



We drew arrows on our hands symbolizing how we are here together.

Club Sports—

Men's and Women's

Soccer

Rugby

Basketball

Volleyball

Rugby

Golf



Elite Eight National Team Photo

Hounding the Incoming By Amanda Belmont

What values define Loyola? Loyola prides itself on "Cura Personalis" which translates to "care of the whole person." We also pride ourselves on community. When you arrive here at Loyola, you will never feel alone – you will find a community for whatever you want to do. One way to join a community at Loyola is to join a Club Sport. I know that not everyone plays a sport; however, I wanted to discuss my experience with the community found in club sports that allowed me to find my support system and people.

When I chose Loyola, I knew that I wanted to play a sport because I manage my time best when I have extra-curriculars or pack my schedule. I found rugby in high school and loved the atmosphere given from the community. To the point that I knew, I wanted to continue this sport in college. Even before I arrived on campus, I got in touch with one of the current players, who welcomed me with open arms. She offered to help with anything I needed especially when preparing to come to Loyola. The first time that I physically met Mary Amonica – captain and president of the team – was at a one of the introductory events for in-

coming students. This event showcased all the different club and intramural sports Loyola has to offer. The minute that I went up to the table I was welcomed not just by Mary but by everyone else who was at the booth for rugby.


At the first practice, everyone who signed up for rugby came and had a blast. Since most people do not know how to play rugby, the first day was a way for people to see the sport and to make friends. We practiced two hours twice a week where we learned how to properly tackle and throw the ball. They also added a one-hour practice once a week where we were able to just play the sport. Nobody was critiquing anything; we all were just playing and having the time of our lives.

Now, I know what you must be thinking. There is a great community here but why would I join a sport or why would I sign up for a sport I've never played? I met a ton of people who were in the same boat. Similarly, the sophomores felt that same way. They were restricted to an online fall semester. They missed a year to build relations and a community. In order to help build comradery on the team, many seniors reach out to check in on you, and also to help you in any way you need. You can ask the seniors for their opinion about anything ranging from rugby to just things they enjoy on campus. Rugby has also given us the opportunity to travel to other states, and while doing that, we have all gotten to know each other almost like a family.

Over the course of the past two seasons (fall and spring), we have experienced new and exciting things together, strengthening our team

bond and making it unbreakable. We are constantly there for each other. My favorite example would be when we travelled to Virginia for our national tournament. Our coach brought a sharpie and let us draw arrows on our arms to signify that we were playing for each other and to show how we will always have friends on both sides of us on the field. Also, since the women's rugby team is relatively new, we get the joy of experiencing everything together for the first time. For example, we made it to the Elite Eight in the fall season. We always see each other on campus and say, "Hi." You can also identify us by just seeing us sit together in either Starbucks or Boulder. It allows us to develop a bond and to get to know each other better. We know that we can rely on each other even when times get tough.

After talking with Mary, I learned how she found this team. Mary says that the best thing about club sports at Loyola is the community. Mary joined rugby her sophomore year which was the fall semester right before COVID. She says, "Freshmen year, I felt alone and joining sophomore year and seeing people on campus helped me feel like I had people on campus that supported me." When I made the change from high school to college, Mary was with me throughout it. She made sure that I had support. And she gave me an outlet as someone who is connected to Loyola. Over the summer, Mary and I were constantly texting.



She would either tell me more about the rugby program or give me advice on life in college. She made sure I knew that I was part of the Loyola community even before I met anyone or arrived on campus. Mary has had such a huge impact on my life here that even after she graduates, we will not lose touch. She even plans to come back and support the rugby team – especially by joking that she will take over the assistant coach position. Even though Mary is graduating, the atmosphere will not change – she will forever be a part of the Loyola Women's Rugby community. And the vast alumni network that Loyola Men's and Women's Rugby has.

The best part about the community you can build here is that you can meet people who you might have run into before. That happened to me. I met a girl who seem very familiar to me – and it turns out we only live a town over from each other. Her name is Francesca "Fran" Minervini, and she is a junior who is also our treasurer and in control of our financial situation. Fran has helped me in many ways – she goes out of her way to show me that I have al-



This is a photo of the men's and women's Rugby teams on their trip to Nashville, Tennessee.

"When I joined the club Rugby team, I immediately felt welcomed and like I had found my home away from home." - Catherine Giordano, junior officer



This is a photo of the rugby team goofing around during our break between games.

lies and a community here. I asked Fran about her story of how she joined rugby and why she decided to stay. She says, "Joining a club sport helps me balance my schedule and meet new people. The people I met at rugby will be the friends I stick with for the rest of my life. I contacted the Loyola rugby Instagram page, and they gave me their practice times so I can try out the sport." Most people joined rugby for help balancing their schedule but ended up staying for the community. Like Fran said, we found friends who will last a lifetime. We found a community that will last outside of college.

Now I know that you still might be overwhelmed especially since this is just my story, and everyone has a different story. So, I thought that I would leave you with advice from some of my current teammates.

Advice

Fran – "Try out any sport that piques your interest. Rugby was not a sport I had ever expected to play, nor did I know what rugby was when I came to Loyola, and it is the weirdest sport I will ever play to this day. But I decided to join on a whim, and I regret nothing."

Mary – "I would tell freshmen to not let the high school boundaries of sports define them. I was letting myself be boxed in by looking to the sports I played in high school. So, I would make sure that you may go to the activities fair and really explore your options before tying yourself down to one sport."

Community has been a very big influence on why I have loved my time here at Loyola. I found people who understand me and who help me to be the best me that I can. We all complement each other well. Communities also continuously want to expand. They will never say no – they want to meet more people. You can try multiple different clubs to see which works best for you. The worst thing you can do is say this is not for me and back out. By that point, you will have met people from different communities.



We decided to take a team picture when the weather was nice and cooperating on April 9.

"Try something new. Don't hesitate to broad your horizons. Community can be found everywhere on campus."

"Rugby has also instilled within me a sense of teamwork and comradery." - Catherine Giordano



Coach told us to take a silly group photo.