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Plateau area footballers tackling sport of rugby

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Bonney Lake-Summer Courier-Herald Reporter

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Lingering snow on the field at Bonney Lake High nixed the first practice of the season for the Plateau Rainier Junior Rugby team, but it didn't dampen their enthusiasm.

The team draws footballers from Enumclaw, Buckley, Bonney Lake, Lake Tapps and Sumner.

"We're all from different areas," Enumclaw High senior Casey Smith said, "but it takes us about four seconds to mesh."

Smith and Calum Ramsay, a senior at Bonney Lake High, have been with the program the four years, since its inception. In a team that lost more than a dozen to graduation, they are cornerstones to rebuilding the team.

"They were literally one and two," coach Andy Ramsay said of the boys. "They've been there through the highs and lows.

"They've done a lot of things off the field to lead the program," said Ramsay, who is Calum's father. "That first year I preached, 'set the tone for the program' and they really have."

The team took its lumps the first year and then the division changed and it took a pounding. The past two years the team is gaining ground and made the playoffs last season.

"In two years we went from nobodies to a team other teams have to look at," Smith said. "We made a name for ourselves."

Rugby is drawing a lot of interest. It's the latest Olympic sport. It's action-packed. It's continuous, aerobic, inclusive and uses power, agility, strength and speed.

That's what draws Smith and the younger Ramsay.

"Anyone who would enjoy football would love this sport," Calum Ramsay said. "It's really a unique sport. It contains so many aspects you'd find in other sports."

"I liked the way it looked, the way it played," said Smith, who plays football for EHS. "It doesn't stop. It's continually going."

He likes that loose, go-with-the-flow aspect with players the ability to be offensive and defensive without leaving the pitch.

In Rugby, he said, coaches prepare players and then it's up to the players to control the game. In football, coaches call the plays.

Coach Ramsay admits the sport is not for everyone. That's why he offers no-obligation opportunities to give it a try.

He encourages players to see if it's something they would like, if nothing else, to come watch.

The team practices Mondays and Wednesday, most often at BLHS. Information is available at www.rainierjuniorrugby.com.

The team will host the Beaverton Barbarians from Oregon at Sunset Chev Stadium Jan. 28. The program is governed by USA Rugby and Rugby Washington with 10 teams playing in the South Division with the Plateau team.

The goal, coach Ramsay said, is to have two teams – a U16 and U19 – but so far he's only been able to put together a U19 and pick up some junior varsity competition.

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- None at this time.

He's always actively recruiting. Three of the team's dozen or so graduates are playing at college. One at the University of Washington, another at Washington State University and Jake Christiansen from Enumclaw on the prestigious team at West Point.

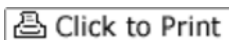
Ramsay and Smith plan to play at college. "It will be a sad day when they leave, they've been there from the start," coach Ramsay said.

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