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MIXAR
MAGAZINE 02




PRESENTATION

iMIXED ABILITY: A NEW MODEL FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION!

By Martino Corazza – IMAS Director

We all know participation in sport benefits our physical and mental wellbeing, as well as creating social change for the wider community. Why – then – are there still so many people who face significant barriers to participating in mainstream sport as equal members? Where are their voices? Why do we still use labels, categories and special projects which belong to the past, dividing people by ability, disability, gender or background?

We believe it's time to look at the future with different eyes.

The Mixed Ability Model embraces and celebrates human diversity, and gives real opportunities for people of all abilities, or facing a wide range of barriers to participation, to work together and empower themselves. Training in a mainstream club, being equal members, striving to improve personal goals, challenging stereotypes and the orthodoxy of sport (and disability sport along the way) and, yes, also taking risks. For some it is a chance to demonstrate their sport know-how and commitment to inclusion, for others it's just about learning new skills or being part of a new family. It doesn't matter, we are all part of the same club.

In the Mixed Ability Manifesto, we do acknowledge that grassroots sports can also engender exclusion. IMAS advocate to democratise sport participation across the world, giving people the right to join in community sports without being identified, separated, classified or labelled, promoting inclusion and equality through a sense of belonging and membership.


IMAS have been developing and sharing the Mixed Ability Model since 2009. Initially working primarily with adults who have Learning Disabilities and involving them in co-producing presentations, accessible resources and delivery, we quickly realised that there was growing interest for the Mixed Ability Model beyond these groups.

We now work with Sports NGBs, grassroots clubs, health support networks, Universities, and a broad range of individuals who recognise IMAS as world leaders in inclusive sport. We deliver theoretical and practical training into clubs, organisations, service providers, and healthcare professionals, reaching thousands of people across Europe every year and we are creating a social movement which can revolutionise the way we think about sport. We would love you to be part of it!

We are delighted to see the exponential growth in rugby, with the MIXAR partners and the IRFU embracing the vision and making sure the rugby family does not leave anyone behind. Rugby has an incredible ethos, based on solidarity, respect, discipline, teamwork, and many grassroots clubs across Europe promote this philosophy with passion. We hope that MIXAR can inspire and support their work through IMAS, affiliating them to a vast network of individuals, clubs and organisations who can be of mutual support throughout the world!

We do acknowledge we are advocating for a radical change in the way we think of, join in and enjoy sports, but the reward awaiting us is a fairer and more equal society, for everyone.

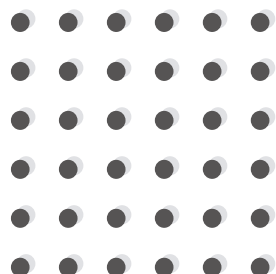
BECOME A SIGNATORY by adding your name and endorsement to the list of people and organisations www.mixedabilitysports.org





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The MIXAR project aims to harness the benefits of collaborative and inclusive partnership working and knowledge exchange to expand the potential of MA Rugby to achieve broad, sustainable, social inclusion outcomes for all participants, both disabled and non-disabled.

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WHAT IS...

MIXED ABILITY RUGBY?

By Maeve D'Arcy - Head Coach Sundays Well Rebels

Sundays Well RFC is home to the first Irish Mixed Ability Rugby Team – Sundays Well Rebels. The team began training together in January 2014 and almost 5 years later have experienced an amazing journey including two International Mixed Ability Rugby Tournaments (IMART) and growing in numbers to four times what we started with.

Anyone playing with the team can't help a smile creeping onto their face when talking about it. For those who have experienced it on the pitch, it's a very simple concept – just another rugby team! But trying to explain what it is and why it works to someone who hasn't experienced it, is much more difficult than you can imagine.

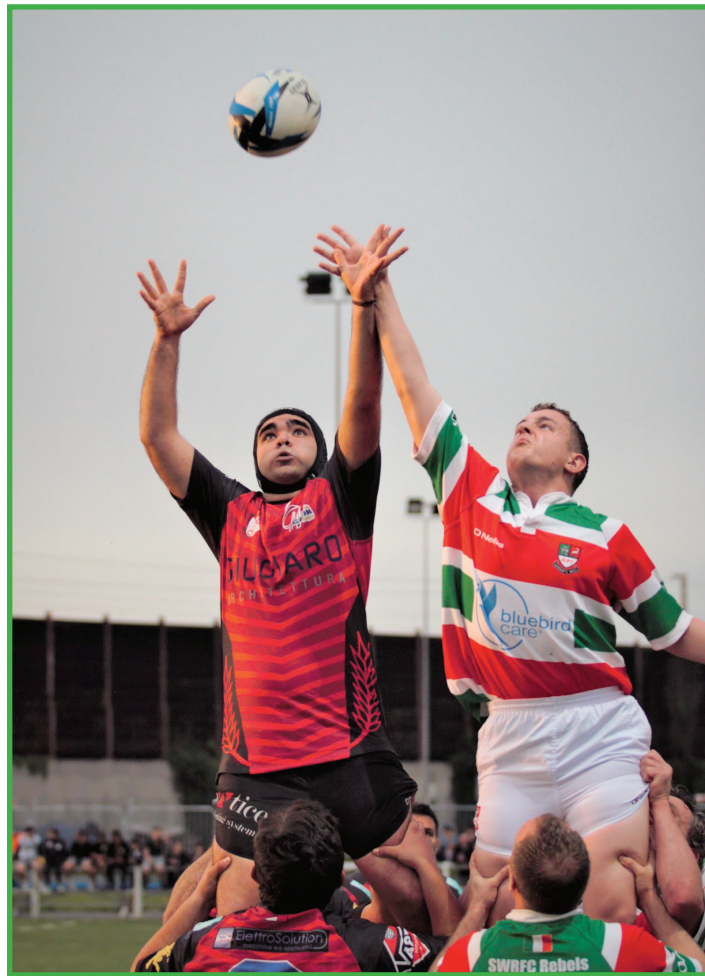
Mixed Ability is a worldwide movement spearheaded by International Mixed Ability Sports (IMAS). IMAS has its roots in Bradford, home to the first English Mixed Ability rugby team. IMAS works to spread the idea of Mixed Ability around the rugby world and transfer it to other sports. The first time I experienced it, I just couldn't understand why there isn't a Mixed Ability team in every sports club in the world! There have been Mixed Ability teams in existence for a long time – Swansea Gladiators in Wales are recognised as the oldest Mixed Ability rugby team and are now in their 26th year. What IMAS have done is spread the word far and wide through education and promotion of the ethos of Mixed Ability in all sports.





For those of you who haven't experienced it first hand, what is the best way to describe it? Just another rugby team! It is not a disability team, players are not classified by physical, intellectual or mental disabilities or barriers. It is a team open to anyone who wants to play regular full contact rugby... for rugby's sake. If you happen to have some form of disability or barrier but want to play regular rugby, then you are more than welcome. The same goes if you have no disability or barrier. Games are played in true rugby spirit where of course you want to win, but either side getting hammered on the scoreboard isn't much fun.

As a coach of a Mixed Ability team, I aim for a one-score game if we can. Like with other teams I have coached if you are ahead in a game you give newer players a good run and if you are behind you might put some stronger players on for longer. Either way, everyone who comes



training gets to play!

With the Rebels, everyone on the squad is expected to participate fully in all aspects of training and games – and that's what players want. It is a regular rugby team where working hard on the pitch, discipline, respect, teamwork and of course the social pints in the clubhouse are all key aspects of the experience. We have a wide variety of players from all backgrounds, like you would find on any rugby team.

Why does Mixed Ability work so well in rugby? Well, rugby has always been the sport for all sorts – all shapes and sizes, and all abilities. That's what made me fall in love with the sport to begin with. So, there is a spot for the big slow guy and a spot for the small fast guy on the same team and both are valued for what they can do. Another factor for why Mixed Ability Rugby has been so successful is that since the sport has turned professional, there are less and less people playing at the lower levels for the pure enjoyment of it.

The public view of rugby as a sport is what we see on TV and social media. Big, strong, fast and muscled! In Ireland, particularly outside of Dublin where many clubs only field one or two adult teams, if you don't want to play at that level then there isn't another option for you. On the Rebels team we have a high percentage of players who had retired from playing at higher levels in the club but have since re-joined the club to play Mixed Ability. Players are predominantly from our own club Sundays Well RFC, but some players travel from all over the greater Cork area to play Mixed Ability rugby with the Well.





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disability team, players
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It is a team open
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rugby's sake >>**



If you go to watch a Mixed Ability game of rugby, what does it look like? Again, just another rugby game. Mixed Ability teams play 'friendly' matches against local sides, Veteran and Social teams. Does anyone get hurt – YES, it's RUBGY!!! Rugby is a contact sport and there is always going to be injuries here and there, more often at training than in games, but that is part and parcel of life for a rugby player. Mixed Ability rugby is the same as social rugby in that it's usually players that know each other and are friends that hit each other the hardest!

Mixed Ability rugby just takes the same format as any other rugby team in a club. The Rebels are an adult Men's Rugby Team and hopefully, when the game grows, we will see Women's and Youths teams develop also. Players are free to join other teams within the club if they suit them better but if you feel you don't have enough experience, might not be good enough, are new to the game or just want to get back to playing for a bit of regular training, team bonding and the occasional rugby tour then a Mixed Ability team is for you.

To truly experience rugby, Mixed Ability has to play the same format as a regular rugby team, and we do. The only law change is uncontested scrums which you often see in social or veteran matches too.

If you want to see rugby played for rugby's sake, then I would encourage you to go take a look at a game of Mixed Ability Rugby and see what it's all about. Even better, grab a pair of boots and experience it on the pitch!



Positions

To start, it usually helps to have more experienced players at 9, 10, maybe 13 and 15 and at least two or up to four in the pack, say at 2, 5, and 8.



Fitness and Mobility

With Mixed Ability teams, it can be a good idea to set-up timed shuttle runs out and back instead of one long run.



Skills

Try and set up games / drills up and down the pitch (in the direction you would play in a game), rather than side to side.



Passing

All the basic passing and handling drills that you use to coach rugby players are what we use in Mixed Ability Rugby too.



Tackling

The large cylinder tackle bags are great for players new to the sport to give them the feel of knocking something over.



<< Remember to coach all players – more experienced players are not necessarily capable of facilitating others in the game. >>



GETTING STARTED

WITH A MIXED ABILITY RUGBY TEAM

By Maeve D'Arcy - Head Coach Sundays Well Rebels

Positions

Mixed Ability Rugby is the same as any other rugby team. Deciding on positions for players can take as little as one look or can take a bit longer to figure out. To start, it usually helps to have more experienced players at 9, 10, maybe 13 and 15 and at least two or up to four in the pack, say at 2, 5, and 8. The make-up of your team will also change as your squad develops and players get a bit more experience.

Remember to coach all players – more experienced players are not necessarily capable of facilitating others in the game. Some players will be great to talk and help those around them. Other players may be very good at rugby but just play their own position. Learning to communicate effectively is also a rugby skill!

Fitness and Mobility

A basic level of cardio fitness is required to play any sport. Aim to build running into games and drills with the ball. If you are doing just running, keep it position specific with front five players doing shorter bursts, back rows and half backs doing medium bursts and outside backs doing longer runs. With Mixed Ability teams, it can be a good idea to set-up timed shuttle runs out and back instead of one long run. The slower players won't get left behind and everyone is working for the same amount of time.

Mobility is also a key factor in rugby as there is a lot of getting up and down off the ground as well as contact. Stuck in the mud is a great game to play with any rugby team. It has movements relevant to rugby and with close contact also helps work on spatial awareness, particularly for those with sensory issues.

Watch out for players new to the game who may struggle with basic mobility movements. For players with reduced shoulder mobility, press-ups are probably not a great exercise. While a press-up is a great exercise if you are reasonably mobile and have some core strength – if you have reduced shoulder mobility it is just going to do more harm than good.

Self-awareness is also key to watch out for. Demonstrating and explaining basic movements like squats and lunges may not be enough for some players to replicate the exercise. Start doing these exercises in pairs in the warm-up, where a more experienced player is paired with a newer player who face each other while doing the exercises. It helps players get to know each other and encourages peer to peer coaching too.

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Skills

Try and set up games / drills up and down the pitch (in the direction you would play in a game), rather than side to side. It can help players with what direction they need to run in and also help them relate the drill to a match situation

Passing

All the basic passing and handling drills that you use to coach rugby players are what we use in Mixed Ability Rugby too. Using tennis balls (or eggs) can be good to improve basic handling skills. Also, varying the width of the pass in lateral passing drills helps improve how to judge the weight of the pass required.

Tackling

In Sundays Well Rebels, all players participate in contact training. Again, the same as with any new players to rugby – teaching the basics of how to go to ground, knee, hip, shoulder and using the key teaching points for tackling are crucial. Breaking down the skills, especially rucking and tackling work well using the same 3-4 key teaching points while demonstrating in slow motion. The large cylinder tackle bags are great for players new to the sport to give them the feel of knocking something over. It helps when working on technique as well as building confidence in the contact. As players progress, still go through the teaching points at every training session but now look to engage the players and get them to give them back to you.

Watch out for Mixed Ability rugby coaching videos coming soon from Sundays Well Rebels.





SCIENTIFIC

Research on the impact of Mixed Ability rugby

By Dr Jen Dyer – University of Leeds

Over the last two years, the University of Leeds has conducted comprehensive research on the impact of Mixed Ability rugby through focus groups and surveys carried out with MA rugby participants in the UK and Italy.

The research has found that the main impacts are:

- Increased in physical activity and the associated physical benefits for participants who previously faced barriers.
- Increased social capital and networks through building closer and more diverse friendships.
- Personal development including increased confidence, skills, empowerment and pride.
- A sense of belonging and community within MA clubs, and associated mental health benefits.
- Positive shifts in perception around ability both for the participants and local community.
- Increased confidence when interacting with people perceived as different to oneself.
- Increased awareness of the value of social difference in society.
- More inclusive rugby clubs which cater for everyone regardless of, for example, ability, disability, age, background, sexuality and skill level.
- Increased numbers of new and returning players, as well as retention of those engaged with the game.
- Promotion of social inclusion far beyond the rugby field.





So, why is MA rugby resulting in these benefits? The research has highlighted key features of the MA Model that promote these benefits at individual, club and community level.

1. The first element is the IMAS peer education and training, which increases awareness around equality and inclusion and offers support for individuals, coaches and clubs that might be anxious about welcoming diversity. The presence of realistic role models that potential participants can relate to also reduces the fear of not being accepted and being perceived as different.

2. Creating a supportive mainstream environment increases social integration between different groups, thereby normalising, and indeed celebrating, social difference. Part of this is promoting club membership rather than a 'drop-in' status for participants, which fosters a sense of equality, belonging and community as well as financial sustainability. This sets it apart from, for example, segregated disability sport provision.

3. Regular, frequent and sustained activity makes building relationships and friendships, as well as fostering a sense of belonging and community, much easier. The MA Model promotes weekly training, regular matches against local community teams, and participation in tours and tournaments. This again, sets it apart from disability sport provision which often happens in time-limited blocks of activity.

4. Promotion of self-determination whereby participants have the freedom to decide whether to assume the risks inherent in playing full contact rugby, rather than alternative formats such as tag or touch. The research shows this is an important element of MA rugby, particularly for disabled people who often are not given this freedom.

You can find the full article on the Social Inclusion journal here:

'A New Model for Inclusive Sports? An Evaluation of Participants' Experiences of Mixed Ability Rugby' <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion/article/view/908> or if you want to know more you can email Dr Jen Dyer at j.dyer@leeds.ac.uk





MIXAR BENEFITS

1

Increases awareness around equality and inclusion and offers support for individuals, coaches and clubs that might be anxious about welcoming diversity.



Creating a supportive mainstream environment increases social integration between different groups, thereby normalising, and indeed celebrating, social difference. Part of this is promoting club membership rather than a 'drop-in' status for participants.

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Regular, frequent and sustained activity makes building relationships and friendships, as well as fostering a sense of belonging and community, much easier. The MA Model promotes weekly training, regular matches against local community teams, and participation in tours and tournaments.

Promotion of self-determination whereby participants have the freedom to decide whether to assume the risks inherent in playing full contact rugby, rather than alternative formats such as tag or touch.

4



THE MIXAR PROYECT IN...

CELEBRATING THE FIRST OFFICIAL MIXED ABILITY MATCH IN ITALY!

The Sunday's Well Rebels are the first Irish Mixed Ability team, made up of very good players, some of them with a glorious past in the first team, others are veterans that wore the club's jersey for many years, but they also include players of all abilities or new to the game. As our stories are similar, we thought to send them an invitation to tour Italy last May and celebrate the first official Mixed Ability match fully sanctioned by FIR in Italy!

The idea immediately gathered the support of the local community. Settimo Torino Rugby, the mainstream rugby team who is going through the Mixed Ability Accreditation process with IMAS and owns the pitches where Chivasso Rugby train, contributed financially to pay for the flights of the team from Cork. The Italian Red Cross and Settimo Torinese City Council gave maximum availability for supporting internal transports. Dozens of volunteers in Turin gave up their time to organize the game, prepare the meals and make sure the educational conference about the Mixed Ability model took place. The game between Chivasso Rugby and the Irish was incredibly tough, competitive but fair, releasing an incredible positive energy (and few bruises!). The spectators were surely able to enjoy a real rugby match, as witnessed by an amused Daniele Pacini, project manager of Mixar, and Ian McKinley, Irish-born Italian international, who took part in the warm-up session but didn't want to risk his career playing against Cork's "other" Red Army!





The event was so outstanding that we are planning the rematch (because the Rebels won the game) for May 2019. It would be amazing to meet the Rebels in Belgium, where the next MIXAR meeting is due, hosted by Rugby Vlaanderen. This would also be an incredible opportunity celebrate one year to go before the opening match of the 3rd International Mixed Ability Rugby Tournament in Cork, and to strengthen our commitment to change society through Mixed Ability rugby, education and sport.





THE MIXAR PROYECT IN...

CORK MEETING, FROM THE RUGBY PITCH TO EMPLOYMENT

As part of the program of events for the MIXar project, Italian consultancy and training organisation PerFormare led a focus group on Disability Diversity and Business in conjunction with fellow project partners, Irelands Sundays Well Rebels.

The focus group was held as a precursor to the Cork MIXar Transnational meeting on the 1st of November 2018. The group were hosted by the Ability@Work department of Cork based intellectual disability service provider Cope Foundation.

The group members went from employee to employer and in between the representatives of agencies that support diversity in the work place. The group focused on examples of inclusion in the work place local to Cork and Ireland. It showed how inclusion in the work place can reflect that of the example of Mixed Ability sports.

Focus group participant Jason has been in employment in a housekeeping role for a busy tourist hostel in Cork City for the past three years. Jason has received support from intellectual disability service provider Cope Foundation and from a disability case officer from the Irish Government Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Liam, fellow focus group member and Jason's employer has also received support from both agencies in employing Jason.





Representing specialist agencies Paul, a service manager with Cope Foundation detailed barriers faced by people with disabilities in entering the labour market. During the focus group he outlined what disability services are doing to support people to gain employment. Job coaches, jobs clubs and work preparation courses both certified and uncertified by education providers are on offer to people with disabilities. With all of the support on offer the key to successful employment is follow up support for both employee and employer especially in understanding disabilities.

As well as offering case officers for people with disabilities the Irish Government through the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection also have incentives and support for employers for employing a person with a disability. The government also allow a person with who is receiving a state disability payment to work and earn €120 before it has an impact on their rate of payment and secondary benefits.



"From the 1st December 2018, the medical card earnings disregard for persons in receipt of Disability Allowance will be significantly increased, from €120 to €427 per week and will apply to the assessment process for both single persons and to family assessments.

This increase of more than 250% means that the earnings of someone in receipt of Disability Allowance that can be disregarded under the medical card assessment process has increased from €6,240 a year to €22,204."

Also in attendance local case officer Dermot, explained the supports available from interview interpreters, job coaching, work place adaption/equipment grants, wage subsidy scheme and disability awareness training. The work place adaption/equipment grants support inclusive work places by granting financial support for such items as oversized computer screens or adaptations to the work place for accessibility.

The wage subsidy scheme provides financial incentives to private sector employers to employ people with a disability who work 21 hours per week or more, up to a maximum of 39 hours per week. 2600 people avail of the wage subsidy scheme in Ireland and 350 of those reside in the Cork region.

Out of all the discussions in the Cork focus group, it consistently reverted back to the benefits of inclusion in the work place. The benefits outweigh whatever obstacles are there for a person with a disability gaining employment or an employer offering that employment opportunity. Diversity in work and in sport will have the greatest impact on humanity as we all strive to find our way on our personal journeys.



From Front Row Sea

Tom, a profoundly deaf player

« Being involved
in sport helps me
by increasing my
general happiness
whilst also giving
me the opportunity
to make
new friends »



I wanted the club to start a Mixed Ability team, so I could actually participate. Following a presentation from IMAS (International Mixed Ability Sports) the sessions started in October,

It's a great way to make friends, have a laugh and generally a happy place!

I'm happy whilst I'm playing and find it has built up my confidence. Afterwards I feel tired!

F SUCCESS...

Tom to Front Row Forward

Player with cerebral palsy



As a profoundly deaf player with cerebral palsy Tom may have felt that contact rugby wasn't going to be a possibility. However, it is just 3 months since his first training session and he has already represented Derby RFC in a full contact match and visited Sixways Stadium with the rest of the Derby Bucks MA team.

International Mixed Ability Sports Project Manager, Mike Hawkes, sat down with Tom to find out more about how Mixed Ability has given him the opportunity to participate in the sport he loves.

So, Tom, how and why did you start playing MA Rugby?

I'm very passionate about rugby and have been attending Derby RFC to support the 1st XV for a number of years. Because of this I wanted the club to start a Mixed Ability team, so I could actually participate. Following a presentation from IMAS (International Mixed Ability Sports) the sessions started in October,





I've already played in a community fixture in Worcester and had my first full contact fixture on the 8th December in Northampton.

What is it that you most enjoy about the team?

I like being healthy and enjoy running. I'm excited about the prospect of the new Derby Mixed Ability team as I enjoy throwing the ball and getting involved in the contact elements like scrummaging and tackling. I enjoy the higher level of MA Rugby as it pushes me to be better.

How does being a member of Derby Bucks MA team help in your everyday life?

Being involved in sport helps me by increasing my general happiness whilst also giving me the opportunity to make new friends. I'm happy whilst I'm playing and find it has built up my confidence. Afterwards I feel tired!



How important is it that your friends and family get involved?

It's great to have the support of my family, my brother Adam attends a lot of the sessions and helps the coach out. I also remember that dad used to enjoy rugby before he passed away so it's nice to have that connection. My staff help a lot by providing travel to the sessions, support during the session and interpreting some of the coaches' instructions.

What would you say to other people who might be thinking about joining an MA team?

They should get involved, it's a great way to make friends, have a laugh and is generally a happy place!

Thanks to Adam, Tom's brother, who signed the questions and answers during this interview!



A CASE OF SUCCESS...

Rugby as therapy for all

As a father of two sons diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) I discovered how their invisible disability influences their thinking and handling and how the world around them sees this differently.

My youngest son (T.) changed four times from school over a period of three years (between his fifth and eighth birthday) because of restructuring in the educational system. In that phase he had to leave three sportclubs and two youth clubs because of "not wanted behavior/being quirky". If we - as parents - informed the club in advance about his diagnose, he was refused. If we didn't inform the club in advance, then there was a need "to have a meeting" after two sessions. This period had a huge impact on his emotional balance and his self image.

As a father I sought way to stay in balance and ended up as a player in rugbyclub Hasselt. The five values of rugby (fairplay, friendship, passion, respect and discipline) attracted me and I felt how, beside physical health, this brought me also emotional health. My son said he wanted to give it a try.

To protect T. from further disappointments, I joined the U8-training in consultation with the governing board of the club. Not as a coach but as a helping hand (preparing the next exercise,...) and functioning as an interpreter between T. and the coach. Some subtle changes are easier to detect for a parent and in that way there is room to respond more accurate and subtle for the coach during the training.

Slowly but steady this became a positive story for T. thanks to the open mindset of the governing board. Because a coach took on another challenge, I was asked if I would join the training as a coach if I got support in the do's and don'ts. This year I'm doing the IRB level 2 coaching and just succeeded in an postgraduate degree in autism.

With this background the U8, U10 and U12 works inclusive. All are welcome (big, small, muscled, agile, ...) as long as you're willing to follow the five core values . The club doesn't profiles it self as "an inclusive sports club" because we're "just another rugby club". The "universal design"-rule is applicated to make this work. If everyone does the same exercise, then there are no "special needs". Visualisation where to run, throw,... . Short instructions, game-based not drill-based, positive reinforcement, In fact, nothing new for the seasoned coaches.





«During tournaments, nobody notices the "special needs". The players practice fair play, the parents show respect to all players, they have the discipline to be at the trainingen and tournaments but most of all, the passion in their eyes shows when they are on the pitch »»

In september 2017, we had a lot new players in the club. There were no questions about any "problems". At Halloween, we had a report for every player, mentioning the strong points and the points in which we would grow together. In that way we created an triologue with the player, parents and coach/club to pick up necessary details for the evolution of the player. We then started a WhattsApp-group to bond the parents and make the social net bigger.



The five values of rugby (fairplay, friendship, passion, respect and discipline) attracted me and I felt how, besides physical health, this brought me also emotional health.



The U8, U10 and U12 works inclusive. All are welcome (big, small, muscled, agile, ...) as long as you're willing to follow the five core values .



The club (rugbyclub Hasselt) doesn't profiles it self as "inclusive sports club" because we're "just another rugby club".



One of these new players had a backpack before he joined up with Rugbyclub Hasselt. The parents of "Q." had a long search to find him a fitting sport. They saw he was not very agile, didn't see him in a teamsport (Q. kicked next to a ball, couldn't catch one, had difficulties to keep his balance, writing was nearly a mission impossible in the beginning). After consulting a physiotherapist, the diagnose was a slow lateralization (the determination of the dominant hemisphere in the brain, a neuro-locomotive disability). The following is a testimony from the parents.



"In time, the lateralization will autocorrect, but meanwhile he's building up backlog on different domains and he loses self confidence and motivation. At that time school was already a torture to Q. and it was remarked in his behaviour. He thought that he was bad at everything, a stupid person. Because he didn't had much exercise he gained a lot of weight and that felt ... heavy on him.

Q. tried chess, swimming and athletics until he saw a flyer from Rugbyclub Hasselt. from his first training on, he was enthusiastic. Q. is firm, quiet strong and he found a sport where those qualities are appreciated. He is not very agile but during the trainings its was highlighted that a good team needed all sorts of players and that his contribution is also important.

Suddenly there was something he was good at. But he held back because he dropped a ball from time to time and saw this as being the weakest link. It was made clear to all team members that a ball that was dropped a problem is for the team that has to be fixed together. this made Q. feel secure. He could give it his best without worrying that his mistakes would backfire on him. Q. - who always thought he wasn't good at anything - started to speak in a positive way : 'I think I made a good sidestep during training', 'I made some good tackles today". Totally unexpected to us, Q. asked if he could participate in a tournament. How I see it is that, in rugby, the trainers are trained to focus on the sportive aspect but with a very heavy accent on the rugby values which reflects in their trainings. Rugby should be fun, played together, with friends. That social part is very important to Q. In the group is a safe friendly environment and Q. needs that (and I think most children).

As the coach, in the beginning of the season, I deliberately skipped a tournament with the team to work on their self confidence. From then on we went to all the tournaments within range. Some players even went to the "Haka rugby clinic" at Rugbyclub Antwerpen. The parents from different players made a carpool system to make this possible. Q. was one of them and he proudly performed the Haka.

During tournaments, nobody notices the "special needs". The players practice fair play, the parents show respect to all players, they have the discipline to be at the trainingen and tournaments but most of all, the passion in their eyes shows when they are on the pitch. The friendship they give each other supports them when someone has a tough moment.

"Just another rugbyteam" is an often used quote within the MIXAR-project. Using the values of rugby and working together with the parents there will be a strong interaction from which the qualities of the player wil be highlighted.





NEWS

MIXED ABILITY RUGBY FOR ALL



H-Bomb Trophy

Bumble Bees vs Llanelli Warriors

On February the 22nd, the Bumble Bees RUFC will travel to Wales to play their annual fixture against the Llanelli Warriors in what is the oldest Mixed Ability rugby international match. It's in fact tradition for the two teams to compete for the H-Bomb Trophy on the same weekend which sees England and Wales battling out in the 6 Nations. The first match dates back to 2011 and it's now on its 9 year, with both teams having won the trophy 4 times each. So far, the hosting team have always prevailed, with the Bumbles clinching the title in a very hard-fought match last summer. Can this be the first time a touring team go back home with the cup? Can the Bumbles retain the H-Bomb? If you are in Wales that weekend, come along and don't miss one of the biggest clashes in the Mixed Ability world!



IMART 2020

Cork, 7th to 12th of June 2020

The International Mixed Ability Rugby Tournament (IMART) – the world cup for Mixed Ability clubs organised by IMAS and hosted by Sundays Well RFC – will be held in Cork (Ireland) between the 7th and the 12th of June 2020. The Tournament, now in its 3rd edition, aims to raise the aspirations of people with learning and physical disabilities irrespective of creed, colour, class or ability, bonding people from all walks of life with a mutual respect, camaraderie and understanding of each other's strengths and frailties. We are expected more than 720 players, 24 teams from at least 14 nations for five days of full-contact rugby, friendship and fun! Expressions of interest will be open soon, for more information follow IMART on Twitter @IMART_worldcup or Facebook.



Rugby kit Appeal

An app to send equipment to MIXAR in Belarus



During the month of December the players on the Sundays Well Rebels team launched a social media appeal to the rugby playing community to help send kit and equipment to a Mixed Ability team starting up in Belarus.

Dema Shabetsko a Belarusian volunteer with the Irish charity The Chernobyl Children's Trust was so impressed by the Rebels and Mixed Ability rugby, that he travelled Cork to train with the former world champs. Dema will return later this season to get his coaching certification.

Impressed with his determination to set up Belarus's first Mixed Ability rugby team the Rebels wanted to give him a helping hand. With one post on social media, generous offers of jerseys, shorts, training kit and rugby equipment flooded in. The ethos and values of rugby are more often than not witnessed off of the playing field as pledges of full team kits and equipment were received. The wider rugby community in Cork as well as the Mixed Ability fraternity like the oldest established team the Swansea Gladiators along with English sides Worcester Warriors and Bradford & Bingley Bumbles Bee's also stepped in with their support.

We look forward to seeing the future developments of Mixed Ability rugby in Belarus. This is further proof of the positive impact of inclusive sports.

Los Hidalgos Tournament

Rugby for all in Spain

MIXAR Rugby is growing faster and faster in Spain, and it's becoming one of the best news for rugby on this country. Clubs and regional unions are understanding the importance of MIXAR teams, who saw the rugby values on a special way and make a really important social impact.

El Quijote RC organised the past November the Inclusive Tournament "Los Hidalgos", where four teams (UR Almería, CR El Salvador, Hernani and the own Hidalgos) played really good rugby and had an amazing time together.

Also, they enjoy a fantastic third half, with a barbecue that flew from the table in a record time!





Brancaleoni tournament

An integrate rugby experience for adult



In September 2018 hot on the heels of the experience with the children and wanting to continue the journey, we started the "Brancaleoni" tournament an integrate rugby experience for adult.

This example sees the integration between disabled and non-disabled players on an equal footing and with full contact. This promotes health, fairness, belonging and social cohesion and goes against segregation and stereotypes about disability. In the sense, rugby's main values, team-work, integrity, respect, solidarity and passion, come together with this vision of a fully-inclusive-society multiculturalism, social inclusion, sense of belonging, equal opportunities and equality are all distinctive traits of the project we are working on. We are currently working on formalizing national integrate rugby network along with sports club and voluntary associations in Italy.

The first "Brancaleoni" integrated rugby tournament took place in Sיעי, Florence

following the Mixar project and financed with European funding. This project sees the participation of the Italian rugby federations as a leading bodying the promotion of integrated rugby through special training and the exchange of good practice. The tournament organised by Polisportiva Sיעי ASD Valdisieve Rugby saw the presence of the Italian rugby federation with the president of the tuscan regional committee Riccardo Buonaccorsi. There was also strong support from public administration with the presence of the mayor, Monica Marini.

This was a day of sport and celebration. The athletes from Valdisieve club participated along with the club Invictus Prato, Ribolliti, Old Firenze 1931, a representative of allusions rugby peatland Unione Rugby Capitolina of Roma, Croce Azzurra Pontassieve and the "Unopertutti" associations took part, both having been involved for a long time in the project for the integration of children with cognitive disability into youth rugby teams.

This tournament signals the start of a new journey, that of "Brancaleoni" the aim is to give continuity to this experience with the children. "It was a good day and an important one - said Lorenzo Fortuna of the Valdisieve rugby club - it shows that rugby, with its strong value of support, solidarity and team spirit, can promote the skills and capability of each individual, helping them to cross the barriers and fight the stigma of disability, helping to stop isolation and to create true moments of sociality".



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