

**Feladó:** irb@irb.com

**Küldve:** 2005. november 24. 10:29

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**Tárgy:** Media Statement: IRB Invests In Rugby's Global Development

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24 November 2005

 IRB e-newsletter

## IRB MEDIA STATEMENT

### IRB Invests In Rugby's Global Development

Since the announcement of the Host Union for Rugby World Cup 2011 on November 17 in Dublin there has been a lot said and written about the future growth and development of rugby worldwide.

The IRB would like to make it very clear that there is in place a fully funded Strategic Plan for the development of the Game. Rugby has undergone a profound transformation in just 10 years since the introduction of the professional era and while our core values and aims have not changed, our structures and working practices need to evolve. This is now happening.

In August the IRB announced an unprecedented three-year £30 million strategic investment programme. This was a clear commitment to developing Rugby globally and increasing competitiveness, reflected by the fact that as well as re-investing in the traditional base (the Tier 1 Unions) the IRB has committed around £17 million to development programmes in Tier 2 and Tier 3 Unions.

This includes £8 million of investment in high performance and infrastructure in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Japan, USA, Canada and Romania. £7.5 million in new international and provincial tournaments in the Pacific, North and South America. And £1.5 million for selected Tier 3 Unions that have the potential to move up to Tier 2.

This is on top of the £12 million the IRB invests annually in its 115 member Unions in the form of tournaments, grants, education and training resources. The total investment in the Game over the next three years is over £60 million.

The IRB is committed to extending this investment into the next four-year cycle once the financial situation from Rugby World Cup 2007 in France is clear.

It must also be remembered that there is much more to the successful development of Rugby worldwide than the awarding of a tournament to a single host nation. Investment in infrastructure, high performance initiatives, development programmes and tournament structures worldwide on a consistent basis and over a long period are the keys to success. The Strategic Plan and Trust Grant investments will allow the IRB to deliver these.

Rugby World Cup, our premier event, takes place once every four years. And while the placement of the tournament does play a role in the development of Rugby, it is what happens during the rest of the four-year cycle and beyond that really grows the Game.

An example of this is the 200 plus qualifying matches that the IRB funds around each tournament. However, the Rugby World Cup and its qualifying competition is just one of a large family of tournaments the IRB underwrites globally. The underwriting of men's, women's, age group and sevens tournaments plays a large part in the globalisation of Rugby. This includes the European Nations Cup, CAR

Top 9 and Super 16 in Africa, Intercontinental Cup (this year between Japan, Romania, USA and Canada) and Latin Cup (Portugal, Georgia, Uruguay and Chile).

The IRB Under 21 World Championship was played in Mendoza this year with great success in terms of development, promotion and legacy for Argentina. Next year the Under 19 World Championship will be held in Dubai, the first time a major Rugby tournament will have been held in the Middle East.

The annual eight-tournament IRB Sevens is played in venues in North America, Asia, Oceania, Africa and Europe. The Women's Rugby World Cup 2006 is to be played in Canada.

For 2005 the IRB Trust Grant Committee has approved spending of \$5.1 million on such global tournament structures and the IRB will encourage all its Member Unions to tender to host any of these tournaments in the future.

On top of this the IRB employs eight fulltime Regional Development Managers who implement and run certified training and education courses for coaches and referees, and assist Member Unions develop rugby in their territories – FIRA (Europe), CAR (Africa), ARFU (Asia), FORU (Oceania), NAWIRA (North America and West Indies) and CONSUR (South America).

The Rugby World Cup has enjoyed wonderful growth in its relatively short history but it must be recognised that other events such as the Olympics and soccer world cup are far more established, and it took FIFA 60 years to move its premier event out of its South American and European strongholds.

Even though we expect over two million spectators to attend the sixth tournament hosted by France in 2007 it pales into insignificance when you consider the global TV audience. This is estimated to be over 4 billion viewers. Pictures of full stadia and a whole nation backing our premier event, regardless of where hosted, beamed through television will have a powerful effect in new and emerging markets for growth such as the USA, Russia, Africa and Asia.

The continued promotion of the Game through broadcasting is therefore another key element that will assist development. The IRB has invested significant funds in *Total Rugby* a weekly TV programme that is now broadcast on every continent. A weekly *Total Rugby* radio programme is distributed free-of-charge to radio stations around the world.

The globalisation of the Game has also been assisted by the IRB getting Sevens Rugby into large multi-sport events such as the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and World Games. The IRB still has the ambition to have rugby included in the Olympic Games in the future.

Growth and development in any business takes time, effort and people. The IRB is working hard to put the initiatives and programmes in place to drive and manage this development. We might not see this development reflected in RWC 2007 but the IRB believes that through its commitment to development and greater competitiveness the Game will see significant change in 2011 and beyond. The IRB is totally committed to making Rugby a truly global sport.

#### **Further Information:**

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