

# Rugged rugby in spotlight

## Charity tournament features 7 matches

By **BOB FORTUNA**  
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

### CLEVELAND

Charity and rugby will go hand in hand at the 16th annual Cleveland Cup Rugby Tournament on Saturday.

Seven teams from throughout the seven-county metropolitan area will vie for the Cleveland Cup or compete in an exhibition of old-timers at Humphrey's Athletic Complex, Groovewood Ave. at E. 161 St., North Collinwood.

A seven-game schedule begins at 9 a.m. There is no charge for the games.

Teams competing include the CATS (Cleveland Area Touring Side) Rugby Club, Cleveland Rovers, Cleveland RFC (Rugby Football Club), Cleveland FOG (Flipping Old Guys) and Cleveland HOR (Harried Old Rovers).

Proceeds from the annual event will benefit the National Head Injury Foundation, an awareness-spreading organization based in Southborough, Mass.

"The last two years the money was donated to the homeless," said CATS captain Carl Vella.

This year's Cleveland Cup has a special significance to the CATS. Brett Jones, 21, and Kevin Sopko, 21, former CATS players and football players at Kirtland High School, were two of four people who died in October in a one-car crash on U.S. 6 in Kirtland.

A benefit celebration after the Cleveland Cup champion is crowned will be from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. at Champions Sports Bar in downtown Cleveland. Advance tickets are \$10 and \$12 at the door.

"Proceeds are earned through sponsorships in the Cleveland Cup program," said CATS president Ed Cvelbar. "Plus, whatever money we make from the benefit celebration."

The CATS, runner-up in the Ohio Junior Division, has a 35-player roster. Next season, the CATS will compete in the Senior Division, along with the Cleveland Rovers and Cleveland RFC.

The Rovers, champions of four of the last five Cleveland Cups, are considered the west side Senior Division team. They have 50 active members.

The Cleveland Rovers, playing their first season in the Ohio Senior Division, went 5-5 in the fall.

"We've been together for about 10 years," Rovers president Tom Schloemer said. "The spring season basically consists of two tournaments. It's a time to recruit players for the fall season."

Greg Hair is the president of the Cleveland RFC, the east side Senior Division team that has 40 players.

"Most of us live on the east side or near west side of Cleveland," Hair, an attorney, said. "We practice twice a week at Quarry Park in Cleveland Heights."

Hair said there's a big difference in the level of play from Junior to Senior Division.

"The skill of the players is the big difference," Hair said. "There's better strategy at the Senior Division level. The Rovers found that out last season and CATS will find out in the fall."

"Right now, CATS plays seniors just once or twice during the spring. It's a different story when you play at that level each week for eight or 10 weeks."

Hair, an Alabama native, said he's been playing rugby for 10 years.



PD/ROBIN LAYTON KINSLEY

Ed Cvelbar, a member of the Cleveland Area Touring Side Rugby Club, leaps for the ball during a recent team practice for Saturday's 16th Cleveland Rugby Cup.

Schloemer said a majority of the rugby players were football players or wrestlers in high school.

"Rugby certainly isn't for everyone," Schloemer said. "If you have size, you're a step ahead of everyone. But speed and quickness are more essential than size."

"You not only have to know how to give out the hits. You have to learn how to take the hits, too."

The Cleveland FOG and HOR are in the Old Boys Club.

"The Old Boys Club has been known as the team for the guys 35 and over," said Joe Zone, president of the HOR and founder of the Rovers. "But it's actually for the guys who don't have the time to put into a full season. We play two games a season."

Zone said the HOR has about a 200-player membership.

"On any given day, we can have as many as 25 guys show up," Zone said. "You have to remember, most of our players either have time-consuming jobs or they live out of town."

Zone said the rivalry between the FOG and HOR is solid.

"A lot of us either played together or played against each other when we were coming up," Zone said. "We play hard when we're out there. But as you get older, you mellow out."

The HOR and FOG are not eligible to play for the Cleveland Cup. Rather, they'll square off in a match before the Cleveland Cup championship game.

Anyone who wants to join the Cleveland Cup celebration should call Carl Vella at 446-9030 or Ed Cvelbar at 531-3990.

### Rules of play governing rugby

Rugby, a fast, rough game played by two teams of players, originated from an 1823 intramural soccer game at Rugby School in Rugby, England.

Each team tries to score by kicking, passing or carrying the ball until it kicks it over the opponent's goal or touches it down behind the opponent's goal.

A "try" is worth four points. A conversion kick is worth four points, and a team scores three points on a penalty kick. The team scoring the most points wins.

Each team puts 15 players on the field to play two 40-minute halves. There's a five-minute break between halves. There are no timeouts, and substitutions are allowed only for an injured player. However, no more than two substitutions per team because of injured players are allowed.

The field is no more than 75 yards wide and 157 yards long. Goal lines are 110 yards apart. Goals posts are 18 feet apart and more than 11 feet high. The goal posts are connected by a crossbar.

The rugby ball is a rounder version of an American football. It is 11 to 12 inches long, 24-25 inches around the center and weighs 13.5 to 15.5 ounces.

Game officials include a referee and two touch judges. The referee enforces the rules and serves as the scorekeeper. Touch judges signal when and where the ball goes in or out of bounds and whether kicks are good.

— Bob Fortuna