

For Immediate Release

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Sebastian River High School Girls' Rugby Team Is Making History

SEBASTIAN, Fla. - The Sebastian River High School girls' varsity rugby team is making history as the first-ever high school varsity girls' rugby team in the nation.

The team, which kicked off its first six-match season in October, was featured in the October issue of *High School Today* magazine, a publication of the National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS).

Robert F. Kanaby, Executive Director of the NFHS, was quoted in the article, saying: "The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) applauds Sebastian River High School for its efforts to provide yet another opportunity for girls to participate in high school sports by offering the sport of rugby".

At tomorrow night's game in Shark Stadium, representatives from USA Rugby, are coming from Boulder, Colo., to receive, on behalf of Sebastian River High School and the School District of Indian River County, the game ball used in the very first high school varsity girls rugby match in the United States, signed by all of the Sebastian River High School team players. In addition, a company that produces documentaries will be there to interview coaches and players as well as capture video footage for a documentary they will produce. The game starts at 8:00 p.m.

Rugby, which is very popular in Australia and Europe, is catching on in the United States, particularly in Florida, and Sebastian River has openly invited athletic directors from within the FHSAA or FACA to this match on Saturday free of charge to get a feel for the game.

Sebastian River High School Athletic Director, Michael Stutzke, said the interest for the sport was evident, and Principal, Dr. Peggy Jones, was supportive. So, he worked with USA Rugby's Emerging Sports department to bring the first full contact sport opportunity for girls at the interscholastic level in the United States, to Sebastian River High School. This is not the first time Sebastian River High School administrators have been open to the possibility of bringing emerging sports opportunities to their students. A few years ago, rowing and bowling teams were formed and both have done extremely well.

"This is a great athletic opportunity for girls at our high school, and we hope to inspire other schools to start rugby programs," said Stutzke.

The team joins nearly 150 girls' club programs in the United States, at the high school age level. Unlike the Sebastian River High varsity team, club teams are composed of girls from different schools. USA Rugby supplements the SRHS team, providing start-up uniforms, game and practice equipment. The coaching staff volunteers their time, and transportation for the team is paid for with game receipts.

There are currently thirty girls on the team, which is coached by Allan Dobson, who brings extensive experience as a rugby coach. Assistant coaches are Angelica Cuellar and Mellissa Smith. Team members are: Lily Lauger, Devin Hamilton, Allison Brombach, Ramani Apple, Emilia Hakansson, Melanie Brown, Ali MacGillivray, Katelyn Ward, Brittany Bernhard, Steffanie Espat, Christina Kellerman, Vididriana Salinas, Elisa Cuellar, Teagan Coyle, Ryan Beigal, Jessica Gasparik, Jenilyn Hanna, Emily Sweeny, Hanna Cole, Laura Dale, Amanda Martin, Chrisie Reno, Anna Niewiadomski, Jessica Miller, Nicole Weber, Brittany Faria, Kristie Anderson, and Amber Cook.

For more information about USA Rugby, visit <http://www.usarugby.org>. To see the schedule for the SRHS Girls' Varsity Rugby Team, please visit their website at: <http://sites.indianriverschools.org/SRHS/>. Or for more information contact Patty Vasquez, Public Information Officer, at 772-564-3216.