# Finland Women's 7s Rugby

Annual Review 2018





## Introduction

As my second season with Finland comes to a close, it is important to reflect upon the performance of the programme this year. Of course, in very simple terms, we can measure success by the results of this extraordinary group of athletes and look to progress in those terms. Of course that is important and we, as a team, are engaged in the relentless pursuit of victories in international competition.

With Finnish rugby remaining a very small sport, however, it is more important to explore the foundation upon which we are going to build in the next five or ten years and beyond. The national team management is committed to doing everything within our capacity to create a sustainable future for women's rugby in Finland.

This report is designed to give a brief review of our activities over the past year and to outline a plan of action in 2019. It is my wish to provide players, coaches, managers, board members, sponsors and other stakeholders with an insight into the direction that we are working based on the Strategic Plan published in 2018.

I feel it is important to highlight two major components of our strategy, in the hope that it will inspire ideas and engagement from those who read it. The first is the issue of youth participation in rugby in Finland. As we are all aware, a sustainable foundation of youth participation will provide a stable base from which we can nurture talented players towards the Olympic teams of the future. We are committed to driving forward the introduction of both grass roots and performance level programmes for the first generation of young women playing rugby in Finland.

The second is the issue of funding for the programme. As you will see, our budget for 2018 reached nearly €50,000, of which the players were responsible for the majority. Our aim is to work towards partnerships that will provide us with sustainable funding to reduce the costs of participating in the national team programme. This will be a priority for us in 2019.

I'd like to close by saying thank you to all the people who are driving the Finnish national team through this phase in its journey towards a true high performance programme. Firstly to the players, who commit so much to their pursuit of excellence. They are inspirational athletes and I hope we can use their example to inspire a new generation of young rugby players.

Secondly I'd like to thank the volunteers who make the programme tick and are driving it forwards. Team Managers Mikko Aalto and Rory McIntyre have both contributed what amounts to nearly a full-time job to provide for the players both at home and during tournaments. Marika Nieminen has served the players as the team physio with a level of care and professionalism that goes far beyond what is asked of her. Finally Michael Blakley has worked tirelessly with the team to build a marketable brand and expand our media output. Without their sacrifices, we have no programme so I thank them deeply.

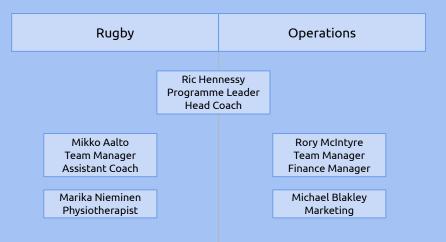
I hope you enjoy reading the document and I look forward to working together to see our vision come to fruition.

Ric Hennessy Head Coach Finland Womens 7s National Team



## 2018 Overview

# 1.1 Structure and Organisation



The team is currently managed on an entirely voluntary basis. The Head Coach and one of the Team Manager positions have been filled by the SRL directly. Other appointments have been made directly by the Programme Leader.

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





## 1.2 Squad Overview

31 Athletes from 7 different clubs

Turku (2), Helsinki(13), Warriors (3), Linna(1), Jyvaskyla(2), Tampere(8), Vaasa(2)

27 represented Finland in a tournament

14 represented Finland in the Rugby Europe Trophy

2 missed the season through injury

All selections to the National Team training squad are made on a committee basis consisting of the management team. This is also the case during selections for each tournament.

Players are scouted during the domestic series, open training camps and a selection camp.



# 1.3 Tournament - Cologne

Squad:
Kaisla Parkkinen
Iida Myllymaki
Heidi Tuomisto
Susanna Haavisto
Sarianna Haavisto
Sanna-Kaisa Lintu (C)
Jonna Tuovinen
Mira Saarikoski
Milla Ryhta
Emmi Snåre
Riikka Nurminen
Ulla Tuominen

Staff:

Coach: Ric Hennessy Team Manager: Mikko Aalto

Opponents: Germany x 4 (LLLL)

Cost Per Player: 360e

The team was given the opportunity to play a series of games against Germany in Cologne as part of the home team's Rugby Europe Championship match against Russia.

This was a good opportunity to see some players in action for the first time. Jonna Tuovinen, Emmi Snåre both enjoyed debuts. Susanna and Sarianna Haavisto, Riikka Nurminen and Heidi Tuomisto played their first games against another international opponent, having all played for the first time in Copenhagen last year. Kaisla Parkkinen, Iida Myllymaki, Mira Saarikoski, Milla Ryhta and Ulla Tuominen all returned to action for Finland having played in the RE trophy last season. They joined Sanna-Kaisa Lintu who was named as captain for the games.

The games resulted in 4 losses, but valuable experience was gained and further strong links were forged with the German team.

Team Manager Mikko Aalto ensured an excellent trip with great organisation and we returned with one injury which was later proven to be minor.



# 1.3 Tournament-Bonn 7s

Squad:
Kaisla Parkkinen
lida Myllymaki
Heidi Tuomisto
Susanna Haavisto
Sarianna Haavisto
Sanna-Kaisa Lintu
Anna Soiluva
Eeva Pohjanheimo
Sofia Ukkonen (C)
Pauliina Nikkila
Sabina Wright
Ulla Tuominen

Staff: Coach: Ric Hennessy Team Manager: Mikko Aalto Medic: Marika Nieminen

Opponents: Germany (L), Austria (W), Sweden (L), Czech Republic (L), Belgium (W), Austria (L)

Cost Per Player: 360e

This was the squad's first opportunity of the year at genuine tournament play with a variety of excellent opposition. There were again two debutants - Pauliina Nikkila and Sabina Wright. Anna Soiluva, Eeva Pohjanheimo and captain Sofia Ukkonen joined the squad for the first time this year.

The highlights of the weekend included a hard fought win against Belgium and another against Austria. The high quality of opponents was a real highlight for the squad, giving us tough opposition leading into the season. The tournament structure proved rather difficult as 4 games on day 1 was perhaps one too many and this caused some debate amongst participating teams. However, the hosts in Germany were fantastic and the tournament was a great success.

We left the tournament with one injury which caused the player involved to miss some rugby over the following weeks but thankfully was not a long-term issue.

# 1.3 Tournament - Centrale 7s (Paris)

Squad:
Kaisla Parkkinen
Lilli Tikkanen
Mira Saarikoski
Susanna Haavisto
Sarianna Haavisto
Sanna-Kaisa Lintu
Anna Soiluva
Eeva Pohjanheimo
Sofia Ukkonen (C)
Pauliina Nikkila
Jonna Ritala
Ulla Tuominen

Staff:

Coach: Ric Hennessy Team Manager: Mikko Aalto Medic: Marika Nieminen

Opponents: Rambling Jesters (L), TUKS (L), Nandu (W), TUKS (L), Ukraine (L), Sweden (L)

Cost Per Player: 360e

The squad travelled to the Centrale 7s in Paris for the 3rd time in 3 years and again the attraction came in the form of high quality opposition. This was the team's final opportunity to get game experience before the RE trophy season and with places in the final squads not yet decided, players were keen to earn their spot. Lilli Tikkanen and Jonna Ritala were selected to the squad for the first time this season.

We had some great performances at the tournament but were let down in some games by a high number of errors. Disappointingly many missed tackles caused us to suffer points deficits that we were unable to overcome despite good periods of play.

Unfortunately the organisation of the tournament was also uncharacteristically poor this year. The university who organise it experienced logistical problems caused by a move to a new campus and the standards of living for the players were far below reasonable.

One player suffered a reccurrence of a chronic back injury during the tournament but there were no major acute issues.



# 1.3 RE Trophy 1 - Dnipro 7s

Squad:
Kaisla Parkkinen
Lilli Tikkanen
Mira Saarikoski
Susanna Haavisto
Kati Miettinen
Sanna-Kaisa Lintu
Anna Soiluva
Eeva Pohjanheimo
Sofia Ukkonen (C)
Pauliina Nikkila
Ifeoma Kulmala

Ulla Tuominen

Staff: Coach: Ric Hennessy Team Manager: Mikko Aalto Medic: Marika Nieminen

Opponents: Hungary (L), Sweden (L), Austria (W), Netherlands (L), Hungary (L), Norway (L)

Cost Per Player: 410e

Placing - 8th

The first RE trophy tournament in Dnipro proved to be a disappointment for the team as the team had a collective feeling of having underperformed. Only one victory in six games was below what the team had hoped for. A repeat of Paris's high missed tackle count was addressed in the aftermath of the competition.

However, there were some important high points. Susanna Haavisto scored her first try for Finland and Ifeoma Kulmala returned to international competition after a lengthy absence through injury.

Kati Miettinen, a huge contributor to rugby in Finland joined the squad after a troubled off season to represent her country one last time. Her leadership and skill will be sorely missed on the field.

Acute lower limb injuries were suffered by two players in the course of the tournament and they were not able to play on the second day. They were able to return within two weeks. One upper body injury was assessed by the tournament doctor after a player collided with the goalpost but they were deemed fine to return to play.





# 1.3 RE Trophy 2 - Szeged 7s

Squad:
Kaisla Parkkinen
Lilli Tikkanen
Mira Saarikoski
Jonna Ritala
Oona Tolppanen
Sanna-Kaisa Lintu
Anna Soiluva
Eeva Pohjanheimo
Sofia Ukkonen (C)
Pauliina Nikkila
Ifeoma Kulmala
Ulla Tuominen

Staff:

Coach: Ric Hennessy Team Manager: Mikko Aalto Medic: Marika Nieminen

Opponents:

Hungary (W), Ukraine (L), Israel (L), Sweden (L), Hungary (L), Norway (W)

Cost Per Player: 410e

Placing - 7th

Following only two weeks after the first RE trophy tournament, this proved to be another difficult occasion for the team. An early victory over hosts Hungary helped the team into another quarter final spot on day two despite a disappointing loss against Israel in the last game of the first day.

Losses again on day two set up a rematch with Norway, which the team won to secure seventh place and an overall tie in the final rankings. An improvement in previous defensive struggles was evident but the team was struck hard with injuries during the tournament, playing no games with a full squad of twelve. These injuries ranged from recurrences of lower back pain to an acute hamstring injury and a shoulder injury. Thankfully none of the injuries proved severe and all players returned to rudby within weeks.

The squad from Dnipro was bolstered by the inclusion of Jonna Ritala and Oona Tolppanen, the latter of whom returned to rugby following a long injury.

Despite the feeling of underachievement, the squad left the tournament happy and eager to be more competitive in future.

# 1.3 Tournament - Scandinavian 7s (Cph)

Squad:
Kiira Kupiainen
Ruusu Halttunen
Mira Saarikoski (C)
Johanna Eirola
Oona Tolppanen
Sanna-Kaisa Lintu
Heidi Tuomisto
Sabina Wright
Pauliina Nikkila
Satu Raudasoja
Ulla Tuominen

Staff:

Coach: Ric Hennessy Team Manager: Rory McIntyre Medic: Marika Nieminen

Opponents: Jylland (W), Vanersborgs (W), Sagene IF (W), Reading Abbey (W), BSI (W), Poland (L), Rambling Jesters (L)

Cost Per Player: 445e

The Scandinavian 7s provides the squad with an opportunity to introduce new players to the squad and to play a few more games without the pressure of the RE season. Kiira Kupiainen, Ruusu Halttunen and Johanna Eirola all earned their first caps for Finland and performed to the high standards that international representation demands.

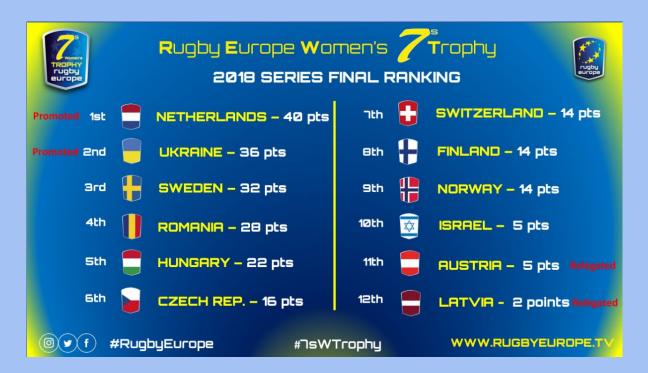
For the second year in a row, the team finished as losing semi-finalists following some outstanding rugby. Mira Saarikoski took over the captain's role and demonstrated excellent leadership ability.

In addition, Rory McIntyre took on the Team Manager's role for the first time and did a flawless job. He received much praise from the players.

In the last game of the tournament one player suffered an unfortunate injury to her hand that, upon return to Finland, was discovered to require surgery.



## 1.4 Squad Statistics - Results



### Dnipro (Placed 8th)

### Pool A:

Finland 10 - 17 Hungary

Finland 0 - 17 Sweden

Finland 22 - 0 Austria

### Knockout:

Finland 0 - 57 Netherlands (Cup QF)

Finland 7 - 12 Hungary (5th SF)

Finland 12 - 22 Norway (7th F)

### Szeged (Placed 7th)

#### Pool B:

Finland 15 - 5 Hungary

Finland 12 - 29 Ukraine

Finland 0 - 5 Israel

### Knockout

Finland 5 - 20 Sweden (Cup QF)

Finland 17 - 19 Hungary (5th SF)

Finland 5 - 0 Norway (7th F)



## 1.4 Squad Statistics - Impacts

### **Tournament Totals**

	Tackles	Offloads	Carries	Line Breaks	Pass Completed	Turnovers Won	Tries	Handling Errors	Tackles Missed	Impact	Mins	Combined Impact
Bonn	95	21	88	24	152	4	10	40	26	328	642	0.5
Centrale	77	15	103	25	216	7	12	39	39	377	676	0.6
Dnipro	91	22	103	14	200	9	9	36	54	358	647	0.6
Szeged	111	19	103	19	210	9	10	41	36	404	652	0.6
Season	374	77	397	82	778	29	41	156	155	1467	2617	0.6
Tournament Average	94	19	99	21	195	7	10	39	39	367	654	0.6

### Game Averages

	Tackles	Offloads	Carries	Line Breaks	Pass Completed	Turnovers Won	Tries	Handling Errors	Tackles Missed	Impact	Mins	Impact score
Bonn	16	4	15	4	25	1	2	7	4	55	107	0.5
Centrale	13	3	17	4	36	1	2	7	7	63	113	0.6
Dnipro	15	4	17	2	33	2	2	6	9	60	108	0.6
Szeged	19	3	17	3	35	2	2	7	6	67	109	0.6
Season Average	16	3	17	3	32	1	2	7	6	61	109	0.6



## 1.5 Marketing



1,800 Likes (200 increase on 2017)

Organic page reach of up to 12,000



@finrugby7s - 910 followers (500 increase on 2017)

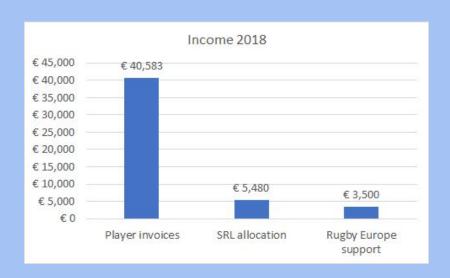
Combined team >65,000 followers

The appointment of a Marketing Manager in 2018 has given our online presence a much needed boost. The increase in social media following has come as a direct result of initiatives to engage the players in the process. The rebranding as 'Northern Storm' was conducted with the players and has given the squad a feeling that the brand represents them. Instagram challenges have been a particular success, allowing us to reach out and connect with other sports stars in Finland and beyond.

The new website for the national team is still not published. There have been some issues on getting it in a format that will merge with the current SRL site and as such we still do not have a good online presence to sell to potential sponsors or newcomers to rugby.



### 1.6 Revenue



Total Income 2018 €49,563



## 1.7 Expenses

Total costs 2018 €49,550







# Review of 2018 Strategies

# 2.1 Leadership

Objective	Status	2019 Goal	Responsible
3.1.1 Dual programme leadership between 'Head of Rugby' and 'Head of Operations'.	Incomplete	Low Priority. Current structure is functioning until this step is taken.	
3.1.2 Clear definition of roles within the Rugby and Operational sections of the programme.	Improved but incomplete	Operating procedures to be documented, clearly defining tasks.	Team Managers
3.1.3 Recruit motivated and qualified volunteers to work in key programme areas to achieve goals set out in the strategic plan	Staff grown to 5 members.	Continue to add new staff members. Medical, Fundraising and Youth development as priorities.	Programme Leader
3.1.4 Recruitment of Development Officers in each club around the country	Incomplete - Plan in progress at SRL level	Support SRL to deliver this programme.	SRL
3.1.5 Clearly defined roles based on increasing the level of participation in rugby.	Incomplete	Work to appoint staff member in charge of youth development and support them to deliver participation programme.	Programme Leader
3.1.6 Incentivisation of participation in the national 7s strategy at all levels	No change. Incentive based on motivation to volunteer.	Improve relations with club coaches and other stakeholders.	Programme Leader and Team Manager

# 2.2 Rugby Development

Objective	Status	2019 Goal	Responsible
3.2.1 Improved access to 'Get into Rugby' Programme by providing clear guidelines on how to access and utilise funding.	No change	Include in work programme for youth development officer.	Youth Development.
3.2.2 Recruit club development officer in each club specifically responsible for raising women's participation levels within the club.	No change	See 3.1.4	
3.2.3 Implementation of pilot schools programme with Helsinki Rugby Club at 4 yläaste schools 2018.	Incomplete	Include in work programme for youth development officer.	Youth Development.
3.2.4 Expansion of programme in Autumn 2018 to include a further 4 schools.	Incomplete	Include in work programme for youth development officer.	Youth Development.
3.2.5 Expansion of programme to clubs with the volunteer capacity to replicate or improve upon the model in Spring 2019.	Incomplete	Include in work programme for youth development officer.	Youth Development.



# 2.2 Rugby Development

Objective	Status	2019 Goal	Responsible
3.2.6 Appointment of U18 coach to work with Head of Rugby to deliver U18 programme	Incomplete	Recruitment of further coaches with a view to filling post	Programme Leader
<b>3.2.7</b> Selection to camps from individuals identified in schools competitions.	Incomplete	U18 Talent transfer day to recruit directly to U18 NT programme.	Team Manager
3.2.8 Proposal made to clubs on adjusted season schedule by the Head of Rugby and voted on at the AGM.	Season changed to run from February to April	Further review of season structure to support growth of game at 7s and 15s as well as player welfare.	Programme Manager
3.2.9 Work with the SRL competition manager to ensure a manageable schedule for domestic and NT players	Incomplete - Yet to establish working relationship with new competition manager	Establish working relationship	Programme Manager



# 2.3 High Performance

Objective	Status	2019 Goal	Responsible
3.3.1 Improved access to the NT programme for athletes within the rugby and other sports through reduction in financial investment for players.	Remains unchanged	Head of Fundraising appointment directly responsible for generating revenue	Head of Fundraising
3.3.2 Partnership with National Olympic Committee to improve resources available to high performance programme.	SRL relationship exists. More support reported when licence numbers increase	Continue to support SRL to improve relationship with NOC	
3.3.3 Thriving player pathway that identifies and supports talented players to enter the national team programme from inside and outside of rugby	Pathway for players to enter the squad from club rugby improved by fundamentals camps.	U18 Transfer camp to identify athletes from other sports. Fundamentals camps rebranded to 'open' camps	Programme Leader and Team Manager
3.3.4 Increase in quality and provision of coaching and medical services available for players	Current volunteer staff working to maximum capacity	Recruitment of new medical and coaching support staff to lighten load	Programme Leader

# 2.3 High Performance

Objective	Status	2019 Goal	Responsible
3.3.5 Expansion of NT training squad to include over 30 athletes	31 Athletes in 2018	Squad to remain at approximately 30 athletes.	Selection Committee
3.3.6 Development squad to participate in a minimum of one tournament per year to gain experience of high level competition	4 non - RE tournaments completed ensuring that 27 players represented Finland.	Competition with other Nordic nations to provide even more opportunity for competition at low cost.	Programme Leader
3.3.7 Invitation of talented players from schools rugby to a 'fast track' U18 national team programme.	Incomplete	January U18 talent transfer days.	Team Manager
3.3.8 Yearly talent identification through schools rugby and club rugby	Incomplete	Participation increase at U18 level	Youth Development
3.3.9 Entry to Rugby Europe U18 competition by the end of 2019.	Incomplete	U18 team entering low-level competition already in Autumn 2019.	Programme Leader

# 2.4 Marketing

Objective	Status	2019 Goal	Responsible
3.4.1 Create a clear team identity that is attractive to potential stakeholders and reflects the values of rugby in Finland and the National Team  Identity has been created (Northern Storm). The next steps are to strengthen the brand.  Reinforce the team identity and brander to the forefront.		Reinforce the team identity and bring it more to the forefront.	Marketing Manager
3.4.2 Reveal and share the superstar potential of the individual players in the National Team	So far this has not happened, with the exception of one (who was already quite superstarish). There are potential superstars.	Identification of 2 or 3 players and focus on building star potential.	Marketing Manager
3.4.3 Creation of a dedicated National Team website	Incomplete. Site is ready to launch but problems gaining permission to launch independently of rugby.fi / putting the site on rugby.fi	Have the site online. Negotiation with the SRL to be concluded ASAP	Programme Leader
3.4.4 Regular production of high quality content that showcases the National Team brand and its values	Somewhat regular production occurs. We require more input from the players in order to get more material out there. We have improved by leaps and bounds.	Social media calendar to be written and maintained.	Marketing Manager
3.4.5 Include informative and educative content that brings new players and stakeholders to rugby	Informative/educative content has not been that present.	Explore opportunities to create better content.	Marketing Manager

# 2.4 Marketing

Objective	Status	2019 Goal	Responsible
3.4.6 International and domestic Finnish rugby in the mainstream media	Somewhat, but not really. Some 6 nations rugby on viaplay.	Explore partnerships with media outlets	Marketing manager
3.4.7 Seek out cooperation with domestic partners and strive for mutual partnership	Progressing, but it's proving to be a challenge. Meeting with partners suffering due to poor online presence and lack of games in Finland.	Continue to build brand and construct attractive pitches for partners.	Marketing Manager / Finance Manager
3.4.8 More visibility for the National Team is beneficial for Finnish rugby as a whole	We have definitely gotten a lot more visibility, and the team itself is getting noticed through its own actions.		



## 2.5 Revenue

Objective	Status	2019 Goal	Responsible
3.5.1 Generate a number of sponsorships that align with the values of the Finnish National Team branding	Incomplete. Only one sponsor (Coach Bam). Leads have faltered due to either poor online presence or lack of games in Finland.	Head of Fundraising to push for genuine sponsorship opportunities.	Head of Fundraising
3.5.2 Utilise the power of rugby and the National Team to maximise the value of sponsorship deals	Thrust of pitches has been value of the team members themselves.	Create genuine packages that can be sold to potential partners	Head of Fundraising
3.5.3 Help to find ways to improve the lives of National team athletes through mutually beneficial endorsements	Some small scale endorsements (Fitness Tukku and Printing company) have helped reduce minor expenses	Explore this avenue further to create genuine opportunities for supporting athletes.	Head of Fundraising



## 2.5 Revenue

Objective	Status	2019 Goal	Responsible
3.5.4 Profitable and popular merchandise strategy	No progress	Explore simple merchandising products.	Marketing Manager / Head of Fundraising
3.5.5 Strategy for the engagement of fans in foreign tours	Score updates and footage of games now included in social media coverage. Behind the scenes videos		
3.5.6 Sales of tour packages to join the fans on foreign trips	No Progress	Find a 'tour leader' who would be responsible for organising fan tours	Programme Leader



2019 Off Season Action Plan

# 3. Strategic Goals 2018 - 2024

Leadership

Rugby Development

> High Performance

> > Marketing

Revenue



# 3.1 Leadership

Action	Target completion	Responsible	Status
Recruit dedicated person to establish youth/schools rugby programme	Jan 2019	R.Hennessy	Open
Recruit dedicated person focussed on generating income for the team	Jan 2019	R.Hennessy	Open
Write job profiles for medical roles in 2019 and beyond	Jan 2019	M. Nieminen	Open
Recruit medical person(s)	Dec 2018	R.Hennessy	Open
Document standard operating procedure for team management tasks and tournament planning and execution	Feb 2019	R.McIntyre & M. Aalto	Open



# 3.2 Rugby Development

Action	Target completion	Responsible	Status
Establish connection with club coaches and agree ways to cooperate with national team player development	Oct 2018	R.Hennessy	Open
Create 2019 youth rugby development plan	March 2019	New recruit	Open
Plan and advertise Lukio age recruitment day	Feb 2019	M. Aalto / New recruit	Open





# 3.3 High Performance

Action	Target completion	Responsible	Status
Advertise November's open camp for new player recruitment	Sept 2018	R. McIntyre & M. Blakely	Complete
Agree up to 3 dates and locations for Nordic warm-up tournaments	Oct 2018	R.Hennessy	Complete
Find location for weekly training sessions in the lead up to trophy tournaments and find suitable time from the players	Nov 2018	M. Aalto	Open
Create a full season plan and communicate to players	Dec 2018	R.Hennessy & M. Aalto	Open
Plan additional coaching visits for players in remote locations	Jan 2019	R.Hennessy	Open





# 3.4 Marketing

Action	Target completion	Responsible	Status
Agree how to improve online presence through team website	Sept 2018	R.Hennessy	Open
Create social media calendar	Oct 2018	M. Blakely	Open
Create guidelines and instructions for consistent social media posting inline with team brand	Oct 2018	M. Blakely	Open
Create brand material - GIFs, templates and content for use in social media	Dec 2018	R.McIntyre & M. Blakely	Open
Arrange team photo shoot	Jan 2019	R.McIntyre	Open



# 3.5 Revenue

Action	Target completion	Responsible	Status
Calculate invoicing schedule based on season plan	Dec 2018	R. McIntyre	Open
Investigate options for team merchandise	Jan 2019	M. Blakely	Open
Recruit person to organise fan trips	Jan 2019	M. Aalto	Open
Generate income for team through partnerships and sponsor deals	On going	New recruit	Open



