

RUGBY AT THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY by Alan M. Osur

Al Osur is the coach of the Air Force team and an instructor in the History Department. He played his rugby with the Shelford RFC (England) and is still an active player with the Denver Barbarians.

Last May the Air Force Academy finished up its first year as a Club with a 17-5 record and 1st place in the Colorado competitions for the Coors Cup. The Club was founded in August 1968 with a nucleus of 35 cadets. This figure remained constant throughout the year as 2 teams were fielded each weekend. Even though the Club was new, many cadets did have rugby experience. Lindsay Fenwick, break, is an exchange student from New Zealand, and most of the others had picked up the sport in the Academy intramural program.

Perhaps a word about this program would be appropriate; it is something to see and stay away from. Imagine, 32 squadron teams consisting of 640 players, all crashing away at a sport about which they know nothing. Yet, the cadets like the game as they like all contact sports (around the Academy even basketball could be called a contact sport). Unfortunately, only this year has anyone been able to teach them the elements of the game. This has been accomplished by Club members and coaches (Rugby is played in the Spring, twice a week--one day for practice and one day for games). Presently, in order to reduce the contact and increase the open field running, the Academy is considering some changes in the rugby intramural program. One important change that could help in accomplishing this objective would be to have only 9 or 10 players per team.

The Club, however, has earned a permanent position at the Academy. Because of the first-year success, the administration and cadets have whole-heartedly accepted and supported it; this, I might add, includes good financial aid. What makes its success even more remarkable is the fact that the Academy only allows the Club to practice on weekends. This has meant, to a large extent, that victories have been won by relying on superb conditioning and hard-tackling. Then only slowly was finesse added to the other factors, but not enough finesse as yet to defeat nationally ranked BYU (3 losses to them) and the University of California at Berkeley. The other defeat came at the hands of Colorado State College in the Fall state championship game (Coors Cup).

Victories have come against other Colorado teams, the Univ. of Utah, and a team from the British Royal Air Force Academy at Cranwell. The

CADET TEAM AT BERKELEY

Mike Beezley
Bob Bennett
Jeff Bewers
Jim Chase
Steve Connelly
Roy Coppinger
Burr Crittenden
Linsay Fenwick
Hugh Forsythe
Bill Johannes
Harry Laws
Angus MacDonald
Al McNea
Jim Miller
Olie Olson
Gary Schmidt
Ernie Skinner
Dan Tibbetts
Tom Westmoreland
Carl Yakabowskas

Academy has been particularly successful against Colorado teams during the Spring, allowing only 22 points in 7 games. This includes an 8-3 victory over the Denver Highlanders for the Spring state championship. Also, the Club took 1st and 2nd in the Second Annual ERRFU Sevens Tournament on May 11th.

Prospects for the upcoming year look good, even with the graduation of 12 of the 1st 15. An active Colorado Summer rugby program and a host of cadets interested in playing for the Club will insure a good year. Also, there is the extra added incentive of Army being on the schedule in the Spring. So the US Air Force Academy Rugby Football Club looks forward to defending its titles as second to none in the state of Colorado for playing rugby football and second only to the Denver Highlanders in after-the-game partying.

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