

# CHICAGO BLAZE RUGBY CLUB

March 01, 2013

Newsletter Vol.1

## Welcome

The Chicago Blaze Rugby Club is happy to bring you the new periodic newsletter. We hope this newsletter will bring you up-to-date on the many happenings of our great club. If you need help with some of the big words, have comments, or wish to submit articles for future newsletters, please contact me ([bryantcscharenbroch@yahoo.com](mailto:bryantcscharenbroch@yahoo.com)).

-Bryant Scharenbroch (CBRC VP & Editor-in-Chief)

## New Clubhouse Update

The CBRC New Clubhouse will help solidify the Blaze as the rugby epicenter of Midwest, USA. The new building will be over 4,500 sq-ft, and include locker rooms for home and visiting teams, referees, and trainers. The building will have player and guest bathrooms and shower rooms. The building will have a 2,500 sq-ft bar and banquet room, full kitchen, and a 1,500 sq-ft second story viewing deck with patio. The installation will also include a new parking lot. The total cost is \$1 M, to be paid with a loan of \$450,000 and \$550,000 through fundraising.

We are very close to meeting our fundraising target of \$550,000. To date, we have raised \$325,000. The final push will be to raise the remaining \$225,000 by the end spring, 2013. Meeting that deadline will allow us to break ground on June 15, 2013 with a project completion of January 15, 2014.

The CBRC needs your assistance to finalize the campaign. There are many options in which you can contribute to the fundraising efforts, including:

- CBRC Stock
- Clubhouse & Field Advertisements
- Donations

A one-page flyer on the New Clubhouse Campaign is attached in this newsletter. More details on the Clubhouse Campaign can also be found on our website ([www.chicagoblazerugby.com](http://www.chicagoblazerugby.com)) or by contacting me directly at [chriscobb@aol.com](mailto:chriscobb@aol.com) or via phone at 630-452-7007.

-Christopher Cobb (CBRC Building Corporation)

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N, S, E, and W perspectives for CBRC New Clubhouse.



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## 2012 Season Recap

The Chicago Blaze continued their season as DI contenders in what many call the toughest bracket in the country. With top teams such as the Lions, Metropolis, Griffins, Palmer and a combined WI team, the Blaze showed amazing resilience. The spring season showed great promise with the young players we had developing. We had brought up a number of college players and young talent and finished the season with a 5-2 record. In those wins we had four different MoM. Coming off a strong spring season, a solid core of players, many of them home on college break took on the nations toughest competition in a long 7's season. The Blaze consistently held up with the best these teams could throw at us. Due to our youth and little coaching we had, the outcomes would get away from us in the closing minutes. However, that group really learned something about themselves and what it means to play as a team and run off each other. With the fall season into full swing as many of our 7's players finished up we got off to some strong practices headed by Coach Folland. We had to fill in a lot of gaps in our lineups from losses due to work, school and injury. Even then we had many guys ready to step up and take the reigns and drive this team forward. We always put up a strong side to an often deeper opponent. This was a year that many of us on the team learned a thing or two. We learned what it takes to play at the highest level in the country against the best players in the country, we also learned a lot about the sport and our positions by often being thrown into the water and having to sink or swim and I am proud to say that many of the men came up and became strong players and teammates because of it.

-Brian Szwed (CBRC Captain)

## Who's that Blaze Guy?

This Blaze guy is not bearded, nor does he wear long pants. He will suck the marrow out of chicken bones. He does not have fingers, but instead 10 bratwursts on his hands. He was given a 5-point-freestyle-head-and-arm toss on the eve of his wedding. Identify this Blaze Man and he will owe a beer. Good luck getting his cheap ass to pay for it.

## 2012 Club Award Winners

D1 MVP – Brian Szwed  
D1 Back of the Year – Jamie Lugo  
D1 Forward of the Year – Bryant Scharenbroch  
D1 Rookie of the Year – Chris Graeber  
D3 MVP – Bob Pitula  
D3 Back of the Year – A.J. Kuban  
D3 Forward of the Year – Jeff DeLong (Dan Hart)  
D3 Rookie of the Year – Brian Chrencik  
7s MVP – Kevin Garbis  
Clubman of Year – Matt Knorr  
Fossils "Nuts & Guts – Norm Smyth  
Spirit Award (Cheryl Lapka) – Joe Clarkson

## USA Rugby & Midwest Territory

There are many changes on the horizon for USA Rugby and the Midwest Union. The goal is to lead to a Super Bowl format between the National and American Conferences. Division 1 will be reduced to 8-teams. Division 2 will be reduced to 16 - teams. Division 1 will play an 18 game schedule. Division 2 will play a 14 game schedule. Division 3 will also be reduced, with a new Division 4 being created. Division 4 will only compete for a Midwest Championship. Midwest will attempt to organize a B-team competition, to keep clubs players at one venue on game day, as opposed to having a second competitive team in a lower division at a different venue.

On the administrative side, the Midwest Territory is being converted to a Geographic Union (GU). Each GU will have one vote on the USA Rugby Congress. There is discussion of Midwest being split into eight GU's. CARFU would be merged with the Illinois Union to form a new GU. Colleges are to compete in conferences that will be aligned when possible with their football programs. For example, NIU will play in the Rugby MAC Conference, Wisconsin will compete in the Bid Ten Rugby Conference, etc.

-Bill Weckstein (CBRC Match Secretary)



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## Chicago Blaze Pride

The Chicago Blaze Rugby Club is more than just a rugby club. We have great infrastructure including the fields, the locker rooms, the clubhouse and bar that make our club special. However, our true strength lies in the intangibles, the memories, the good times, and of course, the friendships that will last forever. If you are reading this newsletter, it is because you are a part of this, the Blaze Family, whether player, coach, supporter, sponsor it doesn't really make a difference, you are part of our club, our family.

The Chicago Blaze Rugby Club is 30+ years old and going strong. The Blaze is now older than all but a handful players on the current active roster. As President, I emphasize our club's history to new players. Our club has been around for so long and offers so much more than most other clubs. Take pride in wearing the Blaze Crest and representing the Blaze Club. You are wearing a jersey that many have also worn to battle. Others before you have bled, sweat, laughed, won and lost matches in that jersey. We are all thankful for the opportunity and are proud to represent this club and family. .

-Scott Smith (CBRC President)

## Coach's Corner – 2013 Goals

Team goals for 2013 include all facets of the club: the squad of players, the fossils, and importantly rugby's life line, our youth teams. With the great work that our Building Corporation is doing, having the insight and vision to have the Blaze facility and Club the number one venue in the Midwest, and combined with the long-term vision of the club to play our game at the top level, 2013 will be a consolidation and foundation building year.

In 2013 we will continue to execute our basic game plan. We will focus on flawless execution of the basic skills. We have a solid core of veteran players and some great prospects in the pipelines. The future is bright for our great club and we are excited to tackle upcoming challenges.

## (Coach's Corner cont'd)

Each player will have the opportunity to contribute, but all must commit on and off the field for our team's success. Remember, what you put in, is what you get out. I assure you our competition is keen to this concept. In order to topple them we must take action to hone our mental and physical skills.

-Chris Folland (CBRC Head Coach)



Blaze vs. Griffins (c.a., late 1980s). Lots of beef (Rhino, Kanzler, et al.) securing the ball in a maul. Photo courtesy of The Facebook.



Blaze vs. Griffins (Fall 2012). Ruben, Vytas, and Bryant securing the ball. New USA Rugby rules around ruck and maul tend to promote faster ball moment. Photo courtesy of Mike Nolan.





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## Fossil Update

2012 was a monumental year for the Blaze. We celebrated 30 great years. The work of the founders, alumni, shareholders, sponsors, and current team has set the foundation for a bright future as we stoke the fire for rugby in the USA. Upcoming events and Fossil games planned for spring 2013:

Fossils vs. Southside Irish (4/20)  
CARFU Ball & MW D2/3 Championships (4/27-28)  
IYRA State Championships (5/27)  
Fossils vs. Lincoln Park (5/18) at 11 am  
Fossils vs. Frogs (6/7) at 7 pm  
Firehouse 7s (6/22)

All Fossils are encouraged to participate in these events and come out and support the current team. You never know who you will see this year as we enter our 31<sup>st</sup> year. Big things are happening with our club. Please visit the website to keep up with the team, progress on the new clubhouse, and purchase your Blaze Shares.

-Norm Smyth (CBRC Fossil Coordinator)

## Club Officials

Pete Thornley – Building Corporation  
Walt Rebenson – Building Corporation  
Chris Cobb – Building Corporation  
Mike Kanzler – Building Corporation  
Al Klemp – Building Corporation  
Scott Smith – President  
Bryant Scharenbroch – Vice President  
Matt Kittridge – Treasurer  
Roman Carney – Secretary  
Jeff Friends – Recruitment Chair  
Graham Johnson – Social Chair  
Eric Fleet – Bar Manager  
Bill Weckstein – Match Secretary  
Chris Folland – Head Coach  
Brian Szwed – Captain  
Norm Smyth – Fossil Coordinator  
Rob Wassalik – Trainer (Athletico)  
Adam Meade – Chiropractor  
Lisa McNulty - Bartender  
Mike Nolan – Photographer

## Sponsors

Thank you to all our generous sponsors. The CBRC has many sponsorship opportunities, including team, kit, and field sponsorships. Please see [www.chicagoblazerugby.com](http://www.chicagoblazerugby.com) for more details.

Major Team Sponsors: Athletico and Argus Brewery.



Other CBRC sponsors:

Oakmark – Kit Sponsor  
Sharon Capital – Kit Sponsor  
Taylor – Kit Sponsor  
CKS Graphical Printing – Kit Sponsor  
Nick's Tavern – Field Sponsor  
Lemont VFW – Field Sponsor  
CPS Recruiting – Field Sponsor  
Dryco – Field Sponsor  
Goodyear – Field Sponsor  
Cobb Realty – Field Sponsor  
Moe Joe's – Field Sponsor  
Stonehouse Pub – Food Sponsor  
Peppo's – Food Sponsor  
Buffalo Wild Wings – Food Sponsor  
Cheers DJ Services – Music Sponsor

## 2012 Announcements

Future Blazers:

Rock – Bryant and Nicole Scharenbroch  
Andrew – Rolf and Melissa Otten  
Logan – Quintin Gerber and Jennifer Ziga  
Camille – Dustin and Jen Bollinger

Marriages:

Brian and Bethany Lubacz

Extinguished Blazers (RIP, we miss you):

Gary Burns  
Stephanus Herbst  
Jay Hilton



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## Youth Rugby

One day out of the blue my oldest son West who was going into 8th grade told me he wanted to play rugby. I told him he would have to wait until high school as there was no rugby for his age group close by. He didn't want to wait a whole year so he asked, "can't you start a team?" I called Dave Rosenberg to help me. In 2009, we started Naperville Youth Rugby for jr high boys.....or so I thought. Next I get a call from Brammy asking if girls could play. So along comes Lillie and her little brother Keegan. We played that first season with 16 boys and 1 girl and called ourselves the Naperville Crusaders. We were one of six new Jr high teams that year and joined the two existing teams, Arlington and St Charles. 2009 turned out to be a big year for development of youth rugby in Chicagoland.



Logos for Neuqua Wildcats and Naperville Crusaders Rugby.

At the end of the 2009 season West asks me where he's going to play at high school. I tell him he can go and play for Bob McNeel's team at Waubonsie who was doing a great job with the high school boys along with Mike Kanzler and Mark Flores at Naperville Central/North. He says, "I want to play for Neuqua". I say, "they don't have a team yet". He again asks, "can't you start one?" I say, "I just started a Jr high team". His response, "yeah, well Quinton still plays for them."

So in 2010 with the help of Dave we started Neuqua Wildcats Rugby with a bunch of freshman, for a total of 27 high school boys in Tier 3. That same year we saw our numbers double on the Crusaders team and we were now fielding two sides. That was the first year the IYRA had an official state championship for the jr high division. We had a policy of rotating our team at half time-forwards to backs and backs to forwards. It turned out to be a winning policy as we made the final and won.

## (Youth Rugby cont'd)

In 2011 both programs continued to grow and expand. Neuqua was playing T2, with more than 50 players registered. We were struggling to find games for everyone.

In 2012, the Crusaders expanded to 5-8th grade as younger boys wanted to get involved and we were still fielding two sides. We also started to experiment as a league with one game every weekend for 5th and 6th grade kids. 2012 was a strong year for Neuqua as we had over 70 boys registered with three competitive sides, T2, T3, and a newly created Freshman/Sophomore division. Our T2 and F/S teams both made the state final unfortunately to lose both games. The Crusaders continued to be a great way to introduce and develop young boys and girls and as a league we added a 5/6th division.

In 2013 Neuqua will move up into the top division-T1 where we will field a varsity and Jr varsity team. We will also play in T3 and F/S.

The Chicago Blaze is fueling the hotbed of youth rugby in the SW suburbs. Plainfield is coached by Steve Krause. Waubonsie coached by Bryce Elliot. Naperville with Mike Kansler. St. Charles with Jay Crawford. At the Jr high level, Warrenville Warthogs has Rob Hammer and Mike Dalan. A new team in Aurora/Oswego has Jeff Lapka and two of the Steno Brothers.

In the short time I have been involved in youth rugby I have seen dramatic growth in all areas and I don't see it slowing down. None of this would've been possible without all of the volunteer help of ex-players and parents. It can be very time consuming but the positive effects of rugby on our young men and women are too numerous to describe. I see it everyday in my family. I have three sons playing, two for Neuqua and one for the Crusaders.

-Graeme Jackson (CBRC Fossil & Coach)

