



Illinois Girls Tornados

The Illinois Tornados is a high performance program representing the state of Illinois in interstate competition. Participation in the Tornados gives players access to high performance coaching, visibility into national team pathway expectations, and college recruiting.

Who can play?

All Rugby Illinois high school girls players are eligible. Illinois players whose home clubs are not members of Rugby Illinois (Noble League teams) can register individually in order to be eligible. Team selections are based primarily on attendance.

All players who are interested in playing at the next level should participate. We want to help players develop their skills and have the opportunity to meet and play with others from across the state. While we enjoy helping those who want to make it to the highest levels get there, we want the team to represent all teams across the state. We love working with players who are newer to the sport.



What is the schedule?

The complete Tornados schedule is not yet finalized. The team will participate in a tournament in New Jersey and should be available to travel from June 9 - 12. There will be an additional game on either June 4 or June 24 - 25.

Practices are usually held once per week in May on Saturdays and 2 - 3 times per week in June depending on our game schedule. Practices alternate locations between the city and suburban locations. For practices in the suburbs, we usually have pickup points at the ends of the CTA blue and orange lines for players who rely on public transportation.

What will participation in a high performance program lead to?

In the last 4 years we have been able to play (Covid restrictions prevented us from having 2020 and 2021 seasons) our players have gone on to do great things!

- We have had 7 Tornados invited to USA Rugby U18 camp
- 12 of our players have gone on to play for varsity college programs, most on scholarship
 - 2 alums won the NCAA Div II Championship in 2022 with one named as the championship MVP
- Many alums have gone on to play for college and women's clubs
 - 1 alum was named a collegiate club rugby Division II All-American in 2022
 - 1 alum was selected for the Midwest U23 team in 2022
 - 3 alums were selected as Great Waters Conference Division I All Stars in 2022

For players who are interested in playing in college, our coaches are happy to help you understand what college programs are out there, what might be a good fit, and provide references to college coaches. For those who do not plan on going to college, we have a wide network of coaches we can connect you with to find a club nearby, in another state, or with a military affiliation depending on what you plan to do after high school!

Who are the coaches?

The coaching staff is dedicated to helping all interested players in Illinois develop their skills.

- Head Coach - Jamie Stephen - Jamie received her Level 2 coaching certification in England as a recipient of the Premiership Rugby Scholarship Program. She is currently the Midwest girls scout for the USA Rugby High Performance Program and has been an assistant coach for USA Rugby HS All Americans 7s. She is also a World Rugby Coach Educator. She is the head coach of Taft Girls HS Rugby.
- Forwards Coach - Chris "Milo" Milojevich - Milo coached the Plainfield Girls HS Rugby team for 10 years, 6 years as head coach resulting in 5 state titles. He is currently the head coach of the County Will Morrigan's Women's Rugby Team.

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- Assistant Coach - Theo Gilbert - Theo founded and coaches the Lane Tech Girls Rugby team which reached the state championship in 2019. He is also the Vice President of Competition for Rugby Illinois.
- Assistant Coach - Taetum Pfingston - Taetum coaches Plainfield Girls HS Rugby which reached the state championship in 2022. She is a current player for the County Will Morigans Women's Rugby Team.
- Assistant Coach - Kathleen O'Brien - Kathleen coaches Lake County Girls HS Rugby. She played college rugby at the University of Notre Dame. She is a current player for the County Will Morigans Women's Rugby Team.
- Manager and Assistant Coach - Amy McCormick - Amy has coached the Chicago Area Rugby Football Union (CARFU) U23s and she coached Noble Street to victory over St. Charles in the first HS girls rugby match in Illinois in 2002. She is currently the Rugby Illinois Girls HS Division Coordinator.

What does it cost?

Fees vary depending on the amount of travel we do, tournament fees, and the number of players traveling. The cost is typically approximately \$350 per player per year which includes all costs when the team is traveling. We do everything in our power to keep fees low in order to make it as affordable as possible. Scholarships funded by former Chicago Women's RFC players are available for players with financial need.

Additional Information

If you want the opportunity to represent your state, play at the next level, meet players from all over the state (OK, we need to develop more teams downstate but we're working on it!), and have a lot of fun, we would love to have you join the Tornados.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Amy McCormick at amccormick@rugbyillinois.us.

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