



# Transferability Toolkit



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# Introduction

We all know participation in sport benefits our physical and mental well-being, as well as creating social change for the wider community. Why – then – are there still so many people who face significant barriers to participating in mainstream sport as equal members? Where are their voices? Why do we still use labels, categories and special projects which belong to the past, dividing people by ability, disability, gender or background?

We believe it's time to look at the future with different eyes.

A future where diversity is celebrated as a resource, and where sports clubs provide real opportunities for people of all abilities to work together and empower themselves. Rugby has always led the way in inclusion, underpinned by an incredible ethos, based on solidarity, respect, discipline, teamwork, and the MIXAR project has once again reinforced this belief. This is the reason why we are incredibly proud to present this booklet, hoping that Mixed Ability will inspire other clubs to start our same journey.

In this brochure we will try to outline what Mixed Ability is, what are the main issues we encounter and, of course, our suggestions to reach positive and inclusionary outcomes. Each section focuses on a key topic that underpins the Mixed Ability ethos, reflecting on the barriers and challenges and how to overcome them and putting this knowledge into the public domain. But the Transferability Toolkit is not just this document. This Toolkit is intended to complement the Mixed Ability Rugby Guide and be a flexible educational resource which takes into account experiences gathered during the project and encompasses disabled and non-disabled participants' views.

We hope that our experiences will provide you with the incentive and some of the knowledge to make it happen for clubs and communities with whom you are involved, setting up successful and sustainable teams!

We believe the lessons collected in this Toolkit are valid for many different sports, and will enable coaches, clubs and organisations working in different countries and social contexts to promote longlasting social inclusion in their communities through Mixed Ability sport activities. The reward awaiting us is a fairer and more equal society, for everyone!

**The MIXAR team**

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PART 1

# WHAT IS MIXED ABILITY?

## The Mixed Ability Model

The Mixed Ability model aims to promote social inclusion through sport, education and advocacy. The practical element, Mixed Ability sport, encourages social inclusion by integrating players regardless of dis/ability into a mainstream sport setting in their local community, playing non-adapted sports. Mixed Ability sport emphasises the importance of regular, frequent and sustainable provision, self-determination, club membership and opportunities for social interaction for all.

In this respect, it differs notably from other approaches that promote a separate and/or adapted approach to participation. The Mixed Ability model was first developed through rugby where it grew organically from a lack of provision for disabled people to play full-contact rugby. In rugby, the model has been shown to have positive impacts at the individual through to the community level ([Corazza and Dyer, 2017](#)).

The Mixed Ability model represents a radical approach to promoting meaningful inclusion and challenging the ablest culture of sport and broader society. The research<sup>1</sup> highlights that the Mixed Ability model has the potential for positive impacts (from the individual to community level) and that fundamental perception shifts around dis/ability can take place when disabled participants are fully integrated into mainstream sports clubs. For these positive impacts to be achieved, the educational component must be embedded alongside practical activities in order to ensure 'authentic' Mixed Ability provision and provide support/guidance to all involved.

**Mixed Ability rugby:** 15 a-side rugby union played abiding by World Rugby Laws for the game with a greater emphasis on rugby's core values and the inclusion of all participants. Players with and without disabilities play together on the same team.

## IMAS

The Mixed Ability model is being developed and championed by the not-for-profit organisation, **International Mixed Ability Sports (IMAS)**. IMAS delivers practical Mixed Ability sports provision and training to organisations across the sports, disability, healthcare and education sectors around inclusion, diversity and the Mixed Ability model. It also works with national and international organisations across these sectors, such as with national governing bodies (NGBs), universities and national health services to inform policy and practice around sport and inclusion more broadly. IMAS trainers are all Mixed Ability participants, from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities, who share experiences and learning through interactive and accessible resources.

See the IMAS website for more information:  
[www.mixedabilitysports.org](http://www.mixedabilitysports.org)

## What is MIXAR

MIX.A.R. (Mixed Ability Rugby for All) is an Erasmus+ Sport Collaborative partnership which aims to transfer, experiment and implement the Mixed Ability model in rugby across 5 European countries. Rugby is a sport that is becoming more and more popular, whose founding values such as teamwork, integrity, respect, solidarity and passion are in line with the vision of a fully inclusive society. The project brings together seven partners with different and complementary skills, experiences and competencies, which already incorporate a strong commitment to social inclusion in their work: the coordinator FIR, Federazione Italiana Rugby (IT), IMAS - International Mixed Ability Sports (UK), INICO - University of Salamanca, Instituto Universitario de Inclusión en la Comunidad (ES), Sunday's Well Rebels Rugby Football Club (IRL), Per Formare srl (IT), RV - Rugby Vlaanderen (B), FER Federación Española Rugby (ES).



# MIXED ABILITY manifesto



Sport has the power to transform lives making us healthier and happier, and yet there are people excluded or segregated because of stigma, prejudice or personal perceptions of their capability.



Mixed Ability is a social movement within sports, actively promoting inclusion and equality through a sense of belonging and membership to a group, team or club.



Too often sport is seen as the prerogative of elite athletes or established majorities. Grassroots sport can also be responsible for excluding minorities allowing access only to charitable or segregated activities.



Mixed Ability Sports follows the same rules and regulations of mainstream sports without adaptations, and only minor adjustments to take into account individual participant needs.



Mixed Ability recognises the right of everyone to participate in community sports without being separated, classified or labelled.



In breaking down these barriers Mixed Ability Sport creates opportunities for marginalised communities to challenge the established status quo and affirm their right to equal participation.

A photograph of three Italian rugby players on a field. The player on the right has a bloody nose and is being supported by the player on the left, who has a bloody hand. A third player is partially visible on the far left. They are wearing white jerseys with blue accents and the Italian national emblem. The background is a blurred green field with other players and spectators.

PART 2

# RISKS



## **Risk, A Necessary Evil?**

One of the biggest concerns around disabled people's inclusion within mainstream sport, and contact sports like rugby specifically, has to do with the risk of injury. It is important to raise both participation and awareness of Mixed Ability (MA) rugby and the risk of injury is a common concern. Below we have detailed our reasons why we believe this risk is manageable and even necessary in the journey to full inclusion.

## **The Full Experience**

As with all MA sports, MA rugby is played to the same regulations as mainstream rugby with competition against local social sides encouraged to spread the MA model of inclusion. This ensures that MA teams remain within the mainstream structure and aren't segregated to only play against other MA teams in a separate league. In England we have seen MA teams play fixtures against opposition from as high as National One whilst in Argentina Los Pumpas played against the national team, the Pumas! Once again, this rightfully raises questions about ensuring the safety of players and we have found a simple briefing prior to the game to be the most effective means to achieve a social yet competitive fixture. Utilising the 'tackle who needs to be tackled' ethos allows the contact intensity of a game to vary depending on the rugby-competency of the individual in possession. By playing mainstream opponents it allows for MA teams to access all of rugby's many benefits be that physical on the pitch or social in the bar afterwards!

## **Duty of Care**

On the infrequent occasions that we receive resistance to Mixed Ability rugby, 'duty of care' is often cited as a reason that it can't be delivered. This generally comes in the form of questions such as 'don't we have an increased duty of care to protect these players from injury?' In short, the answer is no. As with any sporting activity the club and coach involved have a duty to deliver sport safely through effective preparations and safeguarding. However, delivering sport 'safely' doesn't mean that any element of risk must be eliminated. Whether playing rugby at International level or in a friendly between two local Vets sides accidents are inevitable and an accepted part of the game. What is key is that all players understand the potential risks involved and then consent to participate.

## **‘Unwrapping the Cotton Wool’**

For many disabled participants the opportunity to play full contact rugby will often be their first experience of playing contact sport. It is commonplace for parallel sports to be offered that remove any elements that can be considered dangerous, even if this is to the detriment to the sport itself. Mixed Ability rugby, and Mixed Ability sports in general, provide an opportunity to move away from the misconception that disabled people are a unique section of society that require protection and instead empowers them with the autonomy to decide what sport they would like to engage in.

## **Encouraging Independence**

For players new to rugby stepping out onto a pitch to test yourself against 15 opponents for the first time is a daunting prospect, regardless of disability. However, from a player’s perspective when a coach sends you out onto the field it is a moment of immense pride as it illustrates that they trust you to participate both safely and competitively. By allowing players to participate despite risk it helps to build independence and confidence that can often spill into other areas of life. For example, we have seen how individuals who may previously have required support to attend training have gained the confidence to attempt another ‘risky’ activity in the form of travelling independently. In this instance whilst the risk is more likely to be ending up in the wrong place rather than injury the premise is the same and the confidence gained via rugby is transferable leading to a greater level of independence.





*Overall it is our contention that whilst risk certainly isn't to be celebrated, it is necessary if we are to open all sports to the MA model. Sports must be offered 'warts and all' to participants in order for them to access the full array of benefits which we believe far outweigh the associated risks.*





PART 3

# TERMINOLOGY

## **‘Us’ and ‘Them’**

Lack of guidance and understanding around Mixed Ability is evident in the language used by some of those involved, which included the dichotomy of ‘normal’ (us) and ‘them’ (MA participants). This is not in keeping with the MA ethos of ‘all of us together’, but perhaps reflects the complex interplay of broader societal perceptions of disability as ‘other’. And this may be amplified in a sporting context where the more common scenario is for disabled people to take part in segregated sports. Highlighting the differences between segregated disability sport and MA sport is a regular challenge when trying to explain and promote MA sport and is further complicated by the high profile of elite disability sport.

## **Volunteers or participants?**

The MA model seeks to challenge societal perceptions of disabled people as requiring ‘charity’ by emphasising that everyone is a participant in sport, rather than labelling people either ‘MA participants’ or ‘volunteers’. The MA vision is that they are all participants.







## Welcoming or inclusive?

Many club members emphasise how inclusive their club already is. However, although there is no doubt that many clubs are clearly welcoming and wouldn't turn any potential member away that approached them, some are still seen as exclusive because many would not approach the Club in the first instance. This could be a barrier to many approaching a sport such as rugby. Clubs need to be aware of the difference between being welcoming, which is a very positive aspect of club culture for nurturing MA, and being inclusive, which may involve thinking more critically about existing barriers the members may not even be aware of.

## Understanding Mixed Ability

Defining Mixed Ability, and how it differs from 'disability' sports provision in particular, is at times a challenge. This led to different interpretations in terms of practical provision, and therefore it might be useful to clarify what Mixed Ability is not.



# MIXED ABILITY is not



## **TIME-LIMITED PROJECT**

Mixed Ability is a long-term commitment, with frequent and regular sessions, not a box ticking exercise. All Mixed Ability activities are created with sustainability as a key objective.



## **DISABILITY SPORT**

Mixed Ability is open to both disabled and non-disabled participants. Whilst Mixed Ability participants and teams do play against each other, we believe competing against mainstream opposition is key to accessing the full social benefits of the Mixed Ability model.



## **SEPARATE TO MAINSTREAM CLUBS**

A Mixed Ability participant and team fits within a club in the same way any other member or team does. For example, Mixed Ability rugby teams play to the 'just another team' ethos.



## **QUICK FIX TO INCLUSIVITY**

Simply hosting a Mixed Ability activity doesn't make a club inclusive, participants must be fully integrated in all aspects of a club.



## **POLITICALLY-CORRECT 'DISABLED SPORT'**

The 'Mixed' in Mixed Ability refers to the variety of abilities that are competing together. We all are Mixed Ability players, regardless of dis/ability.



## **CLASSIFYING OR IDENTIFYING PEOPLE**

Mixed Ability does not identify or classify participants based on their differences. Many participants join Mixed Ability activities as they do not want to be singled out.



## **ABOUT USING DIFFERENT RULES & REGULATIONS**

Mixed Ability sports are played to the standard rules and regulations agreed by the national governing body. 'Reasonable adjustments' may be made, but without creating special rules.

A group of men, likely athletes, are shown in a celebratory mood. They are wearing dark-colored sports jerseys with red and white accents. Some jerseys have logos, including a frog and the word 'AVI'. The men are clapping and shouting, with their mouths open. The background is a bright, outdoor setting, possibly a sports field. A semi-transparent orange banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text 'PART 4' and 'IMPACT OF MIXED ABILITY'.

PART 4

# IMPACT OF MIXED ABILITY

Mixed Ability can generate several positive impacts for those involved. This is true for disabled and non-disabled participants and can be identified as being on an individual (e.g. physical, health benefits, mental well-being, self-confidence and belonging), club (e.g. a shift to a more inclusive culture, recruitment of new members, more accessible infrastructure and practitioner development) and societal (e.g., shifts in perceptions of dis/ability, raised awareness of potential barriers to participation and enhanced communication) level.

### Impacts on the individual

- Improved skills
- A sense of 'giving back' to the club and sport
- A chance to explore a new sport for MA beginners
- An improved awareness of social difference for non-disabled participants in particular
- An ability to communicate with a broader range of people



### Club-level impacts

- Promoting a culture of accessibility, vulnerability and openness. For example, the more flexible, 'sessional' payment model for MA has allowed others to start conversations about struggles with affording annual membership
- Improving and diversifying communication strategies, for example, around social events
- Informing other rugby initiatives (e.g. Try for Change in England and Spirit of Rugby in Ireland)
- Offering an additional, welcoming space for rugby for those who are struggling to join in with other club activities temporarily, for example, because of mental health reasons or other commitments

### Societal impact

- Challenging perceptions of (dis)ability and assumptions that MA beginners would be less able than other beginners
- Raising awareness of social difference and encouraging reflection on barriers others may face in society
- Reducing fears of communication with those perceived as different to oneself



# IMPACT CASE STUDY

## SUNDAYS WELL REBELS – IRELAND

Being involved in the MIXAR project has greatly impacted Sundays Well RFC and Sundays Well Rebels Mixed Ability Team. When the Rebels Mixed Ability team started in Sundays Well RFC in 2014, they were the first and only Mixed Ability team in the country. Mixed Ability rugby was not supported by our national governing body (the IRFU), only disability tag rugby was available. This held true as the European Erasmus + Project MIXAR began in early 2018.

Through MIXAR, the team and club created links with representatives from other national governing bodies, FIR, FER, Rugby Flanders

*When the Rebels Mixed Ability team started in Sundays Well RFC in 2014, they were the first and only Mixed Ability team in the country.*

and IMAS. They committed to raising the issue of support of Mixed Ability rugby with their counterparts in the IRFU. This increased awareness of Mixed Ability rugby at a national level in Ireland, and also at the highest levels of the IRFU. MIXAR also gave the team and club increased credibility in their mission to grow Mixed Ability rugby here in Ireland.

Since the project began, the IRFU have now come on board (August 2018) and are supporting Mixed Ability rugby through their Spirit of Rugby Program at community level. Alan Craughwell, from Sundays Well Rebels has joined the disability sub-committee of the IRFU which oversaw a pilot project in Ireland for the 2018 / 2019 season of three Mixed Ability teams. Malone Tornadoes, of Malone RFC in Belfast began training in September 2018. The DLSP Eagles, of De La Salle Palmerstown in Dublin began in January 2019 and both teams joined the Sundays Well Rebels playing Mixed Ability rugby.





The IRFU, Munster Branch and Ulster Branch all had representatives attend the Cork transnational meeting in November 2018. The review of the pilot project at the end of the 2018 / 2019 season was very positive with new teams interested in starting. Bantry Bay RFC in West Cork have begun training with their Mixed Ability team in September 2019 and the first Women's Mixed Ability team in Ireland is due to begin training in October 2019 in Ballincollig RFC, also in Co. Cork.



## **Federación Española de Rugby – Spain**

MIXAR has been the starting point in FER to officialise our previous concern about being a Federation for all and everyone in Spain. It has given us the opportunity to learn more about inclusion and rugby and to draw new paths for more players to join the game. We believe that FER must be plural and give space to different models and explain the benefits from each one, so that everyone can choose what they feel suits them better. It has allowed us to get a closer relationship with clubs that had already started this journey and give them institutional support.



## **Unione Capitolina Rugby Roma – Italy**

The impact has been exciting and has allowed us to set up a completely new entity. What has made interesting and stimulating this project is its characteristic of being a form of integrated rugby: an integration that tears down the barriers caused by disability, allowing players to play finally an active role and be complementary to our project. Non-disabled players have had the chance to face different kinds of disability and understand to what extent integration is beneficial for the whole community.









A group of soccer players in red jerseys are celebrating, with their arms raised in the air. One player in the foreground has an Italian flag painted on his cheek. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

PART 5

# DOS AND DON'TS

# DOS

## HAVE A CLEAR VISION

Setting out expectations is a crucial moment, be very clear about what you are trying to achieve, what kind of rugby this is, keeping in mind that we want to promote equal membership, independence and inclusion in the mainstream rugby family.

## GET STARTED

If there are players who want to play then find a club and a pitch and just get going. It will grow best by word of mouth and support from the club, local community and governing bodies will all come once it's up and running. If people can see what it's about on the pitch, then it is much easier than trying to explain it in a meeting room.

## GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE INVOLVED

A champion/driver or qualified rugby coach who will be able to keep training and games challenging for players of all abilities are essential. Also, if you know anyone with links to a disability service provider, school or college which has people with disabilities it makes it easier to spread the word and have a supply of players.

## USE EXISTING EXPERIENCE

A presentation to the Club committee can be a good starting point to attract veterans or retired players. They can bring a great deal of expertise to support the team and don't forget that players with disabilities will become your best role-models.

## CREATE A ROUTINE

You can create a sense of routine through regular training sessions, games with local community sides, logistics arrangements, so that the team can meet other teams and understand its improvement goals and points to strengthen. Don't underestimate the power and the sense of belonging a jersey and a badge can create.

## ASK QUESTIONS

No one knows everything, and every player is different. Communicate, try to involve your players in determining what they want and what is good for them.

## GO ON TOUR

It doesn't have to be an expensive trip abroad, even a bus trip to the next town over for a match. As long as there is an opportunity for the more experienced players to share some rugby tales and a good sing song on the bus home then it will be a success. Tours are what brings the players together off the pitch and create lasting positive memories of your rugby experience.



# DON'TS

## **DON'T UNDERESTIMATE A PLAYERS ABILITY**

Mixed Ability rugby is not just for athletic people who happen to have an intellectual disability or players who have proven they are very good at tag or touch rugby. Like any regular contact rugby team, there is a position for everyone, and all players will have something to offer the team and club.

## **DON'T CHANGE THE GAME**

Mixed Ability rugby is just rugby so aim to be just another rugby team. Mixed Ability rugby is full contact rugby so don't advertise it as something else or a modified version of the game.

## **DON'T ADD DISABLED PLAYERS TO AN EXISTING TEAM**

Don't use an existing team like a veterans or social side and add a few players who happen to have disabilities. Mixed Ability rugby should be a new experience for everyone involved and should be open to all – young, old, experienced players, those new to the sport or new to the club.

## **DON'T BE AFRAID TO MAKE MISTAKES**

It's like your first match, you might have watched a lot of games, but the real pitch is a different matter.

## **DON'T TREAT MIXED ABILITY AS A SPECIAL PROJECT**

The Mixed Ability team is just another team in the club, with the same rights and duties of any other team.

## **DON'T BE OVERPROTECTIVE OR PATRONISING**

Independence is a journey, allow people to make informed decisions, but don't make decisions on their behalf.

# RECOMMENDATIONS & TOP TIPS FOR COACHES

## AFFILIATION AND MEMBERSHIP

Aim to have Mixed Ability rugby integrated fully with the national governing body. If it falls under the same community rugby network as the other teams and clubs in your area then it is not dependant on a few people involved, it becomes part of the system.

## PLAY LOCAL TEAMS

Play matches against other local teams who are not Mixed Ability sides. This increases awareness in the wider rugby community and also makes it 'normal' and 'acceptable' to see players with disabilities on the same pitch with everyone else in the club.

## OFFER PATHWAYS

Once your team is established, look to have pathways in and out of Mixed Ability rugby. Under-age or youth teams will give a supply of players from within your own club. Tag or touch rugby teams (which are already in some rugby clubs) can have players who want to progress to the full contact version. Also, if players join the Mixed Ability team in the club and want to play rugby at a higher or more competitive level, create a link with the other teams in the club so that this can be facilitated.

## TIPS FOR COACHING MIXED ABILITY

- Aim to coach a Mixed Ability team the same as any other team playing the sport. Teams at all levels have players of varying abilities.
- Don't limit content by assuming players won't be able to do things - aim high and try it out – if it doesn't work then you can break it down before building back up.
- Coach all aspects of the sport to players - skills, team plays, and fitness. Not many players enjoy the fitness aspect but it is an important part of sport. Try to make it as fun as possible and praise effort, not first place!
- Ensure the team ethos matches your coaching ethos and have clear goals for what you and your players want to achieve. Example: Play good rugby, have fun and make new friends!
- When it comes to matches, reward effort and attendance at training with more game time on the pitch.
- Winning isn't everything! Focus on playing as a team. Continually improving as individual players as well as a team will reap greater long term benefits and sustainability.



PART 6

# PLAYER CASE STUDIES



## **Danny Lynch – Sundays Well Rebels, Ireland**

Danny Lynch is one of the founding players of Sundays Well Rebels, Mixed Ability team. The team began when Alan Craughwell who works for local service provider Cope Foundation read an article about the Bumble Bees in a World Rugby Magazine. Alan thought that several of the guys he knew through his work would be interested in playing Mixed Ability rugby.

Danny was one of these guys who had an interest in rugby but did not want to play tag or a modified version of the sport. He wanted to play the same game that he watched on TV and saw when he supported his local team Munster.

Danny is 6'6" tall and an ideal build for a second row. Getting the opportunity to play a contact sport where more experienced players would tackle him and knock him over was a new feeling for him and one that he enjoyed from the very first night training. Having Danny on the Rebels team means that everyone has to tackle him at some stage and it makes all of the team better players... You need to have your tackle technique right to get him down!

Danny is one of the lively characters who is the life and soul of the team. He is very quick witted and is usually first to get in with joke or smart remark. He was the first player to captain the Rebels and also lifted the first ever Mixed Ability World Cup when the Rebels won the inaugural tournament in Bradford in 2015.

"2015 was a great year for me, it was the year of my lifetime. The best highlight of 2015 for me was becoming a World Cup winning Captain of Sundays Well Rebels Mixed Ability rugby team. In August of that year we went to Bradford to play in the first International Mixed

Ability Rugby Tournament. Mixed Ability rugby is contact rugby played by people with and without disabilities. We are Ireland's first Mixed Ability team. The tournament was a week long and we played teams from Scotland, England and France. In the final we beat the host team the Bradford & Bingley Bumble Bees. The best thing about this is now I have friends from all over the world.

I am now a local sporting Legend! The local Bank of Ireland branch asked me to open the Macroom Business Fair in September 2015 and I also got to tour the Cup back to my old primary school. I also went to Dublin Castle with my team mates to collect a 'Better Together' award for Cope Foundation and Sundays Well RFC. I am very proud of my achievements.

I would really like to share my experiences with other rugby clubs to help them understand and see people's abilities not disabilities. Sundays Well Rebels is the best thing that has happened to me.

In May 2016, Sundays Well Rebels took on the Scottish National Mixed Ability team, The Clan in Murrayfield before the PRO12 final. We were on the back pitch and as all the fans were coming into the final we got to show them how good Mixed Ability rugby is. I have also gone on tours to Italy, Wales and the last World Cup in Spain in 2017. We lost the final but only by 3 points. It was a great week and we got to meet new teams as well as ones we had played before.

Now more teams have started up here in Ireland we have gone to visit them and help them get started. It's great for the Rebels to be able to share what we do with new teams. I am looking forward to next year when we get to host the World Cup in Cork in June 2020. Hopefully we can win back the trophy!"

## **Aritz and Jose Manuel Gurrutxaga – Gaztedi Rugby Taldea, Basque Country, Spain**

In 2013, a training session was organised between Down Araba's leisure programme and some members of Gaztedi Rugby team. As a parents, we observed and felt that everyone had a very goodtime.

As a result of this experience, from the club we were offered the possibility to create a Mixed Ability rugby team made up of people with and without disabilities.

At first, the idea seemed a little crazy given the vision that perhaps out of ignorance we had of this sport, but after a meeting in which David Izquierdo explained the idea they had, we felt encouraged to give it a go, and the truth is that it has been one of the greatest successes of our lives.

At first it seemed to us that this could be very complicated for our son. We soon realised that the good work, commitment and involvement of the people who led the MA team, promoted exponentially the inclusion of all people in the dynamics. In addition the activity is not only sporty, there are also social and educational moments such as the famous 'third half' (post match get together).

When they started playing games against other teams, more people were still cheering. The motivation was high on receiving the invitation to play the first Mixed Ability Rugby World Cup to be held in August 2015 in England in the city of Bradford.

All that involved in preparing such an event for them was something amazing, but nothing comparable to the experience we lived there. We are a family of four, José Manuel and Pilar,



our daughter Olaia and our son with Down Syndrome, Aritz. In Bradford, unfortunately, only Aritz and José Manuel were able to attend, and what happened there was something wonderful, unique and exceptional.

The great atmosphere that was generated among the participants of all the teams, the organisation and the public, but above all the level of inclusion that we live there with our sons and daughters, made that at least in my case, every night in my room I would burst into tears as I relived what had happened throughout the day.

Everything was unbeatable, ignoring the fact that my wife and daughter for work reasons missed this great experience, so I had the job of telling them everything I lived, which wasn't an easy job because they were a lot of emotions difficult to translate into words.

When my son and I got home, I hugged my wife and daughter and broke down to cry in such a way that they thought something bad had happened to me. I immediately told them no, that what had happened to us was a great thing and that I cried with emotion and grief because they hadn't lived it. Following my recount, my daughter was encouraged to play with the women's team, and I was encouraged to play with the veterans team. Of course, we also started playing with the Mixed Ability team.!

In June 2016 Aritz along with four other teammates went to Turin for a match against Chivasso. This meant for us another indescribable moment because for the first time he went there alone, without family and accompanied with his teammates, with his friends.

After the Bradford World Cup in Bradford, I was sure that what I had lived there would be very difficult to repeat, but I was wrong! In August 2017, Vitoria Gasteiz, our city, hosted the second IMART 2017, in which I was immensely lucky to participate as a player with my son. It was brilliantly exciting for the whole family. The most incredible thing came when Aritz got a try while I was just 10 meters away from the play. I was able to hug him right there under the excited gaze of his mother and sister. That day was coincidentally my birthday and it really was the best gift of my life.

All this experience of the World of Mixed Ability has provided for our family an area of enjoyment for all since we live it above all as something wonderful for Aritz seeing him how comfortable he is in that environment.

As far as Aritz is concerned, since he is in the team, we feel that something is changed in him. I have a feeling that we had never seen the real

him before, and sincerely we believe that this is due to rugby, and to everything that comes with this of values and the immense work of the people who work with him always from affection, respect and inclusion. Rugby has become 'his thing', he always waits for training and match days to be with his teammates, no matter how long he has been and waiting to enjoy the third half as well.

We can say that the Mixed Ability is for this family a gift that has come to us from wonderful people who use part of their time to make other people happy. A thousand thanks to everyone!





## Ian Bourne – Hessle Vikings, England

My name is Ian Bourne and I was born in 1966 with Cerebral Palsy as a result of the umbilical cord getting wrapped around my neck at birth, leading to brain damage which affects both my speech and co-ordination. I have always strived to lead as normal a life as I possibly can, working as an administrator for the Local Authority for 25 years and living independently for 20 years.

Upon being made redundant in 2013 I embarked on a variety of projects. These included: delivering my 'Bourne Different' talks on disability, diversity, hate crime and bullying; becoming a member of an Awareness and Employability Forum; becoming a trustee for an Autism drop-in centre and finally, volunteering at a school for children with complex disabilities. It is here that I met Stuart Crooks, the Pastoral Manager at 'Freddies' who is also Head Coach at Hessle RUFC.

He asked me if I was interested in playing a game I have loved and watched since I was a child, I certainly didn't need asking twice!

When I thought about it with some diligence and scrutiny, I identified dexterity may prove an insurmountable barrier – the only thing I'd ever caught is a cold! Well that fear was blown out of the water by our coaches who were quick to demonstrate different ways of both passing and receiving a rugby ball. Our leaders in Stuart, Mally King, Greg Bone and Linus Penna are magnificent people and patient beyond words.

Starting my sporting career at 51, I have now been playing rugby for the 'Hessle Vikings' Mixed Ability team for two years. I am proudly associated with some wonderful people who



have made my dream of playing rugby and donning the colours of a sporting team come true.

It illustrates that anyone can do whatever they desire to do, it may not be at the echelons of international gladiatorial combat, but it proves a point – **If you are willing to try, you can participate!**

There is nothing to stop you, apart from your own self doubt. Anybody can do anything through determination, motivation and drive. We are lucky at Hessle, we are encouraged by wonderful and inspirational people who coach, manage and volunteer for our wonderful club!







## APPENDIX 1

# CONCUSSION SCAT TESTING IN MIXED ABILITY RUGBY

**Maeve D'Arcy**, Head-Coach Sundays Well Rebels

**Ray Dennehy**, Nurse Sundays Well Rebels & Nurse with Cope Foundation

**Michael Moynihan**, Player Sundays Well Rebels & Supervisor with Cope Foundation

### 1.0 Introduction:

Sundays Well Rebels started training in January 2014 are Ireland's first Mixed Ability Rugby Team. In their second season, 2015 a player received a knock to the head during training. This was the first time that the Rebels Backroom Team had to deal with a suspected concussion.

Being a rugby team, the coach removed the player from the field of play and referred him to the team nurse. The guidelines for concussion set out by the IRFU were followed and the player was fine. The standard SCAT test questions were asked and answered, the players balance was checked and advice and a follow up were carried out.

Summary of Concussion Protocols for Rugby:

- Any suspected concussion at training or a match then the player is removed from the field of play.
- They are to be checked by the team / venue medical support.
- The player does not play / drink / drive / exert themselves for the next 48 hours.
- The team manager follows up with the player / their guardian after 48 hours and completes an IRFU injury report form.
- If a concussion is confirmed (any symptoms in 48 hours) then the player must follow the GRTP.

### 2.0 Progression:

#### 2.1 Phase I:

Rebels nurse Ray Dennehy and head coach Maeve D'Arcy struck up a conversation on the night of this incident, both with the same thought – would all of our players on the Mixed Ability Team pass the SCAT test in a baseline check, when we know they are not concussed?

There are several factors that concerned us for our team in particular, mainly:

- Players who have suffered from a brain injury in the past can have memory problems or come across as confused, even though they have not suffered a concussion.
- Some players may be excessively sensitive to noise, even though they have not suffered a concussion.
- Some players may have balance, mobility or co-ordination issues even though they have not suffered a concussion.

We set about modifying the standard SCAT test questions so that they would be more suitable for our Mixed Ability Team. For example, matches are sometimes played in quarters or thirds so asking which half of the match it is would not be suitable.

The questions were modified to the ones listed below.

Scat test Questions Adapted by the Rebels for Mixed Ability Rugby:

1. What venue are we at today?
2. Is it a match or training?
3. Are we at the start or end of the match / training?
4. Had we training or a match last week?
5. What was the last match we played?

## **2.2 Phase 2:**

In 2017, another issue arose when two of the new players that joined us presented different issues. One has quite a severe learning disability and struggles to know what direction he should be playing on the pitch and the other is classified as non-verbal.

We set about reviewing our modified baseline testing again to see if what we had been working with was still valid for the entire squad. The result was that the players all passed the baseline test but the one classified as non-verbal could present a problem going forward. While the nurse, coach and other players could all understand him as they had known him for a while, for a medical professional who meets him for the first time that may not be the case.

## **2.3 Phase 3:**

We began to consider how to modify our baseline SCAT test to find something that would suit the entire squad, including players classified as non-verbal. One of our players, Michael Moynihan works as a Supervisor for Cope Foundation Day Services. Ray and Maeve spoke with Michael to see if we could come up with a solution that would work.

Using picture cards seemed the best solution so that if you ask a non-verbal player any of the questions they can answer by pointing to the correct picture. The picture cards could be used for all players in the squad during testing making it a universal test for baselining on the team.

Ray also reviewed the full SCAT 5 test to see if any other aspects were suitable for our players with disabilities. Some of the language and numeracy tests are not suitable for our players with disabilities. The key learning point for the Rebels and other Mixed Ability Teams is to get to know your players before an issue arises.

The key learning point for the Rebels and other Mixed Ability Teams is to get to know your players before an issue arises.

## **3.0 Conclusion:**

For the coming season, 2019, the Rebels plan to baseline test the squad again but this time using the picture cards to aid the SCAT test questions. We also plan to take a baseline gauge of eye response, balance, co-ordination etc. and record any signs or symptoms that are 'normal' for each player.



## 4.0 Picture Cards

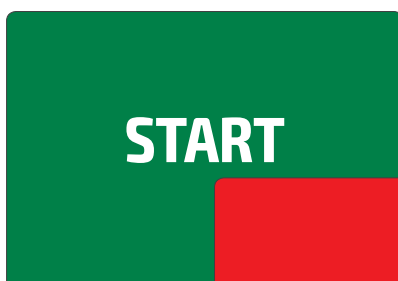
1. What venue are we at today?



2. Is it a match or training?



3. Are we at the start or end of the match / training?



4. Had we training or a match last week?



5. What was the last match we played?



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For help setting up your own Mixed Ability Rugby team or to find out more,  
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