FRF will need to first be acknowledged by the Finnish State, i.e. receive government support for the general sports' federation activities (see above).

Bro Bannatyne, Chairman
Tytti Yli-Viikari Vice Chairman

