

Tough Scrum

Simon Drakeford on It's a Rough Game but Good Sport, his new book about the history of rugby in Shanghai

You began researching the history of rugby in Shanghai after you found out that a rugby player in 1907 had the same last name as you do. How did you first stumble upon his existence?

In February 2010, I received a text message from my teammate Charles 'Chip' Johnson. He had been researching the history of the old Shanghai Rugby Football Club at the Xujiahui Library in Shanghai. "Simon," he texted, "a Drakeford played rugby for Shanghai in 1907." Shortly afterwards, he showed me a grainy photograph on his mobile phone of the Shanghai team playing rugby in the 1930s. The Club hooker had me hooked. **What's it like being historian of the Shanghai Rugby Football Club? What are your day-to-day duties?** Being the Historian of SRFC is a position I was given as a result of my research. Totally voluntary and unpaid! I see my



role as discovering the past and then keeping modern records as much as possible. **Your book has been described as "telling the history of Shanghai through the lens of a rugby club."**

How much does the history of rugby in Shanghai parallel the history of expats in Shanghai in general? From 1867 to 1950, my book has shown how the lives of rugby players and the peaks and troughs of rugby ran closely with those of Shanghai. In 1867, there was a large enough [expat] population to play football. It was a relatively peaceful time in Shanghai after the first opium war and the Taiping rebellions. Time therefore to play football. The biggest influence on rugby was the

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need for the West to its Western residents the [governing] Chiwarlords) to mid 1930s gression). Thousands

Shanghai and many of them played rugby. The rugby-playing police were favored recruits for the Special Branch, and were at the forefront in developing techniques and tactics to deal with gangsters, riots and kidnappers in the 1930s, when Shanghai was a lot more violent than Chicago and its Mafia. **Do you think that rugby is as valued among Shanghai expat sports fans now as it was in 1867? What value does it hold for you?** The big games in Shanghai pre-1950 attracted up to 3,000 paying spectators and were big occasions reported widely in the press. The build-up to the games, practice matches and team selection were dissected and the resulting win or loss commented on. Today, very little is mentioned and a big game is lucky to attract 100 spectators. But to the individual players, it is just as important today as it was then. The spirit of 'playing the game' remains identical. The concepts of sportsmanship, respect for the opposition, being humble in victory and dignified in defeat are the same today and fiercely protected. **★ Erica Martin**

Find it: *It's a Rough Game but Good Sport* is available in bookstores around Shanghai.

Sports Events

Sports

Saturday, Jun. 14

Stanley Cup Finals Viewing Party

Dragon Events is giving hockey fans a chance to catch a showing of the Stanley Cup live at 7 in the morning. Head there at the crack of dawn to see the best teams in America's NHL battle it out for hockey's most prestigious prize. RMB50 pre-sale, RMB100 at the door. 7am-12pm

Feiyang Skating Center 136-5195-7249
www.dragoneventschina.com

ShanghaiPRIDE 2014 Run & Pink BBQ

Pride in Shanghai has always been uniquely its own, and markedly different from the celebration in other cities because of its lack of a parade. This year, its ever-innovative organizers plan to take to the streets, but in a different way. The Pride Run will be followed by a BBQ to recharge your strength for following week of parties. 9am-2pm

The Langham, Xintiandi 2330-2288,
shpride.com

Monday, Jun. 16

Iconx Summer Skateboarding Camp

Shanghai's first indoor skatepark hosts weekly summer skateboarding lessons beginning on June 16. The camp features regular days of coaching mixed with visits to other skate parks and special events. ¥1,800 for a full summer session, which covers five weeks. 1-5pm

Iconx Indoor Skatepark 6215-2991,
www.iconx.com

Saturday, Jun. 21

Monthly Stableford

Expat golf group SIGS hosts their monthly game in partnership with Shanghai Brewery. ¥1080 gets you a buggy, a caddy and a full day on the open green. Dust off your pom-pommed hat and plaid pants and start practicing your swing. 12-5pm

Lake Malaren Golf Resort 5659-0008,
www.sigschina.com



add your event

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