



# SUOMEN RUGBYLIITTO RY FINNISH RUGBY FEDERATION

Member of International Rugby Board (IRB)  
Member of European Rugby Association (FIRA-AER)  
Member of Finnish Olympic Committee (NOC)  
Associate Member of Finnish Sports Federation (VALO)

02.01.2014

## SUOMEN RUGBYLIITTO ANNUAL REPORT 2013

In 2013, Rugby Union has developed in a much more systematic and structured manner. Linking specific people with the clubs in order to achieve a harmonised schools rugby programme was, and continues to be, the Suomen Rugbyliitto's (SRL) number one priority for long term growth.

Reporting of licensed player numbers continues to be based upon the Valo licensing system, which also permits players to purchase insurance suitable for rugby. It is hoped that this has removed a significant administrative burden and future barriers for the clubs when colluding with municipal sports authorities.

	2013	2012	2011	2010
<b># Clubs</b>	14	14	11	11
<b>Male Adult</b>	xxx	422	353	270
<b>Female Adult</b>	xxx	157	119	90
<b>Youth (under 18 years)</b>	xx	25	?	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>390</b>

The first in competition testing was carried out in Helsinki in September towards the end of the regular domestic season. Normal testing procedures were carried out and [Clenbuterol](#) was found to be present in one of the players. The Finnish Anti-Doping Agency (FINADA) finished its process in December 2013 by forming a Disciplinary Hearing which subsequently issued a recommendation to the SRL that the Player concerned receives a two year ban from participating in Rugby Union. At the time of writing, the SRL Board has yet to issue its final decision as this must be under the IRB Anti-Doping Regulations. If endorsed, the player faces a comprehensive ban from Rugby at any level, with the earliest possible return to the sport in October 2015.

To be absolutely clear, the SRL's position is that the use of banned substances is cheating. It is contrary to the sportsmanship and integrity that Rugby Union prides itself on and these values are what we differentiate ourselves from other sporting codes.

### 1. Administration

Administratively the most significant change in operations this year was the shift of daily operational decisions being made within the office team of the General Secretary, Technical Director and Treasurer. This team has engaged with partners, outside organisations, as well as FIRA-AER & the IRB.

At the Spring General Meeting, Jouni Ränninen and Merita Valkeapää's resignation from the Board were recognised by the clubs and the Deputy Board Members, Mikko Korte and Katri Nummelin were appointed to the vacant full board positions on 3 March 2013. Karl Filtness and Isaac Visser were voted in as Deputy Members to occupy the vacant positions on the same day.

The Autumn General Meeting saw the end of the previous Board's term. Most members made themselves available for re-election and new members were welcomed into the board. The current board is in place until the 2015 Autumn General Meeting. At year end, appointments are:

#### Board

<b>Chairman</b>	Palemia Field
<b>Members</b>	Teija Alasalmi, Karl Filtness, George Mossford, Isaac Visser
<b>Deputy members</b>	Petter Larssen

#### Officers

<b>General Secretary</b>	Stevan Thorne
<b>Treasurer</b>	Salla Salo
<b>Technical Director</b>	Stephen Whittaker
<b>Competitions</b>	George Mossford
<b>Anti – Doping</b>	Ville Siiskonen
<b>Women's' Rugby</b>	NN



### **IRB Accredited Educators**

<b>Match Officials</b>	Olli Linnossuo & George Mossford
<b>Coaching</b>	Stuart Reynish
<b>Strength &amp; Conditioning</b>	NN
<b>Medical</b>	Mikko Korte

Since its inception in 2011, the Finland Rugby Referees' Association continued to appoint the referees to competitive matches during the domestic season. FRRRA referees are also being appointed as Match Officials at European Nations Cup, FIRA & IRB 7s tournaments and the first FRRRA/ SRL delegate at the IRB Level 3 Match Official course. For the 2014 season, FRRRA will potentially have two IRB Level 3 referees at its disposal and ## IRB Level 2 referees.

## **2. Finances**

The SRL balance sheet and other official financial figures can be found in the audit report 2013 (Finnish Rugby Federation financial statement 1.1.2013-31.12.2013). The 2012 accounts were accepted and closed by the member clubs at the AGM in October in Helsinki. The 2014 Budget was presented and accepted at the same meeting.

SRL were granted 18517,49€ by IRB for year 2013. For year 2014 the grant is 19515,94€. SRL received a grant total of 12 000€ from Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö (Ministry of Education and Culture, OKM), which will be the same in 2014.

## **3. Sponsorship**

The SRL signed a new contract with Samurai to be the official kit sponsor of the Federation until August 2017. Other companies were investigated, however none of the other suppliers were able to match Samurai's offer. Additionally, by changing supplier, extra cost would be incurred of NT players who would be required to purchase complete sets of off field kit. The contract states that Samurai are the sole supplier of all items on and off the field.

No other new contracts were agreed in 2014

## **4. Youth Rugby**

Youth Rugby has grown in 2013, thanks in no small part to Tampere, Kuopio, Linna, Porvoo, Vaasa, Pori and HRC all throwing their weight behind the cause. Each club is doing what they can and has different resources. It should be noted that Tampere and Linna both have people who have been able to do rugby sessions during the school day, and this was evident with two particular projects that had tangible success. Linna ran an interschool tournament which was the culmination of many session of schools rugby. Kuopio had focussed on Training the Teachers to engage schools from within.

The IRB initiative, Get Into Rugby, means each club now has their own access codes to the GIR website, that hosts a wealth of information, promotional materials, drills and other useful material for clubs.

Miika Valo (Tampere) had to step down as youth development officer due to increased work commitments and a lack of time in Finland, however he was replaced with a willing and able candidate – Ari Tikkanen (Kuopio). Ari was a regular fixture at JRC and the National team, since moving to Kuopio he has taken up the reigns there. Ari has the added benefit of being a school teacher.

To assist Ari, the SRL took the step of also installing a deputy YDO, Sanni Virtanen (HRC) who is also well qualified. Like Ari, Sanni is a stalwart of HRC, one of the original members from the Women's 1st national team and is also a teacher.

### Under 20's

During the summer the coach of the U20's resigned due to lack of time, shortly after the U20's team manager resigned, the search has been on since to find a replacement, to date no suitable candidate has been selected.

### Under 17's



The under 17's also have no coach, no team manager and no competition, due to a poor showing at a previous U17's camp we have not been invited to further camps organised by FIRA-AER, the criteria for the camps are 35 attendees under 17 and 4 adults.

The position of coach and manager have also been advertised within the Finnish Rugby Community as well as on Facebook, and again no interest has been shown. How the SRL moves forward with the U20 & U17 setup needs to be discussed with the clubs and the Technical Director.

## 5. Domestic Competition

<b>Champions (Suomen Mestari):</b>	Tampere Rugby Union Club
<b>Women's Champions (Suomen Naisten Mestari):</b>	Jyväskylä Rugby Club
<b>Division 1 Winners:</b>	Vaasa Wolves Rugby Club
<b>7s Champions:</b>	Helsinki Warriors Rugby Club
<b>7s Womens Champions:</b>	Helsinki Warriors Rugby Club

The 2013 season was a memorable one. There were five SRL-competitions all in: the men's and women's championships, the men's and women's 7s, and division one (men).

The men's championship table was one of the closest yet, with the top three all finishing within a bonus-point win of each other. Tampere won the regular season and so claimed the automatic place at the main event where they faced the champions of the last five straight seasons, Helsinki Warriors. Just as the season itself, the final score was extremely close but Tampere managed to hold on to their lead to claim a 25 - 24 and lift the trophy. In the women's championship, Jyväskylä topped the table and squared off against second-placed rivals, Helsinki Warriors who managed to come through their semi-final against Tampere. This final two was very close, although Jyväskylä eventually squeezed out a 10 - 5 win.

Division one (men) was divided into two regional pools, North and South. Vaasa and Porvoo won their respective divisions convincingly and both came through their semi-final encounters without difficulty. A tough match was expected, but in the end Vaasa's experience at playing XVs shone through and they outclassed their Southern opponents to win the right to compete in the championship in 2014 with a 33 - 5 win.

In the 7s, a women's winter series was launched for the first time with eight teams taking part across the three events. Each tournament - played on indoor artificial turf - threw together some great matchups but it was Helsinki Warriors that took home the trophy with a dominant display that saw them win all three legs of the competition. On the men's side, the SRL 7s consisted of a single event held in Kotka to coincide with Kotkan Meripäivät and it was Helsinki Warriors that came home the happier having beat Porvoo in the competition's finale.

Overall, the feedback from the season was extremely positive with a total of fourteen clubs making their mark.

## 6. National Teams

### Senior Men 15

The Senior Men's team is coached by Alan Hine, who is assisted by Alastair Davies, Captained by Andrew Myrie and the Physiotherapist is Anna Viljamaa. Stephen Whittaker managed the team thorough 2013 in addition to his other SRL duties as Technical Director.

The team played 4 games in 2013, Greece (Athens), Bosnia (Zenica), Greece & Norway (both games in Turku).

Player base was largely the same as the previous year. But with a view to utilising the A team where needed. Player fees were able to be reduced slightly with a result that the Greece home game incurred no cost to players.

The Greece away game resulted in a win, 11-13, with more tries scored than the opposition. The team played a good game and utilized its bench well. The conditions of the pitch were shocking and the



sportsmanship of the Greeks was missing, with one of them stamping on the skippers knee, forcing further games to be missed.

Bosnia had a very skilful fly half who scored their points. Finland outscored Bosnia in tries with some well worked moves. However the kicking game was not on and some wrong decisions made later on that could have affected the outcome of the game. The game was there for the taking and is becoming the 'catchphrase' of the senior team, could have won it, should have won it but didn't

There were no NT training camps during the summer as it was agreed that game time in the respective leagues was more beneficial.

The next game was in the autumn part of the series and was Greece at home in Turku, played in the Paavo Nurmi Stadium. The A Team played a game as warm-up event against Estonia in the International Partnership shield which has been played twice before and both times won by Finland, unfortunately on this occasion Estonia showed their development and beat the newly formed A team. The Finland Greece game went to prove what Finland can achieve, a win of 35 – 20. At half time it was 15-13 and in this game the team managed to score 5 tries, earning the 4 try bonus point and denying Greece a losing bonus point. This is how Finland should be playing and this win also lifted us off the bottom of the IRB rankings.

However, some results in other games didn't help us. Bosnia beat Luxembourg and then Greece beat Bosnia, this now dropped us to bottom of the heap and in addition 4 new countries were admitted to the rankings which all jumped above us, American Samoa, UAE, Mauritius and Indonesia.

The final game of the season was against Norway, and was again held in the Paavo Nurmi Stadium, the women played an all stars team as a warm up to the game.

This game was a learning curve, with the score at 0-16 at half time, we managed to pull 12 points back, but Norway had the experience to enjoy and hold the lead with big tactical kicking.

This now means we are back in familiar territory in the relegation battle with Greece, however this season the group is very closely placed with just 5 points separating Finland and 1st and 2nd placements.

The 2 games in the spring are vital if Finland isn't to be relegated. Upcoming are Luxembourg away and Bosnia at home to be played in Turku

Stephen Whittaker retired from international rugby after the Norway game finishing with 29 caps and 10 points. Over a career spanning 7 years. He will continue to act as Team Manager. Isaac Visser and Matt Jordan also retired from international rugby due to injury.

Sponsorship of the National team saw the continuance of the Aussie Bar deal which expires in August 2014. Powerade were again providing drinking utensils and Powerade product as well as purchasing some warm up vests for the team.

Negotiations were in place at the end of 2013 for a renewed contract with Aussie Bar, with the main contact talking of raising the amount of sponsorship from 6000€ over 2 years to 10000€ over 2 years for 2014-2016. Eventually that sum was dropped to 8000€ over the 2 years.

Management staff have made no intentions of stepping away. Isaac Visser was added to the coaching staff for his skill in strength and conditioning and overall knowledge which is hoped can be passed on to the team.

### Women's Sevens

The Women's Sevens team is coached by Lauri Ylönen, who is assisted by Virpi Sironen and the Physio is Jani Parkkinen. Niina Tikkanen managed the team until the FIRA-AER tournament after which Teija Alasalmi took over the management.

The main event for 2012 was the European Sevens Championship group B which was held 25.-26 June in Bratislava, Slovakia. Both of the top two teams were promoted to group A which were Finland and Norway. The tournament was a clean sweep for Finland and the performance was praised in the FIRA-AER annual report with the statement, "*Finland was the only team with an organised collective game*".



The organised collective game was no accident. With just promotion in mind, the season of 2013 started in the autumn of 2012 when players were asked to apply for 3 different training groups:

- The first group consisted of players based in the Helsinki area who are dedicated to sevens and have made a commitment to the team for two years.
- Group two was based on those players based elsewhere in Finland and those Helsinki based players who want to take part in 15's national team as well.
- The final group was players based abroad.

Two camps were held in Eerikkilä in the latter part of 2012 where the final selection was made.

During the spring the national team had camps in Eerikkilä once a month (12.-13 January, 6.-17 February and 9.-10 March). In addition, Group one trained twice weekly at Hämeenkylä school and Pirkkolan urheilupuisto. During the winter players were expected to play in the domestic sevens tournaments which proved to have a significant impact on skills and experience.

In 2012 the national team participated in Amsterdam sevens which proved to be inefficient method to prepare as the "cost / quality playing minutes / player" were too high. To compensate, Finland, Denmark and Norway set up a Nordic cup which was a 2 day tournament played in Copenhagen. Finland sent 2 teams, Norway 2 teams and Denmark 1 team. Finland1 had 9 players who would probably be selected for the European championship team and Finland2 had players who could break into the the final selection. Finland1 won all their matches in the tournament. Finland2 beat Norway2 on both days and Denmark on Saturday. Denmark played in division A in 2013 and will play in 2014 as well.

The team selection was made after the Nordic cup and the final preparation four day camp was held in Eerikkilä 9-12 May. The team arrived in Bratislava already on 23 May and had a gym session at a local crossfit gym. On Friday the team had a final training session with some time to know the surroundings and the city. This proved to be a very good approach as it calmed the team and gave them confidence. Finland dominated the tournament and won the cup final 25 to 12 against Norway.

After the successful campaign of 2013 the national team held an open sevens camp 19-20 October in Vantaa where the training squads were reviewed. The last camp of the year was held 23-24 November in Eerikkilä.

#### Women's 15s National Team

### **7. Match Officials**

For the first time in Finnish rugby history, all SRL-sanctioned matches were officiated by appointed referees despite a 10-game increase in the number of scheduled matches in 2013. In total, FRRA boasted 22 members.

Two IRB level one training courses were held during the year and the chairman of FRRA attended the first weekend of the IRB level 3 course at the invitation of FIRA-AER (this has since been completed). The tri-Nordic exchange programme with Norway and Denmark also continued and Finland helped establish a Baltic and Nordic referee's forum to ease discussions and future cooperation with our rugby neighbours.

### **8. IRB/ FIRA-AER**

The SRL has recognised the importance of engaging with the IRB & FIRA-AER by attending the various conferences through the year. This is also seen as a responsibility of being a full member of both organisations.

The IRB held its biannual General Assembly in Dublin, Ireland, in joint venture with the first ever IRB Rugby Exhibition. The IRB paid for all costs of one delegate, the SRL paid the flight & delegate pass for one additional participant (the Technical Director). At the General Assembly, member unions were briefed on the various online training tools that the IRB provides free of charge, including a new anti-corruption module developed in cooperation with the EU.



During the General Assembly, the Exhibition allowed the TD to link in with Norway's Vice Chairman in order to discuss a unified Nordic effort to increase the use of artificial turf within our countries. In addition to Finland and Norway, the Swedish and Danish unions have also been bought in. This included discussions with the manufacturers to ensure compliance with applicable IRB regulations, investment costs and options, as well as lifecycle costs. The IRB person responsible for Technical Services also had a meeting with the Nordic unions to define specific actions that can be done to support the unions.

There was no FIRA General Secretary conference in 2013. The next one runs concurrently with the TD conference in Bucharest in March 2014. The Chairman attended the FIRA-AER congress in Stockholm, in July, whilst the General Secretary attended the FIRA-AER General Assembly in Paris, in December.

#### Training & Education

The IRB's Training and Education Support scheme resulted in a visit from Ultan O'Callaghan (Munster, Ireland) to deliver a weekend camp on youth and getting them from the school into the club. This event showed a good attendance and actually brought all the clubs together in a unified notion that they are all going in the right direction and can bounce off each other for support. This is absolutely critical in terms of aligning club targets with country level development goals.

The goal of 100% participation in the IRB's Rugby Ready programme for all licensed players continues. In 2014, the Technical Director has administrative access to the IRB database in order to view who has done what online training and when it was done. This will allow for a quick and easy audit of compliance of SRL licensing regulations with respect to Rugby Ready. At the Autumn General Meeting, several clubs bought up the issue of language difficulties with the online Laws of the Game examination and being able to pass the exam. It was agreed that all coaches, or those holding coaching responsibility, must have a valid Laws of the Game exam to ensure that any new law variations are being passed on to the players. All National Representatives are required to pass the exam.

#### Get Into Rugby

Get into Rugby is the IRB initiative to increase player numbers globally, in a similar manner too FIRA-AER's European Mass Participation Project. Get into Rugby has its own website with plentiful online resources for training drills and interactive features as well as advertising materials.

Each club has unique log in details that enable them to access these features as well as an area for logging youth activities, of which it is vital that clubs fill these in as these reports go directly to the IRB. This will mean less time is spent by the Technical Director and the Youth Development Officer chasing clubs for data.

#### Mass Participation Project

The FIRA-AER Mass Participation Project is aimed at increasing the amount of players in Europe by 20%. This is done through youth awareness programs, tag projects in schools and schools tournaments.

### **9. Finnish Sports Federation, VALO**

Sports Governance in Finland underwent significant change in 2012 with several organisations now being merged into one entity on January 1 2013, called Valo. This has resulted in the rationalisation of personnel within the Valo organisation and a less direct channel for the "Small Sports" organisations. This has resulted in some things (eg licensing website) being very slow to action. We expect the organisational changes to settle down in 2014.

### **10. National Olympic Committee**

It continues to be difficult to even arrange a meeting with the NOC with it getting progressively worse towards the end of the year as the NOC was ramping up for Sochi 2014.

The SRL is a full member of the Finnish Olympic Committee. Ville Siiskonen is the SRL's Member on the NOC, whilst Olli Linnossuo is his deputy.



## 11. Finnish Anti- Doping Agency (FINADA)

The SRL implemented a commitment to adhere to the World Anti-Doping Agency and IRB regulations through the Finnish Anti- Doping Agency and has this commitment enshrined in the SRL's Rules of Association. FINADA started carrying out training and education modules in the first half of the year at the National Team training camps which was coordinated the Anti-Doping Coordinator and the National Team Managers.

The IRB/WADA list was sent to all clubs in December 2013 and FINADA have also sent small handbooks that each club will be given a copy of at the Spring General Meeting.

Players are reminded that they have sole responsibility in checking the ingredients of any supplement or medicine they are taking. If they have a medicinal reason for any substance that is being taken, then they are again, solely responsible to fully complete the Therapeutic Use Exemption form BEFORE any rugby is played. The SRL cannot stress this enough.

FIRA have also indicated their intention to increase testing within their jurisdiction, meaning that playing any international game or tournament (ENC/Friendly/7's etc.) will increase the probability of anti-doping controls being carried out.

Palemia Field  
Chairman

Stevan Thorne  
General Secretary

