

SUOMEN RUGBYLIITTO ANNUAL REPORT 2011

In 2011, the Suomen Rugbyliitto has sought to build upon the administrative changes seen in 2010. This year saw the first time where the board and chairman were elected for a period longer than a year. This meant that longer term decisions could be made.

2011 saw the focus shifting from administrative improvements, to developmental improvements. Rugby was demonstrated in central Helsinki in front of weekend shoppers in the lead up to the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand. This meant more press coverage than in previous years and it is the intention of the SRL to continue this. Involvement in bigger youth sports events have taken centre stage with rugby being an option at the Your Move event in Helsinki over five days and the Pitkis camp in Western Finland in a similar time frame.

A more structured schools programme has been implemented with IRB money being directed towards the purchase of tag rugby kits, a standard six lesson tag rugby programme being issued by the SRL. By standardizing the programme, we hope to be able to grow the player base of potential junior rugby players joining the clubs.

Rugby continues to penetrate the 'non traditional' locations. Continuing from the previous year's autumn general meeting, in 2011, the member clubs voted to allow Linna Rugby Club (Hameenlinna), Pori Rugby Club and Rugby Club (Porvoo) to join the Division 1 competition, and Pori RC will also provide an extra team to the womens championship. Each of these three clubs have been recipients of coaching and other support from established clubs, proving that the ethos of Rugby is alive and well within Finland.

Financially, we have been able to maximize the partnership deal with Samurai Rugby Gear, the official kit suppliers to the SRL. Indeed, replica sales of the new National Teams' jersey, prominently featuring the Finnish Lion, have been able to provide significant additional income along with other staple items such as SRL branded rugby balls and kit bags. Better planning for SRL events have ensured that budgetary limits for the various SRL events have been maintained, meaning that more money can be put into development projects.

1. Administration

The SRL board has held two meetings since the 2011 AGM. Both of these have been held via teleconferencing or Skype and are in conjunction with decisions made on the secure SRL board forum at www.rugbyfinland.com. Appointments are:

Board

Chairman	Palemia Field
Vice Chairman	Stephen Whittaker (stepped down July 2012)
Members	George Mossford, Jouni Raninen, Merita Valkeapää, Patrick Vikström,

Deputy members Mikko Korte & Katri Nummelin

Officers

General Secretary	Stevan Thorne
Treasurer	Ville Siiskonen
Technical Director	Stephen Whittaker (July 2012 ->)
Competition Coordinator	George Mossford
Womens' Rugby	Sonja Kivelä
Webmaster	Stephen Whittaker (John Maxwell)

IRB Accredited Educators:

Match Officials	Olli Linnossuo & George Mossford
Coaching	Stuart Reynish & Roni Riekki
Strength & Conditioning	Roni Riekki

As in 2011, the Finland Rugby Referees' Association continued to appoint the referees to competitive matches during the domestic season, as well as where FIRA appointments were required, this also included the Men's National Team having an Assistant Match Official (AMO) travel with them on a few occasions.

2. Finances

The SRL balance sheet and other official financial figures can be found in the audit report 2011 (Finnish Rugby Federation financial statement 1.1.2011-31.12.2011). The 2010 accounts were accepted and closed by the member clubs at the AGM in February 2011 in Jyväskylä. The 2012 Budget was presented and accepted at the EGM held on 19 November in Helsinki.

SRL were granted 17753.04€ by IRB for year 2012. For year 2013 the grant is 19617.36€. This is inline with the grant of previous years as well as a 1226.09€ increase which is for the procurement of a 'full time' Technical Director. SRL received a grant total of 12 000€ in four instalments over the year 2011 from Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö (Ministry of Education and Culture, OKM), which will be the same in 2012.

3. Sponsorship

Samurai Sportswear become the Official Kit Supplier to the SRL as of 1 August 2010. This partnership continued through 2011 and 2012. The contract is up for renewal and all options are being looked at

Eerikkilä Urheilupuisto and the SRL signed a supplier contract to provide travel expenses and a wage to coaching staff, on a sliding scale based on participants, for all training camps held in 2012.

Powerade, under the operating arm of Coca Cola signed a year agreement with the Men's National Team to be the official supplier of drinks to the team, in return

Powerade receive logo placement and warm up tshirts adorning the Powerade logo. This agreement looks set to continue into the future.

The Men's National Team also signed a shirt logo sponsorship deal. Aussie Bar International will have their logo across the chest of the men's NT shirt, this is for a 2 year deal. Aussie Bar are already sponsors of Warriors and Eagles.

4. Junior Development

5. Women's Development

6. Domestic Competitions

2012 saw the most competitive season to date within the Finnish Championship.

7. National Teams

From 2010, all Senior Men and Women are required to sign compliance with the National Team's Code of Conduct.

Senior Men

The 2010-2012 ENC season (2010-2012) continued with Finland being grouped into ENC Division 2D.

Finland faced 5 opponents in 2012,

Luxembourg away was a win that was looking to put us on track to avoiding finishing last, looking to make amends for the loss to Greece in the last game of 2011 it just wasn't going to be. Everytime that Finland are looking to escape the bottom of the pit it would seem Luxembourg are trying to do the same. On this occasion they wanted it more and took the game 26-3. All eyes now needed to look to taking Bulgaria and eeking something out against Cyprus-

Bulgaria at home, with the game being held in Turku for the first time. The game was preceded by a Development League Tournament. The conditions for the game were hot and Bulgaria were not looking to have a repeat of the last game in which they won by 2 points from a last minute try. They had also been taken apart by Cyprus in Bulgaria not long before facing Finland. Finland weren't executing the game plan as it should have been but the game was a tight one, Finland also failed to capitalize when Bulgaria had 1 player red carded and another yellow carded. The final score was 24-26 again a loss by 2. Many will say, as will the players that was a game that was there for the taking. Picture evidence went on to prove a certain try which was disallowed by the visiting touch judge. Either which, it wasn't going to happen. 2 losses by 2 points against a team in 1 year that has yet has yet to be beaten by Finland is proving the progression the team is facing.

Next up was Cyprus in Helsinki, with a 15's game from the Women's National Side against 1st time visitors Switzerland. Finland's previous and only encounter against Cyprus was in Cyprus the year before, and was a 70-10 loss. Cyprus were riding high after demolishing Bulgaria 3-97 in Bulgaria and extending their unbeaten run. Finland showed them that underdogs don't lie down and don't stay down, bringing

the game to them and opening the score sheet first. However, Cyprus proved why they have an unbeaten run and that superior fitness plays a huge part. The final score was 10-52. This resulted in Finland finishing bottom in the group and facing certain relegation to the Pool of Doom.

Due to various reshuffles in groups above and 1 team withdrawing Finland were offered an olive branch once again. They would remain in 2D. And should count themselves very fortunate. The new group would consist of Greece, Luxembourg, Norway (dropping from 2C) and Bosnia (rising from 3). Games were set and the first opponent would be Luxemburg at home. As with Finland and their usual regime, it took them a good 20 minutes to get into the game. Luxemburg caught an early break with an intercepted pass that should never been given. This was the only time Luxemburg looked like threatening the goal line of Finland. The last 20 minutes saw an influx of fresh legs and spirit enter the pitch and it was then that Finland showed what they can do. Backs were stringing moves together and playing with a confidence. Unfortunately the clock ran out and the team lost by 2 (again) And the crowd most likely questioned why they can't do it from the off and all the time. Final score 14-16

Next up was Norway away. Norway were an unknown entity, they'd been relegated from a division above so clearly weren't good enough to play there but had been there for quite a while. Once again we wanted to capitalize on the success of the previous game and make it last for 80 minutes.

Conditions both weather wise and pitch wise were terrible. Norway came out of the starting blocks at pace and physical. Quite possibly at a level we've not played since Lithuania over 5 years ago. Finland gave a good account of themselves, but tired legs set in way too early, and the Norwegians got us playing their game rather than us playing our game. The game was a loss with a score of 32-3

For 2013 things need to happen in the Men's rugby. Finishing last in the group again will surely not bring another 'get out of jail free' card. And playing 3C will not be what Finnish Rugby want.

Alan Hine has continued to be the Head Coach for the Senior Men with Alastair Davies appointed as Assistant Coach. Stephen Whittaker continuing as the Team Manager.

Women XV

The women's National Team started in the winter 2008. The head coach for the Women's XV squad is Tytti Yli-Viikari. Team Manager duties are handled by Laura Laakso.

Women 7's

8. Match Officials

Two iRB-recognised training courses

9. IRB/ FIRA-AER

13. The Finnish Sports Federation, SLU

In January, the SRL was accepted as an associate member of the SLU. This has given significant returns already in terms of licensing, financial oversight and administrative support.

2011 saw the first time that the licensing of rugby players in Finland was undertaken online. During the licensing process, players are able to sign up for the SLU's sports insurance, or can opt out as long as they are able to prove they have other insurance.

14. The Olympic Committee

The SRL is a full member of the Finnish Olympic Committee. In the 2012 Spring General Meeting, new NOC representatives are to be elected.

Palemia Field
Chairman

Stevan Thorne
General Secretary