

ROUNDERS SPORT REVIEW PROPOSAL PREPARED

BY *(Rounders England)* | *(3/8/2021)* **CYCLE THREE**



SUMMARY

This proposal has been prepared by the National Governing Body (NGB), Rounders England, based on consultation and insight from our current and future University playing community.

The purpose of the proposal is to provide the strategic alignment between BUCS and Rounders England and evidence of need as to why Rounders would be a positive addition to the BUCS competition framework.

The proposal will also consider the resource implications to BUCS, institutions and students, the wider impact of offering Rounders within the BUCS framework, complimented by relevant key performance indicators for the first year of development through to the 3 year review period.

The proposal seeks for BUCS to;

- 1) Include regular central venue league competitions, mixed gender, from 2022/23. This will be offered as a progression from the current Rounders tour format delivered by Rounders England.
- 2) Adopt a Championship event as the conclusion of the regional leagues with the Champions and runners up from each receiving an invitational to enter.

The majority of students arrive at University with a positive affinity and experience of playing Rounders from school, providing our sport with an advantage of knowing that students are comfortable and familiar with our match play, ready to become engaged with the sport. "I used to love playing Rounders" is a statement we acknowledge on a regular basis, becoming a BUCS sport allows more people to continue their love of playing Rounders during their University experience.

Rounders is a sport that is commonly played across genders and age groups, with the current University rounders offer being played as mixed gender squads. This proposal will reflect that Rounders is a naturally inclusive sport and Rounders England is committed to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate, should they wish to. We aim to ensure that all participants have a positive and enjoyable experience of rounders in a safe environment regardless of age, ability or disability, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation or socio-economic background.

Our competition proposal aims to capture participants that would not usually have the opportunity to compete in their chosen sport and to the level of competition being offered. In our recent student survey over 90% of respondents joined the Rounders club at their University for friendship, this is closely aligned to what we found in our 2020 community survey. Further analysis of the survey results evidenced that not only do students want play Rounders to develop friendships, integrating into their University community but to also compete for and represent their University.

Our consultation with Universities has lead us to find common ground and a unified belief that offering Rounders as a BUCS sport will engage a new participant to the BUCS programme. Rounders England will support Universities to offer a quality and engaging inter mural competition to reinforce the development of the sport pathway in Universities.

The student survey highlighted that the type of student/ athlete that this proposal will provide opportunities for are type 2, 3 and 4.

Type 4

Will generally prioritise sport participation ahead of most other commitments.

Type 3

May prioritise competing ahead of other commitments/interests. Likely to balance prioritisation of sport against wider commitments.

Type 2

Might prioritise ahead of other commitments, but generally unlikely. The offer must suit the individual's motivation and can become quickly deprioritised. Likely to balance prioritisation of sport against wider commitments.

Resource implications have been considered and the proposal has been devised to be flexible and reasonable to reflect the needs of our clubs, societies and teams, at their request, due to the current demand on their facilities and finances. The programme will be delivered at weekends when access to facilities is easier. Rounders is a cost effective sport as it can be played in parks, university pitches with no permanent markings and little equipment.

The proposal will take into account the new Rounders England strategy with its four key areas of development complimenting the current BUCS strategy;

- Creating opportunities for more people to play Rounders
- Support and service our players, volunteers and our workforce to deliver and play Rounders
- Expand and develop a fit for purpose competition structure and pathway
- Raise the profile of rounders with stakeholders, partners and the media at a national and international level

The detail contained within the remainder of this proposal will clearly outline how Rounders has a pathway of engagement for all students and competition for the BUCS student/athlete profile type 1, 2, 3 and 4 with the competition offer focusing on type 2, 3 and 4.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rounders is a sport that can provide both competitive and recreational opportunities. Competition at Regional and National level and our developing talent pathway leads to England squads at junior (women) and senior level (women) providing players with exit routes and high level opportunities. Our talent pathway is currently undergoing development to ensure it reflects our playing community. This will lead to reinstating the mixed gender senior squads which will provide a succinct pathway from the university team to the Rounders England talent pathway. This is then complimented by a game that can be played for fun that creates cohesion through integration and socialisation.

Rounders England transitioned from National Rounders Association in 2008 and our research shows that

historically playing Rounders has always been prevalent in Universities, as a recreational sport, and through competitive external and intermural fixtures opportunities.

More recently, since 2018 Rounders England have hosted Rounders tour events. These events provide a mixed gender central venue tournament for Universities to participate in. Additionally the institutions receive training to develop a workforce to support the events. The Rounders tour was due for expansion in order to meet demand before Covid 19 impacted this development. The Rounders tour will continue to be offered through Rounders England as an engagement level event.

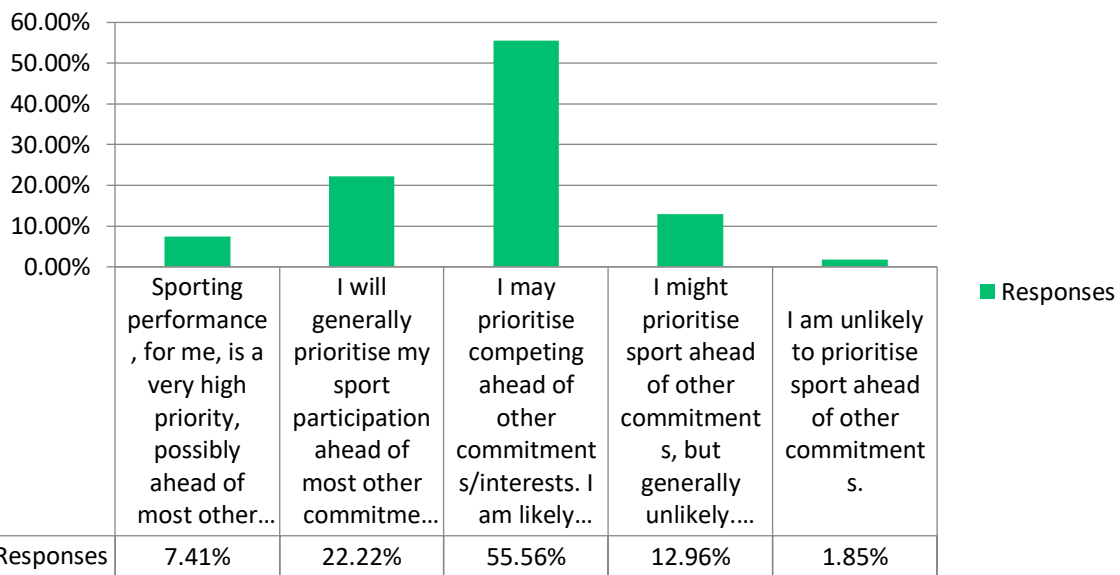
In 2020 we began our in depth consultation with our active Universities as to whether a proposal to BUCS should be considered and we were pleased with the positive response and backing to move forward with this opportunity. Following the first round of consultations with institutions and student bodies we have the following Universities currently offering and/or interested in Rounders.

University of Bath	University of Cumbria	Loughborough University	Royal Holloway University
Bath Spa University	University of Central Lancaster	University of Lincoln	University of Winchester
University of Birmingham	University of Derby	University of Leeds	Solent University
University of Bristol	University of Essex Colchester	Liverpool Hope University	University of Surrey
Birkbeck, University of London	University of East Anglia	London School of Economics	University of Warwick
Brunel University	Edge Hill University	Manchester Metropolitan University	University of Worcester
Bournemouth University	Greenwich University	Newcastle University	
University of Brighton	University of Huddersfield	University of Northampton	
Canterbury Christ Church University	Kingston University	University of Portsmouth	
University of Chichester	Liverpool John Moores University	University of Plymouth	
University of Chester	London South Bank University	University of Reading	

Our insight tells us that we are confident that we have at least 30 Universities with an average of 20 players currently participating, and we believe this is possibly an under estimate as we can't account for the informal participation that is happening through inter mural and recreational activity.

In identifying the type of student/ athlete our competitive offer should cater for we conducted a survey of students asking them to categorise themselves. The results as shown in the graph below; highlighted that the type of student/ athlete our sport should support is from type 2, 3 and 4.

How would you describe how you prioritise sport in your life?



Nearly 70% of respondents are playing Rounders informally, but this is closely followed by 66% of them also playing competitively at games organised by their student union.

79% of respondents see their playing becoming more competitive. This response highlights a need to develop a more comprehensive competition offer for our players to ensure they have the capability of achieving this aspiration.

100% of respondents want to play competitively at the events organised by Rounders England.

98% of players want to play in mixed teams.

Adding to the natural inclusivity of Rounders, Rounders is a non-contact sport and the NGB endorses mixed and women's rounders competitions; as such there are no safety concerns for any players, regardless of gender identity, wishing to take part in sanctioned rounders competitions, in training or friendly/recreational rounders.

Having just updated our Trans and non-binary policy, the below outlines the guidelines for competition: Trans and non-binary players must ensure that the competition they choose to play in at domestic level is consistent with the player pathway they want to be considered for at national level.

Trans women are eligible to compete in the National female category under the following conditions:

- 1 - The athlete has declared that her gender identity is female. The declaration cannot be changed, for sporting purposes, for a minimum of one year.
- 2 - Identification is required to confirm the declaration (E.g. birth certificate)

Rounders is an attractive sport for institutions due to its flexibility, it is a sport that can be played in a variety of facilities and environments. In addition to the outdoor game, there is an indoor regulated version that could be used to support Universities with different facility spaces and availability in the Autumn and Winter months to ensure all year round accessibility.

2. PURPOSE

The central venue leagues will take place at the weekend as this is currently when many Rounders society's train, there is less competition for access to facilities, some Universities indicated that this would provide some students with the opportunity to participate in another sport at University, thus complimenting their sporting experience.

Two options to be considered

Option 1 – an alternative to Cricket as a summer season sport

Match day 1 - Played weekend of 18th/19th March 2023

Match day 2 - Played weekend of 15th/16th April 2023

Match day 3 – Played weekend of 22nd /23rd May 2023

The top two universities from each regional league will be invited to represent their institution at the National Universities Championship – 1 day event - Wednesday 15th June 2023

Option 2 – provides competitive opportunities to play throughout year maintaining momentum of interest

Match day 1 – Played weekend of 22nd/23rd October 2022

Match day 2 - Played weekend of 19th/20th November 2022

Match day 3 - Played weekend of 18/19th March 2023

Match day 4 - Played weekend of 15th/16th April 2023

The top two universities from each regional league will be invited to represent their institution at the National Universities Championship – 1 day event- weekend of 20th /21st May 2023

Rules

Round robin tournament with league points awarded for each match

Maximum 15 players with no more than 9 players on the field at one time

Mixed teams – no more than 5 males playing at one time

1 innings of 30 balls per team.



ROUNDERS ENGLAND

UNIVERSITY COMPETITION OFFER



This competition offer has been created for students that may not currently get the opportunity to play competitively and represent their University. As part of our Rounders annual census we survey all of our playing community including the University fraternity.

The benefits highlighted by the majority of University players completing the survey included;

- it's a great way to make friends
- great social leveller
- it allows you to be yourself
- enjoy the outdoors and to relax
- de stress from modern life

This competition pathway aims to develop more opportunities through BUCS for the Student/ athlete type 1 at Clubs and Society activities and allow them to progress through to a competitive element in the BUCS central venue league and championship.

"I think it would be a great opportunity to expand rounders at a university level and increase awareness within our local community of the values of the sport" **Francesca, University of Winchester player**

3. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

At Rounders England we help people discover, develop or resume the sport they love. Our new emerging strategy, Rounders: Reimagined aims to transform the Country's much loved game into a thriving, modern, inclusive sport that can be played by everyone.

We are guided by our values and our work will be underpinned by these behaviours.

We are for all

- Equality and diversity is a given
- We are open and inclusive
- We have fun getting active
- We make our pathways accessible to all
- We are fair and respectful

We are in this together

- We listen to and serve our community
- We are optimistic
- We bring people together
- We are the best we can be, as a collective
- We reflect and act for our community

We do the right thing

- We create a safe and trusted environment
- We are accountable through a sense of openness and honesty
- We take responsibility for our actions
- We deliver on our promises

We keep moving Rounders forward

- We are collectively ambitious
- We remain relevant and adaptable
- We promote progress
- We differentiate ourselves
- We are brave

Sport/Physical activity

Inter University sport – increased opportunities to compete against other Universities with the profile of competitive Rounders increasing will **increase** the number of inter mural competitions held at Universities. The Rounders University guide produced by Rounders England will support Universities in how to organise these. The new central venue leagues and National Championship will provide an exponential and a higher level of competition for students.

Performance Sport

As the competition programme develops Rounders England want to encourage more University student's trialling for Regional talent hub places and ultimately places in the Senior England squads.

Social and Recreational Sport

Rounders as a sport has always been enjoyed as a social and recreational activity. Rounders England will continue to support current and new universities to develop and expand their Rounders clubs and activity sessions. This will be through mass participation coaching video clips, marketing support and specific workforce development. In our recent Rounders census, University players responded with the main reason they participated in Rounders was to be part of a community and friendship but competition was the reason they remained playing the sport. Offering Rounders as a BUCS sport is a great opportunity to create sporting journeys for students that may not have had the chance in previous years.

Professional and workforce development

Rounders England will look to reintroduce the Higher Education Rounders Officer (HERO) roles and support these officers as a workforce collective and network sharing best practise.

Rounders England have developed a range of blended learning coach and umpire courses. A number of Universities and students have utilised these during the lockdown periods we have seen this past year.

An offer that we will honour to those Universities engaging in Rounders activity is a combination of Preliminary Umpire test award and Introduction to Rounders coaching course which is available online for £10 per person and makes the professional development easier to access to students. We also have tutors that work within Higher Education that would be appropriate for online and face to face workforce delivery.

We will produce a guidance document for all institutions which can be used a resource to develop the skills of aspiring coaches, leaders and umpires.

Profile and Influence

The new Rounders England strategy highlights the ambitions for the competition element of our sport which will strive to become a Commonwealth games ready sport and the creation of a national league. Being included within BUCS will both compliment and drive forward our competition pathway.

We will continue to develop strong partnerships, raise the profile at a national and international level and establish a brand that attracts commercial sponsorship.

Inclusion

Rounders is a sport for everyone and we are proud to be able to offer a fair mixed gender competition. It is a sport that is attractive to a diverse group of people, flexible in nature with limited equipment requirements, thus negating any financial considerations.

Working with the Activity Alliance we are re-developing our walking and wheelchair Rounders version to provide further inclusive opportunities for institutions to offer their students.

4. CONSULTATION AND SUPPORT

We have undertaken extensive consultation with a range of Universities that commenced before the initial review meeting to ensure that this proposal reflected what our playing community want and need.

This consultation process has consisted of;

- Hosting two online forums with engaged institutions
- An online survey of our participants
- One to one discussions with key staff members from individual institutions
- Attendance at Regional BUCS meetings
- Worked with current England team players currently in attendance at University
- Rounders community census 2020/21

Although we are Rounders England, as there is no governing body for the other home countries, Rounders England, provides workforce, competition and participation support to institutions in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The consultation process has helped us to identify a number of opportunities:

Development of a 'University Rounders guide' - An online support pack will be produced containing video clips of practical ideas for mass participation training sessions, techniques and tactics, rules and regulations alongside training and fixture formats

Utilising our tutors that currently work within or support Universities to offer and deliver the workforce courses as and when organised and requested. This could be offered on a blended learning basis

Opportunity to enhance the experience for international students. Institutions have commented that including Rounders in the BUCS programme would provide a much needed opportunity for international

students to participate and compete. The sports rules and regulations are easy to learn and interpret and is an ideal sport for integration and socialisation for these students.

Hosting opportunities - Several universities have formally raised interest in hosting the events these include Bristol University, Manchester Metropolitan, Chester University, Huddersfield University and Derby University.

As stated in this proposal our support for Rounders within BUCS is tangible and the following quotes provide an example of such support;

Andy Allford, Director of Sport, University of Birmingham

"The proposal being submitted by Rounders England highlights how the inclusion of Rounders will allow Universities to engage new student populations into the competition structure. The proposal has been well thought out in terms of overcoming many of the restrictions that Universities will have e.g. cost and playing time."

Lydia Hudson, England senior player and Lincoln University Rounders Union president

"At Lincoln, Rounders has really been a sport that targets those who have never really been into competitive sport before. We have a very inclusive environment where people can come having never really done any physical activity. One of my members recently came up to me asking if they can join into the competitive aspect of our club rather than the social side. They would really like to take part in some more competitive games but unfortunately we have very little to offer here. Being part of BUCS would give a person like this an opportunity to play competitively. It would also allow us to feel more involved in the sports of Lincoln, BUCS is when the university most feels like a community and it would be great to allow these people to feel part of this as well."

Anton Orlandi, Sports Participation Coordinator, Union of Students, University of Derby

"Rounders is one of our up and coming sports which has really stood out over the last couple of years. The club has attracted a high number of students at the University of Derby and offered the opportunity to participate in a sport that is easy to get into, so great for beginners so they can quickly build their ability and confidence in the sport. It's great to see Rounders England working with BUCS to look to take this sport to the next level within the university programme, which can only champion how far the sport has come. Having a larger university offer would clearly be a positive thing and would help bridge the current gap of the sport being played within schools but then a limited pathway for a higher age group."

Mark Jefferys, Director of Sport and Physical Activity, Birmingham City University

"I think the focus of the proposal highlighting the inclusive nature of the sport and the competition structure make this a strong bid."

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resource implications have been considered and will be kept minimal for BUCS, institutions and students.

BUCS – There will be minimal resource implication to BUCS. Rounders England would request resource support from BUCS in the form of administration of entries, central venue league fixtures and result collation. We accept that BUCS may need to take a higher % of the entry fees to cover their internal costs.

Rounders England have the capacity to lead and co-ordinate the National Championships event.

Institutions –

Central venue league entry fees

- £90 plus £30 National Championship entry fee – Option 1
- £120 plus £30 National Championship entry fee – Option 2
- Each team will provide two qualified umpires (training subsidised by RE) to eliminate official's fees.
- Hosts will cover the cost of facilities
- Travelling teams will be responsible for their travel costs

Facilities –Hosting events at the weekend, as requested by institutions helps with access to pitches as well as in some cases reduced pitch fees. Pitches can also be marked using spray paint and markers reducing the need for permanent markings.

Equipment- As can be seen from the following costings Rounders is a cost effective sport to introduce. Kit bags from Rounders England approved equipment supplier's start at £133.99 for an Aresson classic Rounders set or £212.99 for Aresson club Rounders set. No cost to individual players for equipment.

Workforce

Rounders England have a University workforce offer that is £10 per person (pp) to undertake the preliminary umpire test award and Introduction to Rounders course. This has already been utilised by many institutions and both of these courses can be undertaken online. As a follow up and progression to these initial courses there is a preliminary umpire award available at £30pp which is a face to face course. The foundation coach course is £160 pp and is blended learning model.

There is also an option for Universities to become official Education members which is a £45 annual fee and gain all the benefits of the Rounders England education offer.

Rounders England

We have a member of Rounders England staff with University participation already incorporated into their role helping to ensure high quality experiences and support in University Rounders events.

We have a BUCS working group that will continue to monitor our governance, rules and regulations and compliance to BUCS guidelines.

6. WIDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Rounders England will establish a BUCS working group that will continue beyond the review cycle process which will monitor our governance in relation to BUCS, rules and regulations and compliance to BUCS expectations. This group will ensure the pathway between the current Rounders Tour and the BUCS central venue league is fluid and progressive.

Rounders England expectations through the BUCS provision are;

- Increased participation for the less active/engaged students
- Provision of activity to support greater socialisation and participation
- Specific workforce development for students and staff

- Improved competition opportunities
- Strengthened links to local leagues
- Teams will be provided with a comprehensive support offer
- A wider workforce to utilise in the wider playing community
- Supports the development and expansion of the talent pathway
- Improved connections to institutions for regional talent hubs
- Align the regional talent pathway with university provision
- Provide another option for engagement in sport during a season with a lesser sport offer

Rounders England is wholly committed to this proposal with the development team identified to prioritise support to universities engaging in the BUCS programme.

7. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In order to measure the success of the initial implementation of Rounders into the BUCS programme the following Key Performance Indicator's (KPI's) will be used. These KPI's will also be incorporated into the new Rounders strategy.

First year KPI's

- Track how Rounders as a sport is being used to support the mental health and access to physical activity opportunities to students that would not necessarily participate in sport at University
- Produce case studies on the social benefits of competing in Rounders
- 40 teams competing across 5 central venues
- 80 workforce courses undertaken
- 600 participants
- 50% increase in Rounders England university membership
- A comprehensive regional leadership structure supported by Rounders England
- The competition programme is providing competitive opportunities to the identified student/ athlete type

Third year KPI's

- Track how Rounders as a sport is being used to support the mental health and access to physical activity opportunities to students that would not necessarily participate in sport at University.
- Produce case studies on the social benefits of competing in Rounders documenting student's journey through the Rounders pathway.
- 80 teams competing at 8 central venues
- 300 workforce courses undertaken
- 1600 participants
- University player's trialling for England squads
- Students representing at National level that would not usually have the opportunity to do so
- University selective team providing competitive matches for England squads
- An increase in Interhall/ mural competition
- The competition programme is providing a competitive pathway to the identified student/ athlete type and is fluid in allowing student/athlete to move between types.

A university student and institution survey will be used to gather the qualitative and quantitative

information monitored and evaluated by Rounders England. This will be alongside workforce monitoring and data submitted after each central venue event.

8. CONCLUSION

Rounders England have found the process of preparing this proposal an incredibly insightful and rewarding journey to date.

As an organisation we have been overwhelmed by the encouragement of our current playing universities alongside the enthusiasm for Rounders being included as a BUCS sport by our newly engaged institutions.

The offer of Rounders as a sport provides BUCS an opportunity to highlight how its programme is broad enough to engage a new type of student. Building on the strategic drive to support the physical and mental health and well-being of students, Rounders is a sport that can support a programme of activity to address this need.

Representing a Rounders University team will give some students an affinity to their University that they might not have experienced if it wasn't for the opportunity to play Rounders.

Rounders England acknowledge that becoming a BUCS sport will raise the profile of Rounders across the higher education sector and will supplement all elements of the Rounders engagement and competition pathway.

It is a new era for Rounders, with a new strategy, increased participation and interest following the pandemic. With an ambitious Board, leadership team and Rounders community driving Rounders forward, becoming a BUCS sport will be an epitome of our new direction.

