



BUCS RUGBY LEAGUE IMPACT REPORT

Season 2023-24

FOREWORD

As we enter year three of our partnership, like BUCS, we recognise not only the important role rugby league plays in the formative development of those involved within our universities, but the role our students play in the future of our game.

Reflective of our own community strategy, BUCS' vision to create a truly exceptional student experience fits neatly with the RFL's reshaping of the game, and that university rugby league should be utilised as a vehicle in which to embrace the diverse and inclusive nature of the student life.

We know that the higher education sector provides an environment in which to nurture young participants, giving them access to sporting activity and offers they may not have previously experienced. We also know university rugby league contributes heavily to cultivating lifelong participants alongside educating a deployable workforce, and with that, we must continue our forward thinking into the 2024-25 season.

We will therefore strive to strengthen our relationships with BUCS members, encourage institutional aspirations in our game and support our students, no matter what their interest, to have a truly exceptional experience whilst on their rugby league journey.



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



PARTICIPATION - MALE

1,400 PLAYERS

8% INCREASE

2023-24 1,400 MALE

2022-23 1,300 MALE

2021-22 1,200 MALE



8 REGIONS
230 FIXTURES

89% COMPLETION RATE
ACROSS 8 LEAGUES

INCREASE FROM 84.5% IN 2022-23

41 INSTITUTIONS

49 TEAMS

10,000+ ATTENDANCES



With a focus on member, club and administrative support, and active promotion of our offers, both participation and attendance has increased along with the percentage of fixture completion within our competitions.

PARTICIPATION - FEMALE



RUGBY LEAGUE 9s

The first women's Rugby League 9s tournament was hosted at Loughborough University to kick off the inaugural Women's University Winter League. 65 players from five different institutions attended in the hopes of being crowned champions.

The final saw Oxford take on an undefeated Nottingham, with Nottingham claiming an 18-6 victory with a 7-player team.



WINTER LEAGUE COMPETITION

For the first time in the history of the university game, BUCS and the RFL coordinated the women's league structure.

Six teams competed across four regions with a 91% completion rate. The league was built on the success of the 2022-23 women's development days and the 9s competition.

Our participants rated their experience as 2.9 out of 4 in our end of season review.



LEAGUE FINALS AT FEATHERSTONE

The culmination of the inaugural season of our women's rugby league competition took place at the home of Featherstone Rovers.

Having gone undefeated all season, Northumbria ran out 8-0 over the University of Liverpool.

As BUCS aligned to the RFL's 'More than a Sport' strategy, our focus turned to, and will continue to, support the women's game in the sector. We now have 175 females engaged across our various programmes, with participation levels expected to continue to increase throughout the 2024-25 season.



CASE STUDIES



NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY

Northumbria's men's teams have won 14 titles between their 1st and 2nd teams since 2017. The 2023-24 season saw them enter a 3rd men's team into BUCS, launch a women's team, and claim the first ever treble cup win.

Northumbria University, led by Jason Payne and Adam Houston, have effectively cultivated a professional environment within the higher education space and are reaping the rewards year on year.



LEEDS VARSITY

The 2023-24 rugby league varsity fixture between Leeds Beckett University and the University of Leeds, was hosted at Headingley Stadium as a curtain raiser for a Leeds Rhinos Super League fixture.

It sets the standard and paves the way for the National League structure being introduced in the 2024-25 season.



DURHAM UNIVERSITY

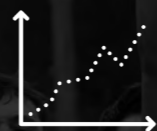
Following four years away from the BUCS competition, Durham University revived its rugby league club by attending the 2022-23 Rugby League 9s event.

Durham used the 2021 World Cup CreatedBy funding to support the club's successful relaunch. The team finished 4th in the league for the 2023-24 season and 3rd in the 9s Trophy competition.

DIGITAL FOOTPRINT



Instagram (@universityrl saw a 146% follower increase from November 2022. Recording a further 55% increase during the 2023-24 season



Our best performing post showcased the 9s Championships in October 2023. 300 accounts were engaged with a reach of 7.4K accounts.



The most significant collaboration saw Northumbria's BUCS Big Wednesday reel hit 30k plays, engaging 640 accounts.



3 reels were shared across the season generating 4k - 7.5k plays each.



Our BUCS Play app houses all rugby league fixtures, results, clubs, leagues and a number of other features giving quick and easy access to our members.

OUR 2023-24 TARGETS



MEN'S RUGBY LEAGUE 9s

The Championship and Trophy were standalone events for the 2023-24 season and saw a 100% increase in entries from 2022-23.



WOMEN'S PROGRAMMES

Inaugural university league with the final held at Featherstone Rovers.

First 9s festival held at Loughborough.



STUDENT CPD OPPORTUNITIES

four free student specific match official courses held across the UK, with 15+ attendees.



MEN'S DEVELOPMENT FUND

Launched in May 2024 ready to be utilised within the 2024-25 season.



WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT DAYS

With the launch of the women's league and the planned 9s events, the development days were paused so as not to oversaturate the season.



ONLINE EDUCATION

A rugby league stakeholder group was assembled to review the needs of higher education clubs. three free online coaching workshops were held, utilising guest speakers to upskill the workforce.

2024-25 AND BEYOND



ELEVATE AND STABILISE THE MEN'S PROGRAMME

National League introduced for 2024-25 season.

Elevate National Championship Finals.

Support institutions in creating partnerships with community clubs.



SUPPORT THE GROWTH AND PARTICIPATION IN THE WOMEN'S GAME

Facilitate Women's University Winter League.

Stand-alone 9s events.

Increased social media coverage.

Introduction of a BUCS competition offering.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Student specific CPD opportunities.

Highlight non-playing pathways in rugby league.

Access to good quality coaches and match officials.

The RFL have committed funding for the BUCS Rugby League Coordinator role until at least April 2026, and the BUCS Rugby League Coordinator will have 3 focus areas to align with the RFL's Higher Education Strategy.

CONTACT US

Maz Veater

BUCS Rugby League Coordinator

Email: Maz.Veater@bucs.org.uk



Instagram @universityrl



Facebook - University Rugby League



X (Twitter) @UniversityRL

