



RUGBY ONTARIO PROVINCIAL HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

2025 / 2026

Presented by:



#BACKYOURBLUES

INTRODUCTION

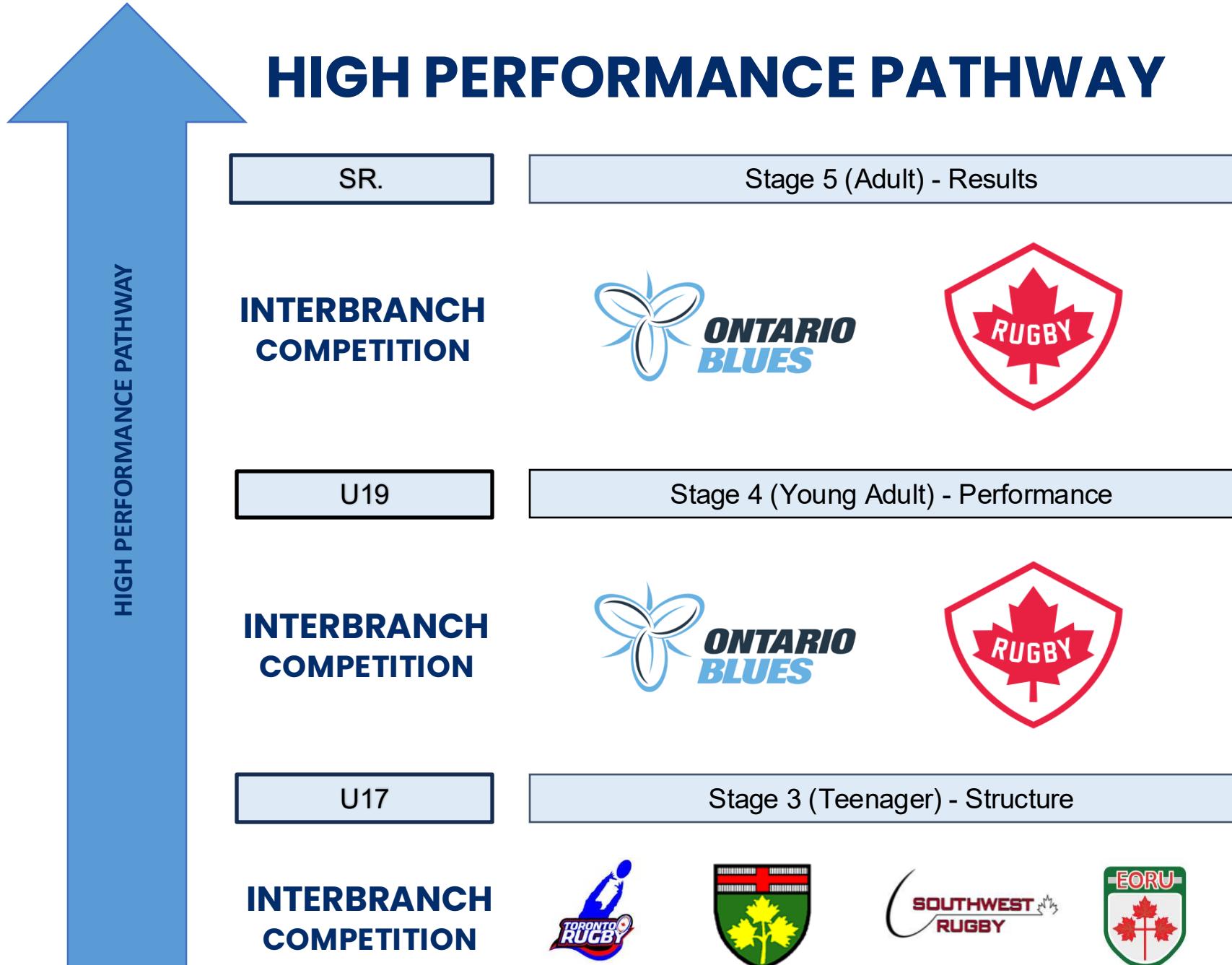
- The Rugby Ontario High Performance Program is a development initiative designed to cultivate and enhance the skills of rugby players in Ontario
- It aims to identify, develop, and prepare promising athletes in both the male and female pathways to represent the province (Ontario) and eventually to reach national teams.
- The **Ontario Blues** name is used for the provincial representative teams at various age grades and for senior levels.



Purpose, Goals & Values

- The overarching purpose is to **develop future provincial and national team athletes**; to prepare players not only physically and technically, but holistically (life skills, leadership, mindset) so they can succeed in both rugby and outside of it.
- Emphasis is placed on values like **growth mindset, personal accountability**, and being part of a **community**.
- The program is designed to create clear pathways: from club → branch teams → provincial teams → national teams.

HIGH PERFORMANCE PATHWAY



"Stage" refers to the Rugby Canada National Technical Direction in alignment with the Long Term Athlete Development model.

Stage 1 (Child) and Stage 2 (Adolescent) have a technical emphasis where the Game essence is "Fun" and "Participation" respectively.

INTERBRANCH PROGRAM

A Foundational Building Block

Over the past three years, the Interbranch competition and the Ontario Blues program within Rugby Ontario have steadily built a strong **regional Branch** play environment and a proven development pathway. This structure has already shown success at the U17 and U19 levels, producing athletes who are technically, tactically and mentally prepared for higher levels of competition.

The natural next step is for Rugby Ontario to continue leading the country by formalizing and expanding this platform at the senior level. In 2026, four regional branches will compete at senior level (>U19), creating a platform for best-on-best domestic competition. This competition model will then serve as a selection tool for the Ontario Blues Senior Men's provincial team.

U17

Week 1 – August 29th, 2026
Week 2 – September 2nd, 2026
Week 3 – September 6th, 2026

U19

Week 1 – May 2nd, 2026
Week 2 – May 9th, 2026
Week 3 – May 17th, 2026

Senior Men

Week 1 – April 4th, 2026
Week 2 – April 11th, 2026
Week 3 – April 18th, 2026



ATHLETE OBJECTIVES



BUILD TALENT PIPELINES

By identifying and developing talented young athletes, the program maintains a consistent flow of players prepared to succeed at advanced levels, including national teams and professional leagues.

- The women's athlete pool is sufficient, supported by a steady progression of players across Provincial age groups such as U16, U18, U20, and USPORTS, OCAA, NCAA and Senior Rugby categories. Many athletes view overseas professional leagues as a viable route to national team selection.
- The men's athlete pool is also sufficient, with a consistent pipeline of players within Provincial age groups U16, U18, U20, and USPORTS, OCAA, NCAA and Senior Rugby categories. However, there is a need to establish a recruitment and profiling program targeting taller and larger athletes. Developing alternative pathways, including opportunities through overseas academies, is essential.
- A key challenge is fostering athlete engagement and a strong sense of belonging among 14- to 16-year-olds, particularly as they face competition from other sports such as Volleyball, Soccer, Hockey, Football, and Basketball, all of which offer NCAA pathways and structured age-grade programming.

PROVIDE PREMIUM TRAINING

This program provides specialized training aimed at advancing technical, tactical, physical, and mental skills necessary for elite-level rugby performance.

- Both player groups require continuous, year-round physical development to meet the sport's demands, supported through outsourced partnerships with regional Strength and Conditioning specialists.
- Coaches will be upskilled following the National Technical Model and aligned with the vision of the four national programs in both 7s and 15s formats, with an annual coach development plan commencing in Fall 2025.
- All athletes will have annual opportunities to enhance their technical and tactical abilities. While winter training is covered by the Ontario Blues Development Academy (OBDA), there is a need to expand builder camps during the summer and fall seasons to optimize training efficiency and lower outdoor-related costs.
- Resources and educational initiatives focused on Mental Performance, Recovery, and Nutrition will be strengthened through collaborations with CSIO.

ENHANCE COMPETITION STANDARDS

Athletes in the high-performance program consistently participate in regional tournaments, gaining valuable experience that aligns with the competitive standards required for success at the international level.

Interbranch 7s and 15s competitions for U17 and U19, along with Ontario/Quebec Senior Women's events, have established a limited opportunity for the top 100 athletes to engage in fixtures aimed at provincial program selection.

Rugby Canada's Age Grade and Senior programming for 7s tournaments and regional events remain limited, posing challenges for Ontario players seeking higher-quality competition and visibility with National Coaches.

It is recommended to develop provincial 7s programming for the following teams and events:

- U18 Blues to compete in domestic or international tournaments such as the Vancouver 7s or NZ/AU 7s.
- Senior Blues to participate internationally at events like the Dubai 7s or European 7's fixtures.

It is further advised to pause participation in the C2C competition at this time, pending Rugby Canada's response regarding the Elite Men's and Women's competition proposal for 2026. The proposal includes having the top U25 Senior Men train from January to March 2026, travel to Victoria, and compete against Pacific Pride and MLR development squads in April 2026.

- Lastly, it is suggested that the Regional Organization and Interbranch consider organizing a competition in May and June for the top 100 players, featuring a six-game schedule.

PROMOTE RUGBY'S GROWTH IN ONTARIO

The program plays a crucial role in boosting rugby's popularity and accessibility throughout Ontario by motivating young athletes and establishing local role models.

Inspire Through Role Models

- Showcase Ontario-born national team players through various media channels and live events.
- Develop a “Where Are They Now?” series to highlight athletes who progressed through Rugby Ontario’s development pathways.
- Engage alumni as ambassadors in community clinics, school visits, and club activities.

Utilize Community Events and Partnerships

- Partner with municipal recreation departments, multicultural festivals, and youth expos to introduce rugby to a wide and diverse audience.
- Provide free rugby programming during events such as the Ontario Summer Games, Canada Day celebrations, and other community gatherings.

Establish a Clear Participation Pathway

- Create a visual representation of the progression from Mini Rugby to the National Team and promote it extensively at clubs and schools.
- Ensure the high-performance program is well-integrated and visible within local clubs so that emerging players can clearly understand the pathway to advanced levels.

SUPPORT NATIONAL TEAM ASPIRATIONS

A primary objective is to align with Rugby Canada's talent development pathways, equipping athletes to represent Canada in international events such as the Rugby World Cup, the Olympics, and other global competitions.

Maintain alignment with Rugby Canada's LTAD and Pathway Standards.

- Implement provincial programs (OBDA, U18, U19, U20, Senior, and Sevens) following Rugby Canada's athlete development frameworks.
- Ensure skill benchmarks, physical KPIs, and game models meet national standards. Continuously update provincial coaching materials to reflect national systems and terminology.

Strengthen collaborative Talent Identification efforts

- Partner closely with Rugby Canada to identify, profile, and invite Ontario athletes to national team camps (U18, U20, Maple Leafs, Senior). Coordinate joint ID sessions such as regional combines or centralized selection weekends.
- Develop, maintain, and share comprehensive athlete tracking profiles with Rugby Canada, incorporating performance metrics, coaching evaluations, and video highlights.

Enhance High-Performance Environment Readiness

- Provide athletes with access to Integrated Support Teams (IST), including strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, nutrition, and mental performance services.
- Maintain high-quality training environments (DTEs) aligned with national team standards, encompassing field conditions, coaching quality, recovery, and performance analysis.
- Facilitate travel and competition opportunities, such as the Coast-to-Coast Cup, Interprovincial Sevens, and international tours.

Integrate National Coaches

- Involve Rugby Canada coaches in talent identification, selection, and provincial team development camps.
- Conduct coach professional development workshops to ensure technical consistency and encourage Ontario High-Performance coaches to establish direct connections with national selectors.

COACH DEVELOPMENT

Certification & Education

Rugby Ontario provides training pathways for coaches to earn certifications aligned with Rugby Canada's standards. This includes entry-level coaching courses and advanced modules covering technical skills, game strategy, sports psychology, and player welfare.

High-Performance Clinics & Workshops

Regular workshops and clinics allow coaches to learn the latest methodologies and gain hands-on experience in high-performance environments. Topics may include video analysis, data-driven training techniques, and leadership development.



Mentorship Programs

Coaches are often paired with experienced mentors, including former national players or high-level coaches, who provide guidance and insight into high-performance coaching methods. This mentorship helps coaches develop advanced techniques and adapt to evolving rugby strategies.

Direct Involvement in Athlete Pathways

Coaches involved in the high-performance program work directly with players on Rugby Ontario's teams, building strong player-coach relationships and implementing long-term development plans. This continuity strengthens the talent pipeline and ensures that players benefit from consistent, high-quality coaching.

MATCH OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT

Certification & Pathway Programs

Rugby Ontario offers certification programs for match officials, aligning with Rugby Canada's officiating standards. These programs provide a clear pathway from grassroots officiating to elite-level matches, preparing officials for higher levels of competition.

Ongoing Training & Workshops

Rugby Ontario organizes training workshops focused on the rules of the game, positioning, game management, and communication with players and coaches. Officials also receive updates on new laws and interpretations to maintain the integrity of high-performance matches.



Performance Feedback & Evaluation

High-performance match officials receive regular assessments and feedback from experienced assessors. This structured feedback helps officials refine their skills, improve decision-making, and adapt to the high-pressure environments of elite matches.

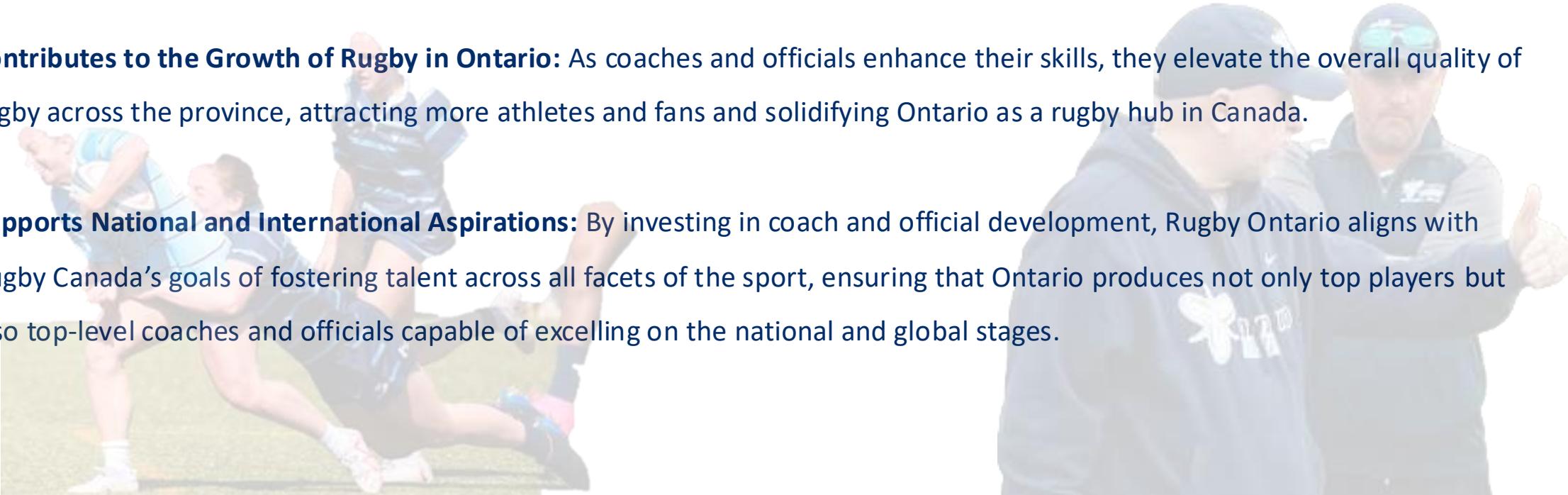
Exposure to High-Level Competition

By officiating in high-stakes tournaments and matches, officials gain experience at a level required for national and international competitions. This experience builds confidence, sharpens decision-making, and prepares them for roles in high-performance settings.

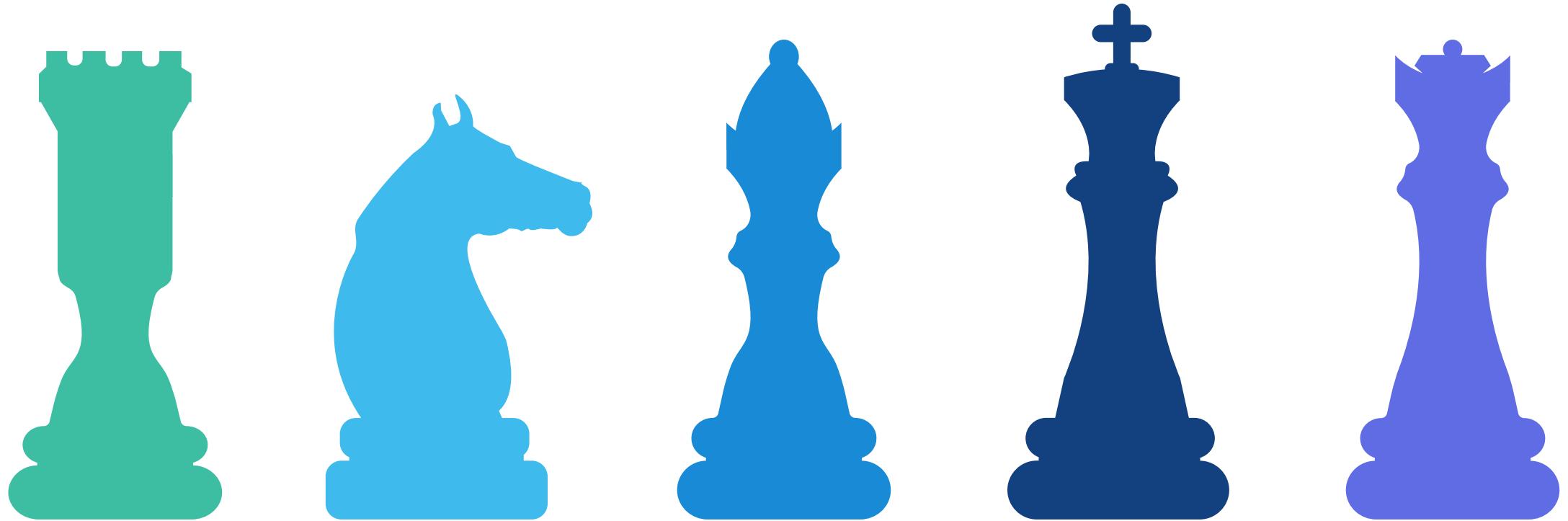
Why Coach & Match Official Development is Crucial



- **Ensures Quality Training and Fair Competition:** Skilled coaches and officials create an environment where players can develop effectively and compete fairly, ensuring Ontario's rugby talent progresses within a supportive and challenging environment.
- **Contributes to the Growth of Rugby in Ontario:** As coaches and officials enhance their skills, they elevate the overall quality of rugby across the province, attracting more athletes and fans and solidifying Ontario as a rugby hub in Canada.
- **Supports National and International Aspirations:** By investing in coach and official development, Rugby Ontario aligns with Rugby Canada's goals of fostering talent across all facets of the sport, ensuring that Ontario produces not only top players but also top-level coaches and officials capable of excelling on the national and global stages.



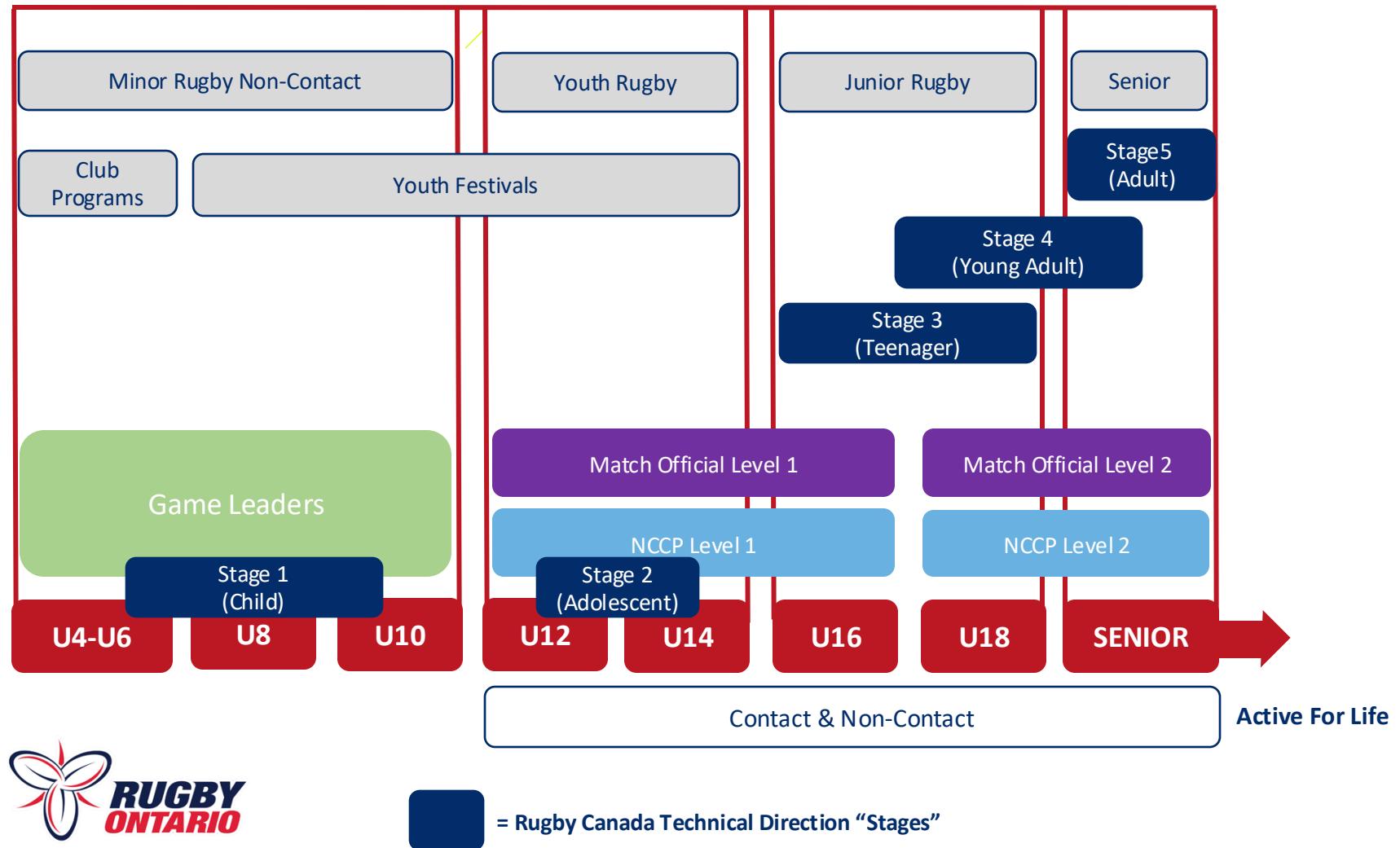
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT



PERFORM WITH EXCELLENCE

Strategies that maximize the performance potential of all rugby participants.

RUGBY ONTARIO PATHWAY



RUGBY ONTARIO HP TIMELINE

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Jr Blues 7s	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓
Jr Blues 15s	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	
Summer Games							✓					
U19					✓		✓					
Sr Women's	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓	
Sr Men's	✓	✓	✓	✓								✓
Interbranch				✓	✓			✓				
Club Comp					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

 Prep

 Competition

 Showcases

 Talent ID

ONTARIO BLUES DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

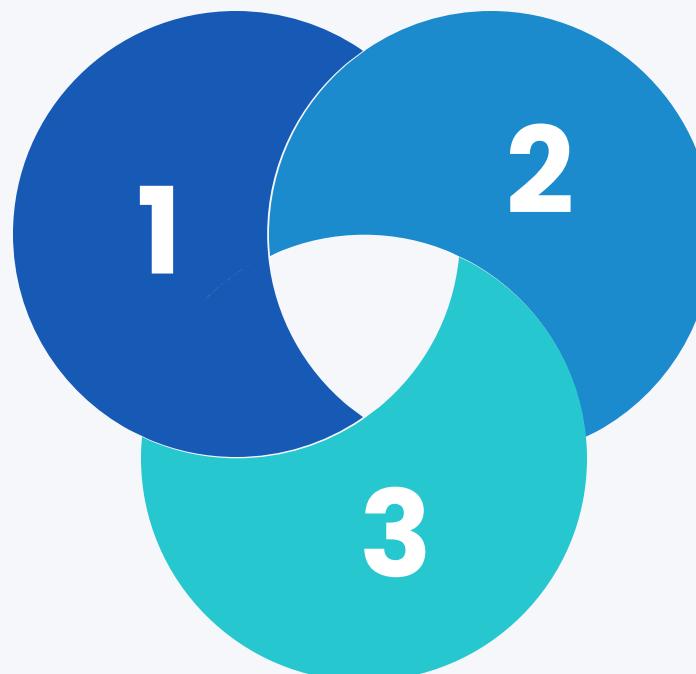
(2008/2011)



Junior Blues – Dual Elite Pathway

7s Elite Program

- Focused on speed, agility, evasion, and decision-making under fatigue.
- Prepares athletes for Canada Summer Games, Ontario Blues Sevens, and National 7s teams.
- Emphasis on the 7-aside game-specific technical and tactical development
- Domestic and International competition and camp structure to align with international 7s demands.



15s Elite Program

- Builds position-specific skills, set-piece mastery (scrum/lineout), and tactical systems.
- Prepares athletes for Ontario Blues U19, Canada U18/U20, and eventual Senior Men's/Women's teams.
- Strong integration with S&C to prepare for contact, collisions, and multi-phase play.
- Structured seasonal competition and development pathway aligned with Rugby Canada.

Shared Academy Benefits

- Athletes can transition between 7s and 15s while maintaining Rugby Ontario's high-performance standards.
- Coaches receive aligned education across both formats to ensure technical/tactical consistency.
- Ensures Ontario continues to produce Canada's top athletes in both Olympic 7s and World Cup 15s pathways

ONTARIO BLUES DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

(2008/2011)



Junior Blues – Dual Elite Pathway

Coach and Player Development Series

- Progressive Athlete Development – Develop core skills by U15, enhance technical and tactical details through U16–U17, and prepare U18 athletes for national and professional standards.
- Position-Specific & Game Systems – Introduce structured attack, defence, set-piece systems, and position-specific skills gradually, aligned with Rugby Canada's pathways.
- Integrated Coaching Development – Offer year-round Coach professional development from Rugby Canada and International Club resources, focused on technical and tactical modules, mentoring, and feedback to expand Ontario's coaching pool.
- Annual Cycle – Fall focuses on physical and skill evaluation through Combines. Winter includes indoor training, strength and conditioning, and video analysis; Spring emphasizes tactical and game preparation; Summer features showcase matches and national and international competitions.
- Performance Tracking – Use KPIs to measure athlete progress towards national teams, technical and tactical improvements, and coach development outcomes.

JUNIOR BLUES 7s

(2008/2011)



PHASE 1 – Talent ID

Talent Identification Combines

West - Oct 4th/5th, 2025 – Guelph University

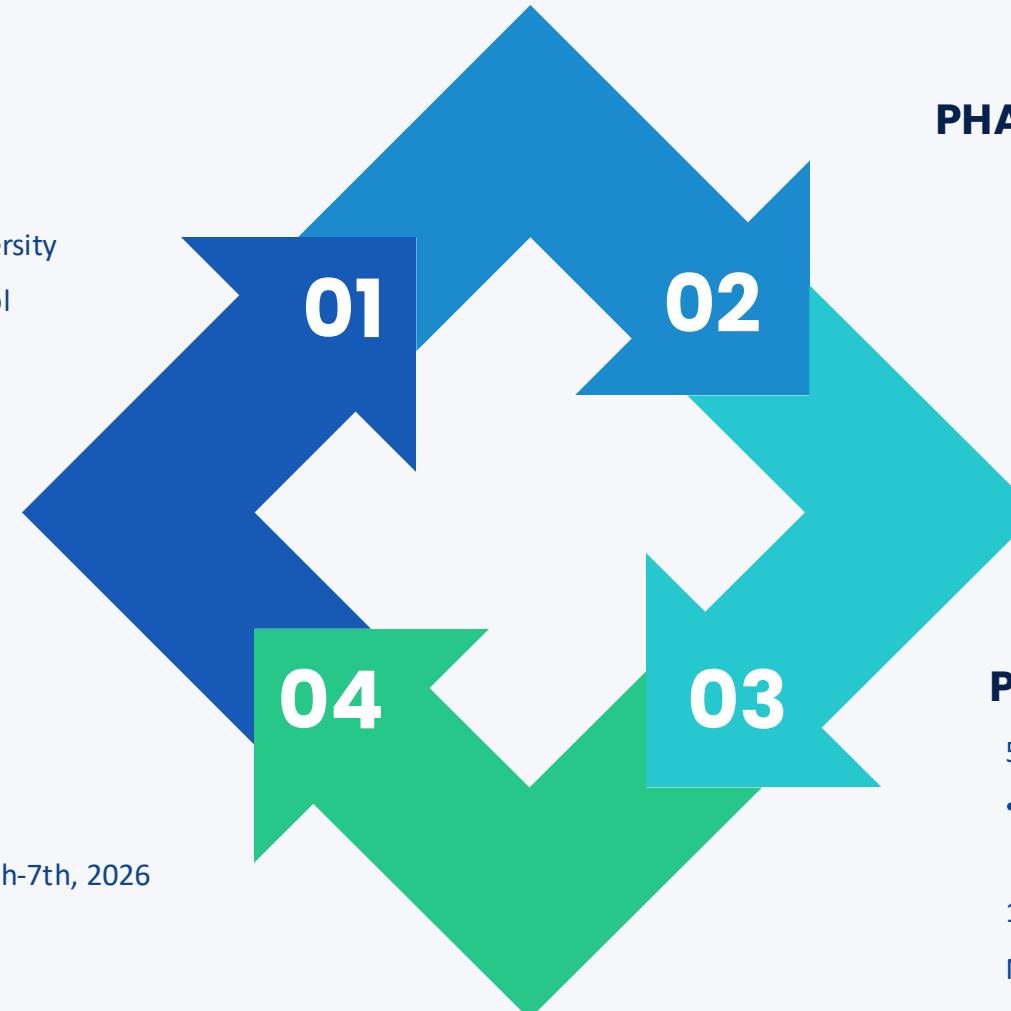
Central - Oct 5th, 2025 – Crescent School

East - Oct 4th, 2025 – Queen's University

PHASE 4 – Competition

Tournament vs OUA /OCCA Teams

Vancouver 7's Elite Competitions – March 5th-7th, 2026



PHASE 2 – Selection via Competitions

3 Interbranch tournaments

Top 40 athletes selected on November 21st, 2025

Bellwether - Oct 17th/18th, 2025 – Brantford

Interbranch Cup - Oct 26th, 2025 – Brampton

Interbranch Cup - November 2nd, 2025 – Aurora

2 Top 70 Builder Camps – 70 athletes 2008-2011

GTA - November 7th and November 14th

PHASE 3 – Pre-Competition Prep

5 training sessions and one pre-tournament:

- Dec 13th, 2025; Jan 11th, 2026; Jan 25th, 2026; Feb 8th, 2026; Feb 15th, 2026; Feb 15th, 2026

12-week S/C, Speed and Conditioning program

Nutritional and Recovery Support

JUNIOR BLUES 15s

(2008/2011)



PHASE 1 – Talent ID

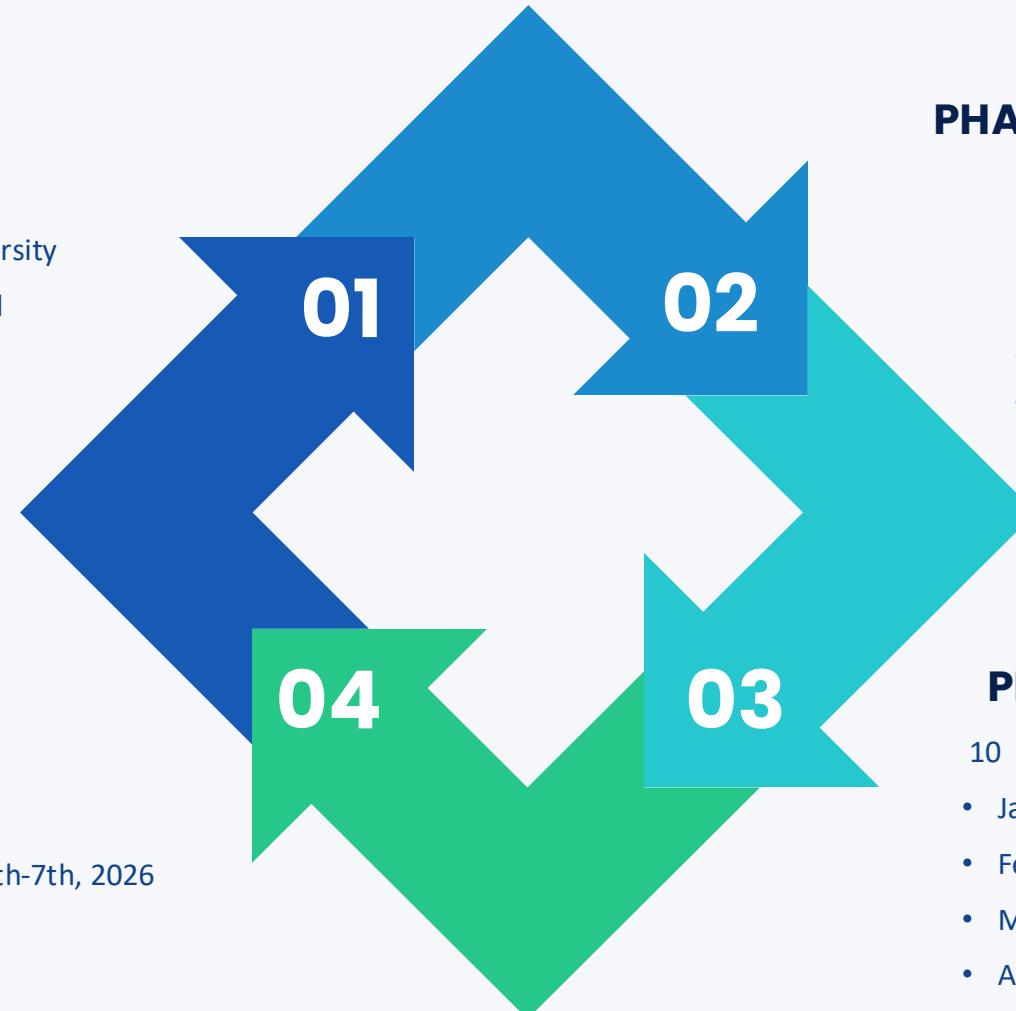
Talent Identification Combines:

West - Oct 4th/5th, 2025 – Guelph University
Central - Oct 5th, 2025 – Crescent School
East - Oct 4th, 2025 – Queen's University

PHASE 4 – Competition

Tournament vs OUA /OCCA Teams

Vancouver 7's Elite Competitions – March 5th-7th, 2026



PHASE 2 – Selection via Competitions

U17 Interbranch matches/ Games vs BC in August. The top 120 athletes will be selected on November 3rd
East - 35 Boys & Girls
Central - 50 Boys & Girls
West - 35 Boys & Girls

PHASE 3 – Pre-Competition Prep

10 training sessions and one pre-tournament

- Jan 2026: 10th, 17th, 24th 31st
- Feb 2026: 7th, 21st, 28th
- March 2026: 7th, 28th
- April 2026: 12th

12-week S/C, Speed and Conditioning program

Nutritional and Recovery Support

2026 ONTARIO SUMMER GAMES

U17 & U18 Women's / Men's

July 30th – August 2nd, 2026
Waterloo, ON

Branch Teams representing the NRU, SWRU, TRU, EORU will each have 2 teams per gender competing in 2 divisions

Player Identification

Players born January 1st, 2006 to December 31st, 2009 are eligible.

Each branch will run and support their teams in the fall of 2025 and Spring and Summer tours to build out their rosters for June 2026.

Competition Preparation

Fall 2025 – Interbranch Fall 7s Series
Winter 2026 – Ontario Blues 7's
Spring/Summer – Canada Weekend
Great White 7s

Ontario Summer Games

Teams representing each branch will compete at the 2026 Ontario Summer Games hosted in Waterloo, ON.
Day 1 – July 31st, 2026
Day 2 – August 1st, 2026



U19 PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT

(2007/2008)



The U19 Ontario Blues program continues to generate high-level talent within the performance development stage of the pathway. This development program aims to select the top players aged 18 and 19 from the regional Interbranch competition to represent the Ontario at a national championship – the U19 Canadian Rugby Championship.

Player Identification

Talent Identification Combines: West, Central, East

150+ athletes identified for each region

U18 players play in Showcase 7s and 15s

Showcase Games

U19 Interbranch Matches:

Round 1 – May 2nd, 2026

Round 2 – May 9th, 2026

Round 3 – May 17th, 2026

CANADIAN RUGBY CHAMPIONSHIP

Men's Lead Coaches – Will Kelly and Eric Noyes

Women's Lead Coach – Rhys Manning

Top 26 players of each gender selected to attend the 2026 CRC National Competition in Guelph, ON from July 19th - 27th, 2026.

Players have prepared together in training days and exhibition games hosted in June and July.

SENIOR WOMEN'S PROGRAM



The Quebec Ontario Rugby Championship – an inter-provincial collaboration between Rugby Ontario and Rugby Quebec and led by Rugby Canada – is the pathway competition for Ontario's senior women's players. The Ontario Blues Senior Women's program will provide meaningful competition and preparation for pathway players, scheduled prior to the Ontario club season. This competition will identify the top athletes representing Ontario for National Teams at the U20 and national senior levels.

Player Identification

Two regional teams selected: East & West
Regional Combine East, West,
When: December 20th/21st
Open and Invitation

Competition Preparation

Players will have the months of December and January to prepare for matches from January to May 2026.

Showcase Games

Ontario East and West will compete in a total of 6 matches prior to Rugby Canada's Sr. Women's Camp (March 23rd – April 5th, 2026) and Pac 4 (May 2026), and finish with a Final in May 2026.

- Week 1 – Jan 18th, 2026
- Week 2 – Feb 8th, 2026
- Week 3 – Feb 14th, 2026
- Week 4 – Feb 21st, 2026
- Week 5 – Feb 28th, 2026
- Week 6 – March 14th, 2026
- Week 7 – March 22nd, 2026
- Finals – May 2nd, 2026

SENIOR MEN'S PROGRAM

Rugby Ontario will continue leading the country by formalizing and expanding an inter-provincial platform at the senior level. Aligning national team selection with a robust inter-provincial competition builds on existing strengths, reinforces development continuity, and positions Ontario and participating provinces at the forefront of rugby development in Canada.

This enhanced selection model provides a more accurate, fair, and developmentally beneficial process compared to traditional try-outs, ultimately strengthening both the national team and the broader Canadian rugby ecosystem.

Player Identification

Players will compete in 3-game regional Interbranch competition with the following fixtures:

Week 1 – April 4th, 2026

Week 2 – April 11th, 2026

Week 3 – April 18th, 2026

Competition Preparation

Top 50 players will compete in an All-star fixture:
April 25th, 2026

Top 26 players will train (preparation) on May 2nd, 3rd and 10th, 2026.

Showcase/Tours

Senior Men's Tour to Victoria, BC

May 16th - 25th, 2026

Matches:

May 18th, 2026 – U20 Canada/Pacific Pride

May 21st, 2026 – Vancouver All-Stars

May 24th, 2026 – BC Bears

HIGH PERFORMANCE PATHWAY

HIGH PERFORMANCE PATHWAY

SR.

Stage 5 (Adult) - Results

**INTERBRANCH
COMPETITION**



U19

Stage 4 (Young Adult) - Performance

**INTERBRANCH
COMPETITION**



U17

Stage 3 (Teenager) - Structure

**INTERBRANCH
COMPETITION**



Future State Outcome:

Rugby Ontario is the leading high performance rugby organization in Canada, consistently delivering performance pathway opportunities, medal-winning performances and alignment from community to province to country.



For more information:

CONTACT

Sandro Fiorino | High Performance Technical Manager

sfiorino@rugbyontario.com

www.rugbyontario.com