

The Rise of Rugby

Rugby rose from the grounds of a schoolyard into a global industry pulling in millions of players and fans each year.

As the story goes, a student at Rugby School in the 1820s ran with the ball in a game of footie and accidentally created rugby itself. Of course, a lot of development and rule tweaking happened over the years and the game stayed an amateur sport for decades until 1995 when the game was first made to be 'openly professional'. Rugby had spread internationally by this point and the first game between England and Scotland was in 1871. Outside of the UK, France and Argentina were among the first to form their own clubs courtesy of British residents and travellers, who then took the game on to other European countries.

Interestingly, there are also early records of women's rugby dating back to the late 19th century too. Irish icon Emily Valentine is considered 'the first lady of rugby' as, at just ten years old, she was the first recorded female player. Her brothers needed an extra player in 1887 and she dutifully shed her coat and hat to join the fray. This was not the only time she played, either, enjoying practices and games throughout her school years.

A lot still needs to be done to support women in sport and indeed, the Women's Rugby Football Union in England was only established in 1983. This change needs to come across the board but why not start at home; Dartford Valley RFC Roses accept players from under 10 to over 18s, and put a strong focus on making sure there's equal support between their men's/boys' and women's/girls' teams.

Take this as your sign to go along and try out something different with a team who were recently promoted to Championship South East 2! Get in touch via info@dartfordrugbyclub.co.uk or visit www.dartfordrugby.com for more.

As mentioned, Dartford Valley RFC also have a host of men's and boys' teams on offer so you can let the little ones blow off steam and learn team skills or find yourself a new band of brothers united in the love of the game. Team sports offer a fantastic way to keep fit and socialise with your neighbours in ways you might not access elsewhere.

If you don't want to play, you can still show your support by attending matches and following the teams on Facebook **@DartfordRugby**. Supporting your grassroots rugby team helps keep the sport alive and improves opportunities for players near and far.

by Nicola Jacobs