



# BUCS RUGBY LEAGUE IMPACT REPORT

2024-25 Season





# FOREWARD

*Rugby League has always been more than a sport; it's a vehicle for community, resilience, inclusion, and personal growth. Nowhere is this clearer than within our Universities, where the sport continues to shape student experiences both on and off the field.*

*This impact report showcases the vital role Rugby League plays across higher education institutions, from developing leadership skills and physical wellbeing to unlocking pathways into coaching, volunteering, and professional sport. At the heart of this progress is the evolving partnership between the Rugby Football League (RFL) and British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS). Together, we are committed to growing participation, enhancing the quality of competition, and ensuring our game is as inclusive and representative as possible. Our collaboration has already resulted in strengthened structures, increased visibility, and greater opportunities for students from all backgrounds to engage with the game.*

*This report reflects the positive change made possible when National Governing Bodies, Universities, and students work together with a shared purpose. As we look to the future, our commitment remains clear: to ensure Rugby League continues to thrive in higher education and to support the next generation of players, leaders, and advocates of the game.*

**Tom Brindle**

**RFL Head of Growth and Women's Super League General Manager**



# PARTICIPATION



## MALE



## FEMALE



**1,400** PLAYERS

**235** FIXTURES

**39** INSTITUTIONS **49** TEAMS

**85%** FIXTURE COMPLETION  
RATE



**187** PLAYERS

**2 X 9S** TOURNAMENTS

**11 TEAMS** PARTICIPATING ACROSS THE  
2 TOURNAMENTS

## WOMEN'S WINTER LEAGUE

**2<sup>ND</sup>** SEASON

**47%** FIXTURE INCREASE FROM  
23-24 SEASON





# SUCCESS MALE - NATIONAL LEAGUE



The introduction of the national league was brilliant. It allowed for much more competition within the league.

*Student*



I have really enjoyed my experience this year as it has been a competitive season and have had the opportunity to travel and play all over the country

*Student*

**100% COMPLETION RATE**  
INCREASE FROM **88.3%** IN 2023-24

SEASON

**MENS END OF SEASON SURVEY**

**OVERALL LEAGUE EXPERIENCE**



**TOURNAMENT EXPERIENCE**



We've enjoyed the experience of playing quality, experienced opposition on a more regular basis. The level of competition has improved and as result we've worked really hard to meet the demand

*Mark Sloan, Loughborough University*

It's raised the standard of competition and provided our players with consistent, high-quality fixtures. , it's also strengthened our partnerships with Leeds Rhinos and other Super League and Championship clubs,

*Mark Butterill, Leeds Beckett University*



# SUCCESS FEMALE - SPOTLIGHTS



**NAJWA FADZIL**

## **UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER**

Najwa was born in Malaysia but came to Manchester for University. Having never played Rugby League before, Najwa picked up the sport to make friends.

Najwa is a Muslim woman and has inspired other Muslim women to join the sport. Due to the rule changes with Rugby League, Najwa is able to play whilst still practising her faith.



**FREYA TURNER**

## **UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL**

From picking up Rugby League at University to now playing for Leigh Leopards, Freya's journey is all about where hard work, determination and passion can take you. Balancing a law conversion course while playing for both Leigh and Liverpool, she puts in the graft on and off the pitch.



**LILY WEBSTER**

## **UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

Lily started playing Rugby League at the age of 12, representing the North West. Whilst playing at University, Lily became president of the club whilst also playing for 3 different teams.

Lily believes the opportunity to play Rugby League at University is essential for the growth within the women's game as it exposes the sport to people who have never heard of it.



# FINDINGS - MEN'S END OF SEASON SURVEY



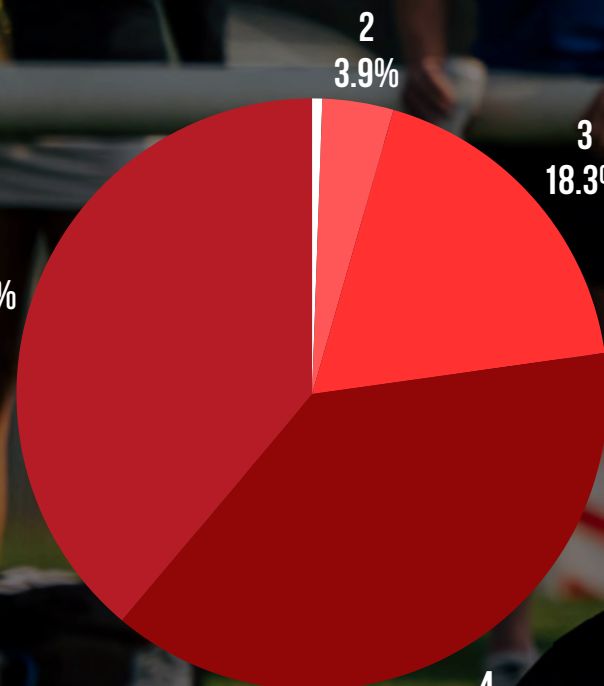
OVERALL RUGBY LEAGUE  
EXPERIENCE AT UNIVERSITY  
(1=LOWEST, 5= HIGHEST)

**182 COMPLETED SURVEYS**  
= **12.3%** OF REGISTERED ATHLETES

OVERALL 9S EXPERIENCE AT  
UNIVERSITY  
(1=LOWEST, 5= HIGHEST)

**53% DID NOT PLAY RL**

**BEFORE JOINING UNIVERSITY**



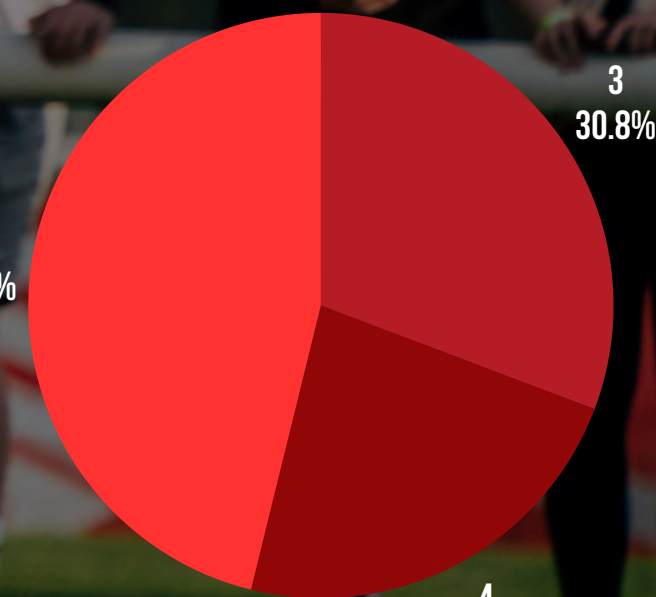
It was the best part of my uni experience.



I've watched since a child but always played union. This year I started playing league and it's been one of the best years of rugby in my life.



Great inclusivity and level.





# FINDINGS - WOMEN'S END OF SEASON SURVEY



**102 COMPLETED SURVEYS**  
**= 52.5% OF REGISTERED ATHLETES**



**73% ARE NEW TO THE SPORT**



**53% DID NOT PLAY DURING THE**  
**23-24 SEASON**



**58% HAVE BEEN PLAYING FOR**  
**ONE YEAR OR LESS**



Very welcoming sport, especially for beginners. It's a very respectful sport too. Found playing the sport and training a lot of fun. Made incredible friends.



Made amazing friends, built strength and fitness and enjoyed learning the game. It's helped me balance my life. It provides me with a competitive outlet and a community who supports me.



The best sport to play at uni. The coaches are so supportive and the girls are incredible.



So glad the sport is getting more support. The season has been great to meet other women from other uni's.





# CASE STUDIES



## UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM MEN'S 1'S

Nottingham's Men's 1's have had their most successful season to date. They went unbeaten in all of their games, resulting in winning the National Trophy and gaining promotion to the National League, which subsequently now has teams in the North-East, West Yorkshire, East Midlands, Leicestershire and South-West. Additionally, 3 of their players were selected to represent England Uni's.



## UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL WOMEN'S

Liverpool Women have had an extremely successful year, especially following the challenges they have faced throughout the season. At the start of the year their coach unexpectedly passed and they had ongoing issues with resources and facilities. Despite these challenges they had a full squad for every game and made it to the Winter League final for the second year in a row.

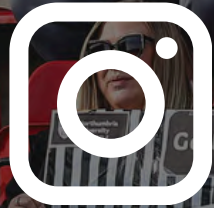


## LUCAS SEALE - LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY

Lucas is in his 5<sup>th</sup> year as a match official. His motivations to become an official came after seeing all the opportunities that would be available. Proving where this can take him, standout moments in his career are refereeing the National Championship final at BUCS Big Wednesday and being the touch judge during the Women's Challenge Cup at Wembley.



# DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT



Instagram (@universityrl) saw a 271% follower increase from November 2022. A 50% increase since the 23-24 season.



Our best performing Instagram post showcased the 9s Championships in October 2024. This gained 283 likes and reached 10.8k accounts.



Our best performing collab was with BUCS featuring the BUCS Big Wednesday Leeds Beckett Champions video. Gaining 1.8k likes and getting 59k views.



BUCS Play continues to house rugby league fixtures, results, clubs, leagues and other features to provide quick and easy access to members.



# OUR 2024 - 25 TARGETS



## ELEVATE AND STABILISE THE MEN'S PROGRAMME

National League successfully implemented into BUCS.  
11 institutions received the Men's Development Fund



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

41 students from 6 different institutions attended a student official course



## SUPPORT THE GROWTH AND PARTICIPATION IN THE WOMEN'S GAME

Women's Winter league increased opportunities to play.  
2 x 9s tournaments took place





# 2025 - 26 LOOKING AHEAD



## WOMEN'S- ELEVATE COMPETITIVENESS AND PERFORMANCE

8 teams participating in the 9s  
tournaments.

8 teams participating consistently in the  
league with both home and away games  
taking place.

## WOMEN'S- SUPPORT AWARENESS AND INTRODUCTION OF THE GAME

The continuation of Women's  
development days to provide a safe  
introduction to the sport.

## WOMEN'S- LONG TERM

Introduction of BUCS offering.

## MEN'S- IMPROVE LEAGUE HEALTH ACROSS ALL LEAGUES

Coaches and captains briefings for all  
leagues.

Best practise workshops delivered.

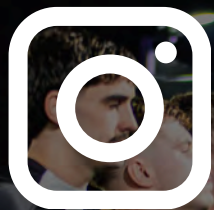
## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Continued CPD opportunities for  
students.

Use social media to increase awareness  
of non-playing pathways.







Instagram @universityrl



Facebook - University Rugby League



X (Twitter) @UniversityRL

## CONTACT US

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