



News Release

For immediate release

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Minnesota Rugby Players Get National Recognition

Fund Raising Drive for Players attending National and International Events

Twin Cities, Minnesota – January 2008 – Although the local rugby season will not start until April 2008, there has been plenty of activity for many players from Minnesota. Several of Minnesota's players have been involved with the US National select Eagles teams.

Kristin Zdanczewicz of the Minnesota Valkyries was chosen for the U.S. Women's National team for a three game tour of England in December 5-17, 2007. She was also selected as team Captain for the tour. "Besides being an instrumental player in the 2006 World Cup, she is a product of the U-23 program. Kristin is a top rated flanker for the Minnesota Valkyries," US Coach Flores said. Kristin scored one of the three US tries in a 34-17 loss to the England A squad.

Katie Johnson, 16, a Hopkins player, has played several games for US women's squads since the tender age of 15. She recently returned from Nashville, TN after playing for the USA U-17 squad in the U-20 Inter-territorial Tourney featuring seven select teams from around the USA.

The Johnson family has another rugby star in Katie's older brother Nick. He was a key player in the US Eagles U-19 team that took part in the World Championships held in Belfast, Ireland last summer. Nick was also the captain of the Minnesota U-19 select team that had a tournament record of 8-2 last year. He has just returned from another tour in Ireland where he played three matches for the US National U-20 team.

Most of the National tours are partly, but not fully funded. For example, some players have to pay a \$500 tour fee for some accommodations, plus buy their own domestic airfare to wherever the team assembly point city is located. MARF, the Minnesota Amateur Rugby Foundation, has as one of its primary goals to provide grants to help offset some of these

costs. "Our main goal is to develop the sport of rugby through the development of youth players in Minnesota," commented Rob Clarno, MARF President. "We help create many programs but it is always a bonus when we can financially support players representing the state at the International level."

MARF is currently in the midst of a major fund raising drive and is looking for corporate and private sponsors to build the \$100,000 annual funding required to support these programs. For information on these programs and tax-exempt sponsorships please check the MARF web site at <http://www.marfrugby.org/> or e-mail Paul Johnson, financial director at paulejohnson1@msn.com.

"Hey, thanks for the money I had a great time in Tennessee. We played three games and lost one against the mid-west. I met a lot more girls that were closer to my age, and that I will hopefully be playing with for many years to come. Thanks again it was a fabulous trip," noted Katie Johnson after her last tournament.

The MN select U-19 team has also has more success with two players being selected for National teams, Jordan Judd, Rogers for the U-17 Eagles and Andrew Hanske, Minnetonka for the U-19 squad. Hanske will be playing in Florida for the U-19 team against Canada and Wales this coming June.

Coaches have also been busy getting ready for the new season. Dave Shepherdson, head coach of the MN select U-20 boy's team, was recently invited as a guest coach to the National U-18 boys training and selection session in Arizona. 63 players from around the US were brought together for skills development and for the selection of the US U-18 squad for 2008. All the Minnesota High School, College and club teams are currently busy registering players for the upcoming season.

About the Minnesota Amateur Rugby Foundation (MARF)

The Minnesota Amateur Rugby Foundation (MARF) is a charitable foundation committed to fostering, and supporting the development of national and international amateur rugby in Minnesota. Since its inception the foundation has maintained a 501(C)3 status as a charitable organization. This provides for the raising and distribution of tax-exempt funds in support of local youth rugby programs, referees, and toward players representing Minnesota in National and International competition.



Katie Johnson (with ball, then 15) playing for the US Eagles against the England U-19 women's team in 2007