



OLD BOY QUARTERLY

The Old Boy Quarterly is targeted to the alumni rugby players of the Kansas Jayhawks Rugby Football Club.

These issues chronicle both interesting parts of the club's **56 YEAR** history and inform the readers about the club's current status & future plans.

It is meant to supplement and not replace the information on the club's website JayhawkRugby.com

The club also has actively managed information on Facebook. ([Kansas Jayhawks Rugby Football Club](#))

We are seeking to expand this publication's distribution. If you are aware of KJRFC alumni who would like to be added to the distribution, please forward this e-mailed newsletter to them.

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Jayhawks' College Games 2019/2020: Fall Season Spring Season

Central Missouri	44 - 7	Arkansas	44 - 13
Oklahoma State	57 - 0	Nebraska	58 - 7
Iowa State	31 - 12	<i>Season Cancelled</i>	
Iowa	34 - 0		
Missouri	41 - 10		
Kansas State	69 - 0		

*Heart of America's Best Record

*Qualified for National Playoffs

*Then Arrives the
Pandemic*



**Jayhawks' Best Team & Season in Years
*Interrupted By a World-Wide Pandemic***

This is a 2-Part Newsletter

"Before" & "After"

WHAT'S GOING ON

This is a difficult Newsletter edition to write.

In the second week in March, USA Rugby cancelled all games, the College Playoffs, and KU cancelled campus classes. I initially had a formative idea about the main article for this Newsletter. That article would cover the two great games we played this spring, the sadness that this was a team of accumulated success stories; of **recruiting, commitment, good coaching, and a background beat of strong alumni support**. That we would have been in a terrific position to advance in the playoffs.

More importantly, that our club has a **PROCESS** that will transcend this setback and therefore, even though we will lose some seniors and Study Abroad Brits, our **PROCESS** will enable us to eventually re-build all this.

HOWEVER, the pandemic is a **world event** that impacts **families, life savings, and employment**; making a rugby club and its aspirations pale in importance.

I think about the horrible position of our club's English boys. Instead of having a terrific experience of getting into and playing for a National Title, they were suddenly confined in a foreign country's dorm, without a car, far from family. Two of the three have since returned home. - I think about all these personal stories inside this event.

So this edition will celebrate what we collectively did accomplish and also try to reflect on this unprecedented situation.

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COVER PHOTO

The Plague Doctor's Mask

During the bubonic plague hundreds of years ago, doctors wore a bird-like mask featuring a beak nose that was stuffed with scented materials such as herbs, spices, & straw.

The masks were designed to protect the doctor from putrid air, which was thought at the time to be the cause of the plague. - (Its era's N95 mask.)



Jayhawks Created a DOMINANT Team

This edition of the Newsletter should be considered an extension of the November 2019 edition, which recapped the fall season as an “adventure story”.

During the winter break, the players stayed fit and focused on continuing their wins on the field, so they could qualify for the Division 1AA National College Playoffs.

During the winter, Study Abroad 2nd row player **TOM MITCHELL** elected to return to England, but we were re-joined by English flanker **LEVI BUCKLAND**. These player changes led to a re-stack of the forwards. **DYLAN HOYE** moved from flanker to hooker. **ANDREW SCHMIDT** moved from hooker to join his talented older brother **ISAAC SCHMIDT** at 2nd row.

Our backfield featured a very talented inside group of **HARRY RICHARDSON (9)**, **CHANDLER OWENS (10)**, and **TOM OLIVER (12)**.

The team was & is bolstered by a tremendous roster, which I won’t list for fear of overlooking someone.

Our opening game was on the road to Fayetteville, AR to play against **Arkansas**. You need some perspective on the importance of this non-conference match. Arkansas was once in the Heart of America. In recent years they were our conference’s dominant team as conference champions 2010 to 2016, missing the championship spot in only 2014. In fall 2016, they moved to the Red River Conference to play Oklahoma and Texas teams. So playing a tough opponent like

Arkansas, on the road, in the opener would be a real test for the Jayhawks. Arkansas has a side of big, fit athletes. - **The Jayhawks won 44 - 13, but more importantly was the way the Jayhawks controlled the field position.**

The next weekend, the Jayhawks were again on the road to Lincoln, NE to play **Nebraska** in our 6th conference round-robin match. - **The Jayhawks won 58 - 7.** I’ll remember the sportsmanship of Nebraska’s best player **CONNOR LUTRELL** who shook hands and

congratulated the Jayhawk’s **SAM GASPAROVICH** right after Sam scored in the closing minute of the match.

I provide the summaries of these two matches on the next pages.

Last summer, I could foresee that this school year’s team would be “special” and committed to seeing every one of the Jayhawks’ games; home & away. It’s a commitment to a rugby fall & spring season I hadn’t made since the 1970’s. - I was rewarded by seeing one of the best sides we’ve ever had.****



**Jayhawk Coaches (L-R)
Matt Schwartz, Jason Williams, and Andy Stewart**

JAYHAWK MENTIONS IN “GOFF RUGBY REPORT”

Goff Rugby Report is run by **Alex Goff**. He covers High School, College and the USA National Teams. His Facebook page is excellent. His rankings and other material are based on opinions of referees, coaches, and other sources.

In early February, Goff Rugby Report posted a list of his “**Division 1AA Hot 100 Fall 2019 Players**”. Goff’s opinion of the 100 best players in the Division, nationwide.

There were four Jayhawks on the list:

BLAKE MITTON

@ Flanker

He is the Jayhawks’ captain and was the cover-featured article in August 2019 edition of this Newsletter.

CHANDLER OWENS

@ Fly Half

He previously played in high school for the Junior Blues in Kansas City and is a second generation rugby player. His father also played for the Blues.

TOM OLIVER

@ Inside Center

He came to Kansas for his 3rd year in school from the University of Hull in England through the Study Abroad program. He previously joined the club when it toured Wales last spring.

SAM GASPAROVICH

@ Fullback

He previously played in high school for St. Thomas Aquinas. The versatile player adds value by also being a very good place kicker.



Tom's University of Hull Study Abroad teammate **HARRY RICHARDSON** is directly behind him. Richardson played scrum-half for the Jayhawks.

High School Athletes

The Jayhawks didn't just "HAPPEN"

YOU could be part of this great organization if you decide to enroll at Kansas and want to play rugby.

Terrific coaches will teach you advanced rugby.

Join the best teammates you will ever know.

Two, alumni-owned, natural grass RUGBY pitches with night-lighting for training.

We go on a foreign tour in odd numbered years:

2019 Wales & Scotland

2017 New Zealand

2015 Ireland

2013 South Africa

2011 Brazil

2009 New Zealand

Become part of this and be a Jayhawk!

ARKANSAS

Kansas over Arkansas 44-13 @
Fayetteville, Feb 29, 2020

Game on sunny mid-sixties day.
Wind cross field.

2 minutes - Jayhawk wing **COLE WILLIAMS** 15 meter run into right corner. Fullback **SAM GASPAROVICH** good. **SCORE 7-0 KU**

10 minutes - Jayhawk penalty kick 15 out left of center **SAM** good. **SCORE 10-0 KU**

20 minutes - Jayhawk flanker **BLAKE MITTON** 20 out through posts. **SAM** good. **SCORE 17-0 KU**

24 minutes - Jayhawk fly half **CHANDLER OWENS** launched a high kick mid-field. It bounced past Arkansas and downed right center by Jayhawk inside center **TOM OLIVER**. **SAM** good. **SCORE 24-0 KU**

25 minutes - Arkansas blocked a punt that shot back to KU goal line. Arkansas downed left center. Kick wide. **SCORE 24-5 KU**

30 minutes - Arkansas penalty kick 10 out left center. They toe ball and score. Kick wide. **SCORE 24-10 KU**

40 minutes - Arkansas penalty kick again 10 out in front of posts. Take easy 3 and score. **SCORE 24-13 KU**

HALF TIME

Wind changed directions and Arkansas has it at their backs.

5 minutes- Jayhawk flanker **LEVI BUCKLAND** churns loose 20 out and scored mid left. **SAM** wide. **SCORE 29-13 KU**

10 minutes - Jayhawk fullback **SAM GASPAROVICH** scores from 5 out by left post. His kick attempt called for time. **SCORE 34-13 KU**

15 minutes - Jayhawk inside center **TOM OLIVER** scores from 5 out in right corner. **SAM** is wide. **SCORE 39-13 KU**

35 minutes Jayhawk scrum half **HARRY RICHARDSON** manages a penalty kick 5 out and sees a seam in Arkansas wall of defenders. He toes ball and squeezed through for score mid right. **SAM** wide. **SCORE 44-13 KU**

FINAL

On next page:

Top:

Coach Andy Stewart preps the club right before kickoff against Arkansas.

(Photo by GTH Images)

Bottom:

#6 is **Levi Buckland**. Scrum half is **Harry Richardson**. (L-R) Backfield is **Sam Gasparovich** (head gear), **Reid Parsons**, **Chandler Owens** (closest), and **Tom Oliver** (orange shoes).

Note that the Razorback team was big, muscular athletes.



NEBRASKA

Jayhawk flanker Captain **Blake Mitton** scores hat trick trio in 58-7 win over Nebraska in Lincoln, March 7, 2020

Game played in 20-30 mph wind straight down field. KU had the wind in first half.

6 minutes - flanker **BLAKE MITTON** through posts after an interception and 20 meter run. Fullback **SAM GASPAROVICH** good. SCORE 7-0 KU

14 minutes - Huskers passing in own goal and tried to punt to far sideline. Wind pushed it back. Jayhawk inside center **TOM OLIVER** fielded the ball in goal and downed it mid left. **SAM** wide. SCORE 12-0 KU

20 minutes - **SAM G** toed a penalty kick, then passed the ball behind him to **BLAKE MITTON** on weak side 20 out. **MITTON** scored by left post. **SAM** good. SCORE 19-0 KU

26 minutes - KU lineout on Husker 30. Ball to **TOM OLIVER** who ran back against grain, feeding weak side wing **SCOTT MERDINGER** who scores thru posts. **SAM** good. SCORE 26-0 KU

29 minutes - Nebraska has penalty kick 15 out from KU goal. They run a series of rucks and score thru posts. Kick is good. SCORE 26-7 KU

36 minutes - Jayhawk outside center **DEVIN MYERS** from 10 out mid left. **SAM** good. SCORE 33-7 KU

HALF TIME

25 minutes - **BLAKE MITTON** off ruck 5 out mid right. **SAM** wide against strong wind. SCORE 38-7 KU

36 minutes - Jayhawk prop **IAN O'LAUGHLIN** powered in 5 out mid left. **SAM** wide. SCORE 43-7 KU

37 minutes - Jayhawk wing **REID PARSONS** scores in left corner and receives a high tackle. A Husker yellow carded. **SAM** wide. SCORE 48-7 KU

38 minutes - Jayhawk **TOM OLIVER** in left corner. **SAM** wide. SCORE 53-7 KU

39 minutes - Jayhawk **SAM GASPAROVICH** in left corner. His kick wide. SCORE 58-7 KU

FINAL

Good Sportsmanship:

Nebraska's **CONNOR LUTRELL** shakes Kansas' **SAM GASPAROVICH**'s hand after Sam scored the 58th point in the closing moment of the game.

Luttrell toured Wales & Scotland with the Jayhawks last spring, so knew our players.

(Photos by GTH Images)

More photos of all games on the club's Facebook page.





Hat Trick of 3 Scores: The Jayhawks' team captain **BLAKE MITTON** had an exceptional day. (Above) His 1st score of day. (Below) Here he is immediately after shaking hands with Nebraska's side. - Sadly this is the conclusion of a year that might have seen the Jayhawks in the National Finals. The season, playoffs, and campus classes were cancelled within days of this photo.



Thank you to our Study Abroad players.

You were a terrific addition to the club. So sorry the events robbed all of us of more time together. (L-R below)

- **Tom Oliver** (University of Hull)
- **Levi Buckland** (University of Leeds)
- **Harry Richardson** (University of Hull)

In background is Sam Gasparovich. All 4 of these players scored in the Arkansas game. Photo taken immediately after the match.

Also...thanks to **Tom Mitchell** for your great fall season!!!

(Tom is tall player in photo to right, talking to Ian O'Laughlin. Also pictured Isaac Schmidt (4) and Blake Mitton.) Photo by GTH Images



PANDEMIC

The interruption of a Season, Classes, and LIFE.

The rugby club looks ahead.

In early March, **RICK RENFRO** was on vacation in South Africa. He caught the news that our college rugby season and national playoffs had been called off and it hit him with the sadness of learning of a death. The KU team had worked so hard for this. Then he learned the KU classes were going on-line.

His flight home on March 19 from Johannesburg to Atlanta had so many passengers from other flights, that the plane stopped in Orlando to re-fill on fuel. Customs in Atlanta was expedited so passengers would not be forced to stand in lines.

But when he got home, his restaurants had an unparalleled situation due to the stay-at-home orders. He

closed the original Johnny's for almost a week to get it ready as a "drive-thru". He hired the staff to do that conversion and to do some upgrading maintenance. His businesses are now staying open with a reduced staff, but working to keep their loyal customers served.

Rick said the dilemma was operating this way and how long he would have to do it.

Driving around Lawrence now reminds Rick of what summers in Lawrence looked like in the 1970's. The students are pretty much all gone.

There is hardly any traffic on the streets. Maybe because he is keen to notice other restaurants, but he sees the drive-thru restaurants all seem to have good flow of customers.

USA Rugby declared Chapter 11 Bankruptcy on March 30. Some national-level business deals went sour and the org has been mired in litigation over funds. **The final straw was the Pandemic which cancelled potential revenues from a number of events and programs.**

What follows from the re-org of USA Rugby will impact the Jayhawks, but we are in a well-organized territorial union (Midwest) and have a strong conference in the Heart of America. We will do better than some other parts of the sport.

Rick's advice for the Jayhawks is to spend the coming year "building the brand" of the club.

We have a successful team with a great tradition. What we have and do separates us from most college clubs.

When USA Rugby and its college divisions finally come out of this and have a new business model, the Jayhawks will be in a position to excel in it.

Since the students have now gone home, the Jayhawks will probably vote for their **annual awards** via teleconference at the end of April, as well **elect their fall officers**. Those election outcomes will be immediately announced. The annual awards ceremony will be deferred until next fall. **Someone will have to wait until then to drink the Bushmills out of the Kernow Cup.******



Ian O'Laughlin

(The graduating senior was the player pictured on the February Newsletter's cover. This was his last season as a Jayhawk college player.)

This season's Nebraska game was during the first weekend of KU's Spring Break. A few days later, Ian received an email from KU saying that due to the Pandemic, the Spring Break would be extended an additional week and the classes would be conducted on-line. Then the buildings on campus started to close one-by-one; the library, the gyms, the Rec Center. Finally they closed the student housing and sent the students home.

Ian is finishing his chemical engineering studies from his parent's home in Wichita. One of his class projects is to design a medicine plant, with its reactors and distilling towers. Then he has to develop a model with computer software to perfect the recycling and dumping. He also attends on-line lectures and on-line labs.

The Chancellor asked he and his graduating peers how they would prefer to handle the graduation. It could be on-line with his name scrolling by, instead of a real walk across the stage, or they could come back in summer or next winter or graduate with the class of 2021.

Ian's prior plans to live and play rugby in Wales for a year hit an obvious snag with the Pandemic. Those who were interested in helping him are now dealing with their own uncertainty. Ian imagines he will spend summer with his parents and weigh several options.

Ian played 3 full years on the club and was a player that got exponentially better each season. He became a dominant player at his prop position and a big part of the scoring machine.

He realized he had played his last game as a Jayhawk a few days after the Nebraska game (where he scored). Ian then penned the following note to the club that summed up his experience as a Jayhawk.

I want to thank you guys for a great senior year. Although it was cut short before we got to really test ourselves, I had a lot of fun. If this situation teaches anything it's not to take this team for granted. I'm so grateful I got brought into this club, the opportunities I've been given are incredible and the experiences I could never pay back. This team made the bad days better, and the good days great.

To the coaches,

Thank you for believing in me and pushing me to get better. Your knowledge and passion for the game is always evident. All of you are crucial to our club and consistently make meaningful impacts for us players on and off the field.



Ian giving a player "flying lessons". Photo by GTH Images

To my brothers,

Any time you get an opportunity to step on a pitch and represent, don't take it for granted, you never know when your time may be up. So you can't afford to ever leave anything in the tank or hold back. You've all become family over the year(s). This team has a bright future and its thanks to each and everyone of you.

I don't know when we will play together again, but I'm looking forward to it!

-Kool-Aid

Best,
Ian

Blake Mitton - Interview

The club's 2019/20 captain

Observations on this season and next year

Blake is a Pre-Med major who will be a senior next year.

Q: Let's start on a personal note. What and how are you doing right now?

Mitton: I am still in my Lawrence apartment, studying for my June 5 “MCAT” that will be part of the process to get into Med School. My roommates REID PARSONS and SCOTT MERDINGER went home, so its just me.

Q: Working on becoming a doctor right now is probably the greatest thing the country would want. How has the Pandemic changed Med School?

Mitton: Med Schools have changed some of their criteria to adapt to our new reality. Previously, candidates needed to do a lot of volunteer work. Those opportunities have largely dried up, so those standards are being relaxed.

Q: You had a terrific year and then the season was cancelled, along with the playoffs. What was your reaction?

Mitton: At first I was just angry. We had accomplished so much, but then I realized the bigger picture of what is now going on in the country.

Q: What was your reaction to being named on Goff Rugby Report's “Hot 100 Players”?

Mitton: I was shocked, frankly. I was a guy who never played rugby until I came to KU. I think it says something about our great coaches,

the upperclassmen who initially took me under their wing and the leadership of the club.

Q: What do you see ahead for the Jayhawks next fall?

Mitton: First we have to see how the Pandemic plays out and its impact on KU. Right now KU classes are being done on-line. So will KU go back to campus classes next fall?

Then there are future decisions about playing sports in the fall that need to be made by (1) USA Rugby (or whatever becomes of the re-org) and (2) KU Rec Sports.

I don't think KU and sports in general have ever faced a challenge like this in history.

Q: How do you think the Jayhawks will do next fall with these contingencies?

Mitton: We will have to do what we do every year; re-load on talented players.

No matter what the future holds, I think the Jayhawks are in an excellent place.

It's the same thing I said about why I was named in the “Hot 100”. I credit the way the Jayhawks can coach a green athlete to understand the sport's “Rugby IQ”, so they REALLY learn to play well.

No matter what happens in the future, the Jayhawks are positioned to have a very good team.****



Alumni Weekend Postponed

The current players have now gone home, with many living far away. There are civil edicts to not have events. So there has been a decision to postpone the Alumni Weekend for this one time.

They might do it like some other college teams do and hold the next Alumni Weekend early next fall.

More details to come in the Fall Preseason Newsletter in early August. The club's Facebook page will publish updates in real-time.



Thank You

The gentlemen of the Kansas Jayhawks Rugby Football Club thank you for your continued involvement of following and supporting the team.

We had a terrific year, cut short.

Now we all focus on getting the Pandemic behind us and the Jayhawks returning to normal next fall.

Some of our best days lay ahead and that is greatly because of you.

Photo by GTH Images, taken after last fall's concluding game, the 69-0 win over K-State.