

# **Finland Women's 7s Rugby**

**Annual Review  
2019**





# Introduction

The 2019 season was a year of progress for the Finland 7s programme. Hard work from the players and backroom staff produced a team that played some excellent rugby over the course of the season, resulting in a fourth place overall finish in the Rugby Europe trophy - the best result in the competition since the team earned promotion to the Grand Prix level in 2015. These results by no means come easily. The amount of time, effort and money poured into Finland 7s by those involved is quite staggering and the results we achieve are wholly attributed to those who give so much.

At the centre of everything is the players. They have taken something that begins as a hobby and through their own will and determination, have turned it into a second profession - one that demands much of them. The physical toll that their sport and training takes on them is well documented. The hours that they dedicate to it, both with the team and on their own, are hard to quantify but I can assure you that they are many. The financial sacrifice that they make in order to play for their country remains the biggest debt that we owe them. Each one of them is a shining example of the will of the athlete who is given nothing, so they make it for themselves.

Behind the athletes is a staff that works tirelessly to repay that commitment. It has been a long standing commitment of ours to treat our athletes as professionals, no matter what barriers we face. Mikko Aalto and Rory McIntyre are a fantastic example of how to create something out of nothing. They spend hours of their time working behind the scenes to push the programme forward. With both of them on board, I see a bright future for Finland 7s.

This year presented the challenge of beginning with a fresh medical staff. Thankfully we were rewarded with Anna Viitala, who stepped seamlessly into the role of physiotherapist and medic. Her instant rapport with the players and her care for them throughout camps and tournament season was a huge contributing factor to the team's success this year. In addition to Anna, the help of Otteliina Rantanen and Vicente Ortuno provided valuable support in tournaments overseas. The team owes a huge thanks to them all.

The challenges that face our programme remain as they have in past years. We are able to find ways to deliver a high performance environment with very little in the way of resources, but that will only take us so far. In order to create a sustainable future at the next level for Finland 7s, we must find sources of revenue that will enable us to reduce the financial burden felt by players and eventually, the staff. In addition to this, we must continue to attract more young people to rugby in Finland. Finding ways to attract young people to the sport as participants and fans is the only real way to ensure that rugby has a future in Finland.

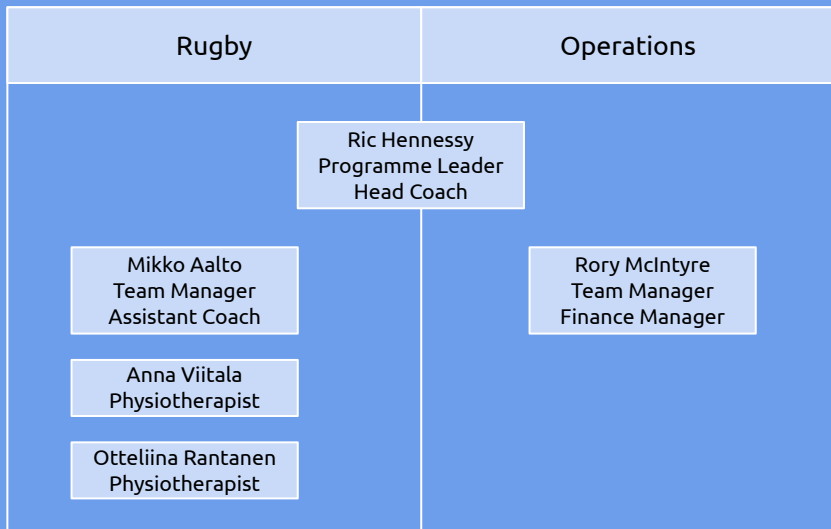
In 2020, we will be continuing our pursuit of excellence on the rugby pitch, whilst finding ways that the national team can further contribute to the growth of rugby at home in Finland.

Kiitos,

Ric Hennessy  
Programme Leader  
Finland Women's 7s National Team

# **1. 2019 Overview - Operations**

# 1.1 Structure and Organisation



The 2019 team was managed again on an entirely voluntary basis. The Programme Leader was in place for his 3rd season. Both Team Managers have been in place since 2018.

The organisation is responsible for all aspects of the 7s national team programme.

This year the team lost its Marketing Manager and previous Physiotherapist. The marketing role was shared between other staff members. Two excellent physiotherapists joined the team for the season.





## 1.2 Squad Composition

27 Athletes in training  
squad

Players representing  
Finland in competition

29



16 Players representing Finland  
in the RE Trophy Series

Clubs represented

Turku (3), Helsinki (10), Warriors (1), Jyväskylä (2),  
Tampere (7), Vaasa (4)

6

The training squad was selected this year in the winter of 2018/19 by a committee consisting of the members of the management team. Potential players were scouted at domestic tournaments, open camps and through conversations with coaches.

For each tournament, the same committee was used to make team selections.

# 1.3 Marketing

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a dark blue rectangular background.

2,300 Likes (500 increase on 2018)

Organic page reach of up to 12,000



@finrugby7s - 1,240 followers (350 increase on 2018)

Combined team >70,000 followers

The loss of our marketing manager left the responsibility for social media with the remaining management team. The team's social media presence continues to improve, as well as the quality of content that the team is producing.

The team remains without an attractive website that would allow us to attract more attention from sponsors.



# 1.4 Finance

| Item                         | Total        |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Holvi fees                   | 90           |
| Eerikkilä                    | 10028        |
| Flights                      | 22693        |
| Transport                    | 300          |
| Accommodation                | 9647         |
| F&B                          | 1214         |
| Competition Entry            | 600          |
| Medical                      | 150          |
| Misc.                        | 90           |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>        | <b>44812</b> |
| SRL allocation               | 8630         |
| Youth development fund       | 1790         |
| Player invoices              | 31547        |
| <b>Total Income</b>          | <b>41967</b> |
| <b>Profit/Loss</b>           | <b>-2845</b> |
| <b>End of season balance</b> | <b>3100</b>  |

Flights were over 50% of the total costs. Hotels and Eerikkilä fees total 43.9% of total costs. Compared to last year, costs are higher. This is due to expensive flights to Trophy tournaments, having to change last minute to Costa Blanca 7s due to Bonn tournament cancellation and SAS strikes, as well as taking 2 teams to Malmö.

|                    | Cost         | Player invoices | Funding used |
|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Camps              | 7434         | 5544            | 1890         |
| Nordic tournament  | 2593         | 2593            | 0            |
| Malmö & Alicante   | 16040        | 13100           | 2940         |
| Trophy tournaments | 18565        | 10310           | 5410         |
| Misc.              | 180          | 0               | 180          |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>44812</b> | <b>31547</b>    | <b>10420</b> |

All funding for 2019 was used. A loss of 2845€ occurred in 2019 year to date. This will be made up through fund raising activities at the end of 2019 and start of 2020.

\*does not include non-training squad camps / activities





## **2. 2019 Overview - Rugby**

## 2.1 Training Matches - Eerikkilä

### Squad

Kaisla Parkkinen  
Heidi Tuomisto  
Susanna Haavisto  
Sarianna Haavisto  
Sanna-Kaisa Lintu  
Mira Saarikoski  
Riikka Nurminen  
Ulla Tuominen  
Eeva Pohjanheimo  
Lilli Tikkanen  
Emmi Ovaskainen  
Heidi Hennessy  
Oona Tolppanen  
Ruusu Halttunen  
Anna Soiluva  
Jonna Ritala  
Ida Herrgård  
Joanna Koskinen  
Hanna Sarinen  
Pauliina Nikkila  
Anni Svanfors  
Johanna Eirola  
Ella Aita

### Staff

Coach: Ric Hennessy  
Team Managers: Mikko Aalto, Rory McIntyre  
Physio: Anna Viitala

### Opponents

Denmark 1  
Norway 1  
Norway 2

**Cost Per Player:** €110

For the first time, Finland hosted two of their Nordic neighbours at their training centre at Eerikkilä. Each team played a series of games against other nations over the course of the weekend. Norway and Finland also brought their development teams, enabling all players to get valuable experience of the tournament environment.

For many of the Finnish players, these games represented an opportunity to get their first taste of international 7s. Ella Aita, Anni Svanfors, Hanna Saarinen and Joanna Koskinen all represented their country for the first time. There were some great successes for both teams, and plenty of tries scored.

The first team's results were particularly encouraging as they recorded solid victories over both of their opponents.

Team Manager Mikko Aalto organised the tournament almost single handedly, liaising with Eerikkilä and the visiting teams. He recruited and managed our volunteer team to ensure a great experience for all.

The team suffered some minor injuries but none proved long term.

Importantly, this tournament sparked a spirit of cooperation between the three Nordic countries involved and will hopefully form the first step towards long-term cooperation.



## 2.2 Tournament- Malmö 7s

### First Team Squad

Eeva Pohjanheimo  
Ulla Tuominen  
Kaisla Parkkinen  
Lilli Tikkanen  
Emmi Ovaskainen  
Mira Saarikoski (C)  
Eve Sapattinen  
Heidi Hennessy  
Anna Soiluva (C)  
Jonna Ritala  
Oona Tolppanen  
Ruusu Halttunen

### Development Squad

Hanna Saarinen  
Anni Svanfors  
Ifeoma Kulmala  
Ida Herrgård  
Susanna Haavisto (C)  
Pauliina Nikkilä  
Heidi Tuomisto  
Noora Plattonen  
Kiira Kupiainen  
Joanna Koskinen  
Annamari  
Kumpulainen

### Staff

Coach: Ric Hennessy  
Team Manager: Mikko Aalto  
Medic: Otteliina Rantanen

### 1st Team Opponents

Malmö RC (W;W;W), Norway  
(W;W), Denmark (W), Tabusoro  
Angels (W)

### Development Team Opponents

Vänersborg RK (L), Lugi RK  
(L;W), Tabosoro Angels (L),  
Kalmar Sodra (W)

**Cost Per Player:** €390



In another new venture, Finland travelled to a tournament with two squads. Resources were a little stretched with only one staff and sparse cover in very windy conditions.

Both teams competed fiercely over the course of the weekend, resulting in Cup and Bowl victories. The first team breezed through the group stages and all the way to the semi finals. Victories over tough opponents from Denmark and Tabosoro earned the squad's first silverware. The development team progressed to the bowl competition after a hard fought first day and played some excellent rugby to take a second trophy for the squad. Noora Plattonen and Annamari Kumpulainen showed excellent spirit to join the team despite having not trained with the squad over the winter.

Once again, there were no major injuries during the tournament and the players were extremely well cared for by Otteliina Rantanen who oversaw player safety through 12 matches.



### Squad

Kaisla Parkkinen  
Lilli Tikkanen  
Ulla Tuomainen  
Emmi Ovaskainen  
Eeva Pohjanheimo  
Susanna Haavisto  
Mira Saarikoski (C)  
Heidi Hennessy  
Anna Soiluva (C)  
Kiira Kupiainen  
Johanna Eirola  
Oona Tolppanen

### Staff

Coach: Ric Hennessy  
Team Manager: Mikko Aalto  
Medic: Vicente Ortuno

### Opponents

Poland (L), France (L), Viator  
(W), Ecosse (L), Costa Blanca  
(W), Belgium (W)

**Cost Per Player:** €390

## 2.3 Tournament - Costa Blanca 7s

The team were denied a trip to Bonn at the final hour due to a pilot strike. The players and staff rallied to organise a trip in a matter of weeks and flew to Benidorm for the Costa Blanca 7s.

It was here that the team really began to hit their stride for the season. Great early games against tough opponents were rewarded with valuable experience against the upper levels of European rugby. Victories late on both days gave the team a 5th placed finish overall and a lot of momentum into the Trophy tournaments.

Kiira Kupiainen and Johanna Eirola broke into the first team squad for the first time this season. Their excellent performances earned them a spot in the first trophy tournament a few weeks later.

Again, there were no major injuries. One player suffered a recurrence of a chronic knee injury which forced her to miss the first trophy tournament but she was able to return for the second leg.

Our physio for this trip was a local student, Vicente Ortuno who did an excellent job looking after the players.



# 2.4 RE Trophy 1 - Budapest 7s

Confidence was high heading into the first major tournament of the season. A good result in Benidorm had the team in great spirits and ready to improve on last year's disappointments.

The team faces significant challenges before the tournament had even begun. An extremely narrow pitch worked against the team's philosophy of playing with width. Worse still, Kaisla Parkkinen suffered an injury in the Friday training session and had to withdraw from the squad. A heroic effort by Susanna Haavisto, supported by Mikko Aalto, had the substitute player on the plane and joining the squad less as the first games began.

Ruusu Halttunen played her first RE competition for Finland, alongside Kiira Kupiainen and Johanna Eirola. In addition, Heidi Hennessy and Emmi Ovaskainen played in the Trophy again having missed 2018.

The team were rewarded for their possession of the ball on day one, with victories over Hungary and Georgia that saw them into a quarter final with Norway. A thrilling extra-time win rewarded the team with a 4th place finish.

The team suffered two further upper body injuries on the pitch which forced the players to withdraw from the games. Unfortunately one proved serious and the player missed the second leg of the trophy tournament.

## Squad:

Lilli Tikkanen  
Ulla Tuominen  
Susanna Haavisto  
Eeva Pohjanheimo  
Emmi Ovaskainen  
Mira Saarikoski (C)  
Jonna Ritala  
Heidi Hennessy  
Anna Soiluva (C)  
Kiira Kupiainen  
Johanna Eirola  
Ruusu Halttunen

## Staff:

Coach: Ric Hennessy  
Team Manager: Mikko Aalto  
Medic: Anna Viitala

## Opponents:

Hungary (W), Georgia (W),  
Portugal (L), Norway (W),  
Germany (L), Czech Rep (L)

**Cost Per Player:** €475

**Placing - 4th**





**Squad:**

Ulla Tuominen  
Kaisla Parkkinen  
Lilli Tikkanen  
Eeva Pohjanheimo  
Ruusu Halttunen  
Eve Sapattinen  
Mira Saarikoski (C)  
Oona Tolppanen  
Sanna-Kaisa Lintu  
Anna Soiluva (C)  
Heidi Hennessy  
Kiira Kupiainen

**Staff:**

Coach: Ric Hennessy  
Team Manager: Mikko Aalto, Rory McIntyre  
Medic: Anna Viitala

**Opponents:**

Hungary (W), Georgia (W), Czech Rep (L),  
Sweden (W), Germany (L), Czech Rep (W)

**Cost Per Player:** €475

**Placing - 3rd**

# 2.5 RE Trophy 2 - Lisbon 7s

Two weeks after the first leg, the team regrouped for the second leg of the Trophy in Lisbon. The squad welcomed back Kaisla Parkkinen, Eve Sapattinen, Oona Tolppanen and Sanna-Kaisa Lintu.

The performance here showed the very best of Finnish 7s. Expansive performances on day 1 saw tries from multiple players to set up a quarter final against Sweden. In wet conditions, the team played some extremely intelligent rugby. Long periods of possession and excellent scoring secured another top 4 finish. Victory later in the day against Czech Republic gave the team a bronze medal and a tie for third place in the series.





The squad were extremely proud of their performance over the two legs of the trophy and there was a positive feeling in the squad that they are capable of even more.

A highlight for the squad was that Rory McIntyre was able to join this tournament giving us a management squad of 4. Having done so much from behind the scenes, Rory's presence was a great boost to all involved.





## 2.6 Squad Statistics - Results

|    |   | Rugby Europe 7 <sup>s</sup> Women's Trophy |      |  |   |
|---|---|--|------|---|---|
|   |   | FINAL 2019 SERIES RANKING                  |      |   |   |
| Promoted 1st  |  | GERMANY - 38pts                            | 7th  |    | NORWAY - 18pts                            |
| Promoted 2nd  |  | ROMANIA - 38pts                            | 8th  |    | GEORGIA - 9pts                            |
| 3rd   |  | CZECHIA - 30pts                            | 9th  |    | HUNGARY - 8pts                            |
| 4th   |  | FINLAND - 30pts                            | 10th |    | TURKEY - 8pts                             |
| 5th   |  | SWEDEN - 22pts                             | 11th |    | ISRAEL - 4pt <span>Relegated</span>       |
| 6th   |  | PORTUGAL - 20pts                           | 12th |    | SWITZERLAND - 3pts <span>Relegated</span> |
| In case of points draw – the global points difference in the Series define the ranking of teams   |   |  |      |   |   |
|    |   | #RugbyEurope                               |      | #7sWTROPHY  |   |
|   |   |  |      | WWW.RUGBYEUROPE.TV  |   |

### Budapest (Placed 4th)

#### Pool A:

Finland 14 - 5 Hungary  
Finland 5 - 41 Portugal  
Finland 12 - 5 Georgia

#### Knockout:

Finland 17 - 10 Norway (Cup QF)  
Finland 5 - 25 Germany (Cup SF)  
Finland 0 - 25 Czech Republic (Bronze F)

### Lisbon (Placed 3rd)

#### Pool B:

Finland 41 - 5 Hungary  
Finland 21 - 7 Georgia  
Finland 0 - 39 Czech Republic

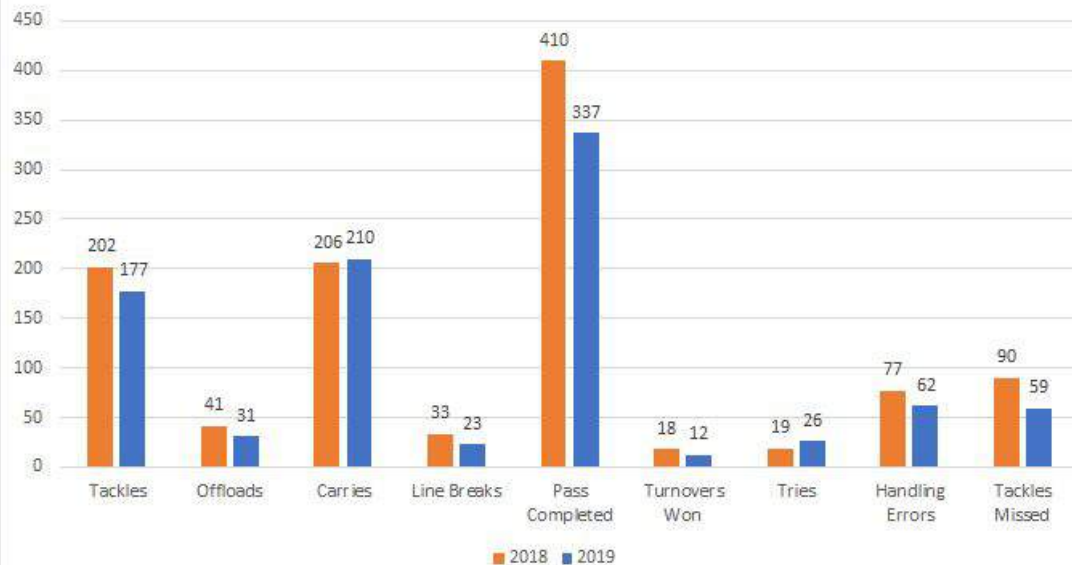
#### Knockout

Finland 14 - 7 Sweden (Cup QF)  
Finland 12 - 20 Germany (Cup SF)  
Finland 14 - 12 Czech Republic (Bronze F)



## 2.7 Trophy Statistics - KPIs

Trophy Tournament Statistics 2018-2019



### Average Possession Errors / Game

**2018:** 11

**2019:** 10

### Tackle Completion

**2018:** 69%

**2019:** 75%

### Possession : Try %

**2018:** 20%

**2019:** 32%



### **3. Strategic Review**

# 3.0 Strategic Goals 2018 - 2024

Leadership

Rugby  
Development

High  
Performance

Marketing

Revenue



# 3.1 Leadership

## Strategic Goal

Implement a governance structure that will best utilise the resources available and drive growth at grassroots and high performance levels.

## 2019 Summary

Growing volunteer structure improved the access to a high performance environment for the players. The improved clarity of roles within the leadership group contributed to the overall success of the programme.

## 2020 Focus

The leadership group dynamic will change with the shared leadership roles of Head of Operations (Rory McIntyre) and Head of Rugby (Ric Hennessy). Focus must remain on recruiting more high quality volunteers in order to increase the leadership group's work capacity.





## 3.2 Rugby Development

### Strategic Goal

Nurture a culture of growth in Finnish rugby at both national and local levels by increasing opportunities and access to participation

### 2019 Summary

Limited resources continue to hinder growth at the local level. The introduction of a development team and open camps has had a positive impact on the quality of play both at international and domestic level.

### 2020 Focus

Identify volunteers and resources that can drive participation figures up at the local level. The national team has a strong role to play in increasing the access to rugby amongst the Finnish population.





## 3.3 High Performance

### Strategic Goal

Secure Olympic qualification for the National Team through improving the quality and quantity of high performance provision.

### 2019 Summary

The team climbed the European rankings to 16th place with excellent performances at the RE Trophy tournaments. Having a development team compete in two tournaments over the season exposed players to international rugby. This created a high level of competition for first team places.

### 2020 Focus

It is essential for the first team to at least maintain their ranking and continue to build towards sustainable entry into the RE Grand Prix. Further expansion of the development team and the addition of new staff will continue to provide a base for sustainable success.





## 3.4 Marketing

### Strategic Goal

Improve overall awareness of Rugby and the National Team within Finland while creating brand value for sponsors and fans.

### 2019 Summary

The team has produced some excellent marketing material over the course of the year. Social media following continues to grow with a strong focus on the Northern Storm brand.

### 2020 Focus

Continue to build social media presence with a focus on attracting new participants to rugby and potential partners to the national team.



# 3.5 Revenue

## Strategic Goal

Generate sustainable sources of revenue for 7s rugby to reduce the cost of participation and increase access to rugby and the National Team programme.

## 2019 Summary

Individual player sponsorship initiatives reduced the financial burden of national team participation for some players. The leadership team continued to explore ways to reduce the costs of playing for the team.

## 2020 Focus

Reduce financial pressure on players by continuing to cut costs and finding new ways to generate revenue for the programme.







Image Credits:  
- Rugby Europe  
- Rory McIntyre