

# 2012 UNITED RUGBY LEAGUE FRANCHISE INFORMATION



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*If there are any questions or if one feels there is an error to be corrected, feel free to contact us.*

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## PART I: INTRODUCTION

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[www.gridironrugby.org](http://www.gridironrugby.org)



[www.unitedrugbyleague.com](http://www.unitedrugbyleague.com)

# JOIN THE NEXT MAJOR REVOLUTION IN SPORTS!

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*United Rugby League LLC was born out of a desire to grow the sport of rugby league in the United States and surrounding countries. Known by its most devout fans as “the greatest game,” rugby league is fast and hard-hitting, requiring only the most fit athletes to play.*

The major reasons rugby league have not been successful in the United States are simple:

- The field they use is too wide to play on athletic fields at American high schools.
- They require special goalposts.
- They require games in meters instead of yards.
- A serious effort by a professional league that understands and overcomes these limitations had not yet formed...until now!

## What is Gridiron Rugby?

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- “Gridiron rugby” is 11-a-side rugby league, played in the confines of American football fields.
  - The game uses the “gridiron” football field, hence the name “gridiron rugby.”
  - Just like indoor lacrosse and arena football has to fit the dimensions of a hockey rink, this sport fits the game to fit American football fields.
- The game uses the same goalposts as American football.
- The dimensions are measured in yards not meters.
- No special linings of any kind are needed. All teams need are the specific balls and other equipment for the sport and they are ready to go!
- Since there are no special linings, it is much easier to see and understand the game from a fan’s perspective.
- The sport is similar to National Rugby League (an Australian-based league), with minor variations. One key owner in the NRL is famous actor Russell Crowe.
- Players are big and fast. And **REALLY** tough.
- Games generally over in about 2 hours.



## What is Gridiron Rugby League?

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- Gridiron Rugby League (GRL) is the official governing body of Gridiron Rugby. The national chapter is based in Fletcher, North Carolina.
- It is listed as a non-profit organization in the State of North Carolina.
- It will oversee the development of Gridiron Rugby as a varsity high school sport, as well as state organizations responsible for making the sport a varsity high school sport.
- It will educate the public on the game of Gridiron Rugby.
- It will help grow the game in high schools and colleges for women's sports in recognition of Title IX.
- It will organize the "State of Origin" matches among top players in rival states to raise funds for high school development.



## What is United Rugby League?

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- United Rugby League (URL) is the proposed professional competition for Gridiron Rugby.
- It shall start as a minor league competition in the Smoky Mountain area of the United States (North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia, and possibly adjacent states).
- It shall expand to additional teams and leagues in other parts of the country. At that time the regional leagues will be named or renamed.
- It shall expand to a national major competition, with the eventual goal of promotion and relegation.



## Advantages of Gridiron Rugby over “indoor” sports

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- When we say indoor sports, we mean indoor football, indoor soccer, and indoor lacrosse.
  - Rent can be at least **\$8,000 a GAME** for indoor sports. URL games are closer to **\$1,500 a GAME**. (Of course, this varies for larger cities.)
  - You have to purchase artificial turf for indoor sports. URL games are likely on artificial turf already installed at high schools and colleges.
  - The artificial turf you would buy for indoor sports may be of dubious quality if the turf is not brand new. URL equipment is much less and will be new.
  - You have to likely pay most or all of the changeover costs for indoor sports (both ways). URL games are much easier to set up and take down equipment.
  - Fans generally prefer to be outside in the summer, as baseball numbers attest.
- (Continued...)

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- Indoor football equipment costs are extra expensive: Dasher board pads, football helmets, lots of protective equipment, etc. Costs much less for URL games.
- Outdoor fields are likely easier to schedule games in the URL than indoor sports.
- It is more likely fans will pay for parking for indoor sports, but likely not for URL games, *a HUGE selling point.*
- Indoor football games can seemingly take forever due to many stoppages. URL games have limited stoppages, just enough for you to utilize them for game day contests and promotions without killing the flow of competition.
- Let's face it: At those indoor sports, the concrete floor under the artificial turf in arenas for is **HARD**. Even with artificial turf for URL games, it is much safer for the players outside.
- Outdoor games are more likely to get fans (especially kids) to buy cold desserts.

## Who are the fans who will support Gridiron Rugby?

- Average fans are between 18 and 44.
- Football fans clamoring for “spring football.” *THIS IS SPRING FOOTBALL.*
  - In fact, both rugby league and rugby union predate American football. We just make the rules fit the American football field.
- International sports fans, especially those for rugby and soccer.
- Mixed martial arts fans. This sport will be the team equivalent in a lot of ways.
- Hockey fans who love hard-hitting action.
- Sports fans in general.
- Something for casual fans, something for the die-hards. Great fun for everyone.
- In short, some of the loudest, most excitable fans around!



## Promotion and relegation: “The People’s League.”

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- The long-term stated and clear goal of the URL is promotion and relegation. Looking at the MLS model, they have zero teams in the southeast, and many “top 40” television markets have no shot at hosting a team due to FIFA limits on number of teams in a league. MLS refuses to go to “pro/rel” to protect current owners.
- The usual MLS excuse is “the infrastructure is not there.” Mainly, the “gridiron” football lines get in the way of soccer. Well, since the URL uses existing football facilities and existing football lines, *that’s not a problem, is it?*
- Pro/rel shall begin when we have 32+ teams, and divided in half by conference. Until then regular season play shall be in regional conferences only to save on travel costs.
- Promotion and relegation will happen within the conference only.
- The “puncher’s chance” rule will be put into place to give conference champions in the second tier a wildcard entry to the URL playoffs. But it will be deliberately hard for them. This gets rid of the “what happens if New York is demoted?” argument. Every team in the top two tiers has a CHANCE at the title, but the top tier teams will get a much better chance.
- As the URL grows, the third and fourth tier would develop.
- **LINE OF DEMARCATION:** There will be NO promotion and relegation **between the second and third tiers**. Section A would be the first and second tiers. Section B would be any lower tiers. This should be considered by potential owners of smaller market teams as a *reason* to

invest. The big payoff to your investment after the first two tiers are filled, then an owner in smaller market could sell the Section A rights to an expansion owner in the same region without losing the franchise itself. For example, if Asheville had a team, and Charlotte didn't get a team before the first two tiers were filled, they could buy Asheville's Section A rights. Asheville would keep their own team, it just gets placed in a more logical tier. The new franchise must begin in the second tier and earn their way to the first tier.

- *THIS STRATEGY REWARDS THE FIRST 20 TEAMS IN THE URL AND PUTS PRESSURE FOR "TOP 40" MARKETS TO GET A TEAM AT LEAST IN THE SECOND TIER!* It would ultimately be much less expensive to buy a team early than buy out Section A rights later!

## How can membership fees be so low?

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- The URL believes in building on the reputations of existing sports owners and sports management graduates. The league fees and dues pay the reasonable fair market value of running the actual league, allowing each individual team to prosper as they grow a fan base.
- YEAR ROUND SPORTS. The best way to bring stability and prosperity in minor league sports is to have more established owners diversify to other sports.
- Existing sports owners (**especially minor league baseball owners**) can use existing management staff to minimize costs, they only need to hire a new coach and get the players!
  - Can integrate their knowledge of sports management to keep them working all year.
  - The more they make, they more they make for you!
  - Built-in sponsorships and fan bases willing to support the team.
  - Ability to recruit new fans to your other established ventures.
- Established credibility and built-in networking already there.
- Even in circumstances where there is a conflict between a baseball team and your URL team, URL team can play during the afternoon as a big event leading up to the baseball game.
- Brand new owners will be required to hire only sports management graduates and students currently majoring in sports management for the higher positions.
- Fees adjusted based on number of teams. You should pay a fair fee based on 6, 8, or 10 teams and the number of games.

## The United Rugby League Package

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- Team name and logo licensing rights.
- Team website will be done for you by the league.
- Rugby league balls (30).
- Uniforms (30).
- League will coordinate with your team to hire additional sports management personnel.
- Percentage of any television, radio, and merchandise licensing rights.
- League will assist in negotiation of venue lease as needed.
- Each team in first season has league management on site for press conference and first game. (We will appear at first home games for each team to make sure game day operations are consistent and professional).
- Chance to win the “Demry Cup,” the highest honor in Gridiron Rugby.
- Operations manual, forms, marketing materials, PowerPoint presentations.
- Many prearranged ideas for game day operations workable with Gridiron Rugby.

## PART II: URL BASICS AND FRANCHISE PLAN

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Source: [whatsyourteam.com.au](http://whatsyourteam.com.au)

## League objectives

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- Providing football stadiums that can seat 4,000 or more a chance to have professional sports in smaller to middle markets.
- To build on existing sponsorship and fan bases.
- Keeping costs affordable with minimized bus travel and limited hotel stays.
- Giving employees of existing teams whose owners have a team in URL more reason to stay with a team year-round.
- Utilize strong ownership groups.
- Seeking new owners with established credibility.
- Utilizing outstanding sports management majors trained in the operations of minor league sports.
- Two teams per market (subject to approval by Board of Governors) to reduce field rental and bus expenses.

**And most important: To bring this exciting game to the people!**

## Basics of URL games

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- Play 11 a side (instead of 13 for rugby league or 15 for rugby union).
- Roster can have 18-20 players.
- Timing: Four 15-minute quarters. Clock will stop on all scores, goal attempts, injuries, or unneeded delays.
- Playing field: The EXACT dimensions of an American football field.
- Goal posts: The same ones used in American football.
- Sidelines, pylon/flags are considered out of bounds. Any player tackled out of bounds loses possession.
- Teams get six tackles to score or turn over ball. Teams usually kick ball on last tackle (although can do it earlier) to gain territorial advantage. After a tackle in the first 5, tackled player must “play-the-ball” to a teammate to start next tackle.
- Defense must give 10 yards after a tackle, except for two players who made original tackle who cannot tackle again until they also go 10 yards back.



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- 14 interchanges (substitutions) allowed a game. Players can return although it costs an interchange.
- **Try:** 4 points and they kick for conversion based on where they score. Ball must be grounded.
- **Goal:** 2 points from conversion or penalty kick.
- **Field Goal:** 1 point. Dropped on the ground and kicked during play. Usually done near end of half as to get tiebreaker or insurmountable lead.
- Knock-on: Fumbling ball forward. Loss of possession.
- Passes must be backwards or to the side.
- Other rules similar to recognized laws of rugby league.
- Season starts in March or April 2012, usually Fridays and Saturdays, once a week.
- Dual round-robin (home and away all teams), or maximum 16 regular season games.
- Top half of teams go to playoffs, with potential bye for top teams.
- Players: \$100-150/game.
- “Pay to play, pay more to win.” 25% of league sponsorships go to bonus pool for team wins.
- Visiting team gets 25% of gate ticket sales (but not season tickets or tickets from sponsorship packages).



## A professional league means a professional approach

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There are unfortunately many examples in minor league sports of unprofessional and/or unethical characters who claim leases they don't have, who then solicit tryout dues, sponsorships, and ticket sales without leases in place, and a number of other unsavory actions.

Even legitimate efforts fail when management falls to temptations out of desperation.

The United Rugby League would rather NOT play than start a league without everything in place upfront. We believe we shouldn't have to anyway, the rules of gridiron rugby and the setup of the league makes this effort easy to execute.

We believe the owners who sign up for URL, following a rational and deliberate action plan, will bring in quality people to make this a league people care about.

*So the URL business plan has three levels of investment, to PROTECT THE OWNERS:*

*INITIAL, VENUE RENTAL, AND FRANCHISE FEE.*

*We do NOT officially declare the league for marketing purposes until at least six teams pass all three levels.*

*As such, you are NOT to raise revenues from tryout fees, sponsorships, and ticket sales until that time. (The exception being a conditional team jersey naming rights deal and of course additional investors for the team.)*

*This would be an egregious breach of contract and cause for contract termination.*

## The ABSOLUTE deadline: September 17, 2011

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*“Pressure makes diamonds.” --General George Patton.*

ALL leases and franchise agreements MUST be agreed to by September 17, 2011.

**NO exceptions. NO extensions. NO kidding.**

**This will be communicated to anybody and everybody.**

On that date, the Board of Governors shall meet to agree to the league and accept franchises.

During the next few days after are the official press conferences and the start of ticket and sponsorship sales.

Any franchise not 100% ready will not play in 2012.

**We will need six months minimum to plan and to market.**

We will need every one of those months.

You are welcome to get your franchise ready sooner.

The date can be moved up if six teams are ready.

## Investment Level I: INITIAL

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- \$50,000. Owner also pays additional costs of incorporation for the team and league dues for foreign incorporation in that state if needed.
- All potential ownership groups must be approved by the Commissioner, who will properly examine qualifications and backgrounds of each ownership group.
- Pays for costs of initial logo design and trademark, and initial league startup costs. League owns the name and logos; you will have rights to use it for marketing while a franchise owner while under contract.
- League will create and own your team website, to make sure all websites are regularly updated. There will be a modest processing fee for each sponsor added on that website once franchise is “official.”
- Ownership group shall have right to allow a second team in the market (for purpose of competition, and sharing of field costs), if the Board of Governors approves (initial market investor only). This would likely utilize natural rivalries in a region. For example, Asheville vs. Western Carolina, etc.
- Person can be involved in one ownership group. Multiple team ownerships are not permitted. Owners cannot be related to each other.

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- Other rugby leagues and media networks are NOT permitted any ownership stake in the URL or any team. (It would be a conflict of interest.)
- We will NEVER be another country's minor league! There will be limits of one player from any NRL or SuperLeague team on a URL team roster. Eventually in the top tier we aim to buy and sell contracts like "the big boys."
- Press release shall state ownership group has a tentative franchise for team. Name and logo debuted.
- You CAN advertise group to get public support in case it is needed for any reason, and to take names of interested parties (ticket buyers, sponsors, players), and then use that list to invite all of them to your press conference when team is officially announced.
- If for any reason league does not play in 2012, you have rights to pursue team again for 2013.

## Investment Level II: VENUE RENTAL

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- Depends on rental fees. Anticipate rental fees around \$1,500 a game. Also anticipate additional costs for security and working with local school's athletic booster club for concession sales.
- Each ownership group shall work with the URL to negotiate with your venue.
- Discuss with league any potential upgrades you might want from your local government and/or sports authority.
- A key component in our leases is a REQUIRED deposit for ALL rental dues for the year upfront.
- We will NOT say "we'll pay you later." That means you don't have the resources to pay the rent let alone run the team. Most venues will require a deposit anyway.
- In exchange, the venue contract must state if for any reason the team does not play, the team gets 75-80% of their deposit returned OR the rental is for the 2013 season (ownership group can lobby for one or both of those conditions in the lease). The rationale is the renting venue would make about a 50% profit on the rental if the team plays, and will make a 20-25% profit just for the conditional rental if the team doesn't play.

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- If practical, include provisions to make sure team has access to that or another venue for practices and the tryouts.
- Upon completion of lease, ownership **MUST** pay the deposit right away. Will have 30 days or the deadline (whichever is sooner) to pay the deposit. **Can NOT state or imply publicly or privately you have a lease unless it's paid for.**
- League does NOT get any part of the lease fees.
- All who pass this level is granted by the Commissioner a provisional membership to the Board of Governors.
- Each team at this time should be getting a staff together. Each team is required to have a full-time office and have only Sports Management graduates or senior students in that major on the staff. Keep in touch with the URL and your local colleges' Sports Management programs.

**Loving a sport or even playing a sport is not the same as being a Sports Management professional. Not when it comes to your staff.**

## Investment Level III: FRANCHISE FEES

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- Franchise ownership is \$100,000. \$1,000 home game/\$10,000 minimum a year.
- Team must show letter of credit or otherwise clearly demonstrate they have resources for all expenses upfront.
- \$5,000 for each home playoff game.
- Team responsible for field liability insurance applicable to their state's laws.
- On September 17, 2011, if there are enough teams who have qualified on all three levels, the Board of Governors meet in Asheville, North Carolina to accept and sign franchise agreements.
- Commissioner MUST approve each application as well.
- Upon approval, then and only then will franchises pay the franchise fees, all upfront.
- Then the Commissioner shall schedule press conferences to officially announce the league and teams in each city...AND THEN THE REAL FUN BEGINS! 😊

## From Announcement Day forward...

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- Use your staff of Sports Management professionals to devise a SWOT analysis, including game day operations, promotions, contests, and sideline advertising, in coordination with your venue and the URL.
- Team responsible for any alcohol regulations and laws.
- Team may not have alcohol or tobacco advertising on their uniforms.
- Teams get 25% of leaguwide sponsorships, evenly divided.
- All teams in one state must start and contribute \$7,500 per team a year for a non-profit state chapter of GRL to get the sport in high schools at the varsity level.
- Each team shall form a booster club. Mainly for potential assistance in housing of players and game day operations, and to raise funds for equipment as allowed. Booster club by-laws need to be approved by the team and URL. Booster clubs should have first meeting around November 2011.
- Start advertising! Get on sports radio, sponsor inexpensive game day events at high school and college football and basketball games. Get flyers at the venue rented. Get a mascot.
- Team tryouts probably in January or February 2012.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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