



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 **57 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](https://www.facebook.com/KansasJayhawksRugbyFootballClub))

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.

Charitable gifts can be made to:

The Kansas Rugby Foundation, Inc.

Go to www.JayhawkRugby.com
Click on "DONATE".
(Services by PayPal)

OR

Mail a check to:

The Kansas Rugby Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 1182
Lawrence, KS 66044

SUMMER EDITION

Legacy



WHAT'S GOING ON

We had a dinner in the club house above Johnny's with [Scott Merdinger](#) and [Bob Tucker](#) to discuss the ongoing success in building the club. The Jayhawks will be everyone's tough match next fall.

To keep the club on the leading edge of the national college rugby scene, next fall's "opener" will be on the road playing powerhouse Indiana. This will require a long, charter bus ride and 2 hotel nights. Details will follow, but we want to build funding to cover the \$8,000 travel cost. — See ad for "Crowd Fund" & write "Indiana" on the donation.

There is a tentative [Alumni Weekend](#) planned for fall, featuring a good game to watch and a banquet with alumni recognitions.

Tentative [ROYALS GAME](#) is in planning.

A 5 person Steering Committee was formed to strategize and challenge the club, the KRF, and Westwick. — We report.

The Kansas Rugby Foundation had its first meeting in a year. — We report.

Its not just about playing rugby, the Jayhawks have been doing community volunteer work and we provide an overview.

Scott Merdinger Interview

\$ Crowd Fund \$ A Charter Bus to Indiana

Save the Dates Royals 8-11-21 Alumni Weekend 9-25-21

Steering Committee Report

KRF Board Meeting Report

Jayhawks Doing Public Service

On The Cover - [Scott Merdinger](#)

"Legacy" isn't who his father is. Its about "leaving it better than you found it". Especially while unable to play for a year and a half. Perhaps nobody better exemplifies the advancement of the club. He was the club VP one year and then club President for past 2. He serves on the Board of the Kansas Rugby Foundation. During his 4 years, the club toured internationally twice and qualified for the National Playoffs 3 consecutive years. Under him, the club's players are [having fun](#), training hard, winning games, and are making good grades. Merdinger is graduating with a degree in Finance and has a GPA north of 3.50.



11 Questions with Scott Merdinger

The Jayhawks rebound after the inability to play matches for the past 18 months.

The Jayhawks will be back.

OBQ: Next fall, the club will be in the most unusual situation it's been in since its founding in 1964. It will have not played a match in a year and a half. – What can you say about the team you envision next fall? - How do you think they will stack up against the other teams in the Heart of America Conference (most have had the same situation or very limited match exposure)?

Merdinger: It's my hope that the team builds off the undefeated team that played 2019/20. I think we have all the pieces in place. I know other teams have been able to play some games, while we couldn't, but we have made the best of what we had. We have been practicing and training at a very high level. I don't think we left anything on the table. We have very skilled players and they care as much, if not more than any other team in the conference. I think those are all key pieces to be in a great position to win games and get back to the National Playoffs.

OBQ: Discuss some of the players who you know will be playing next fall.

Merdinger: Our captain will be Chandler Owens and he is just a

phenomenal player. He's a fierce competitor and very knowledgeable. He came to KU with a great deal of playing experience at a high level. He has grown as a player and a leader over the past few years, which was very impressive to me. Chandler becoming captain is very well deserved, especially because he plays "10" and can guide the whole team from that position.

Among the younger players, Trevor Lister and Luke Connor will be tremendous contributors. Luke plays "9" and Trevor could play anywhere in the loose for-

wards or at center. Trevor is a beast of an athlete. It's impressive that they work just as hard off the field as they do on. They are both committed to the weight room and are careful what they put in their bodies. They are social guys and well-rounded.

Center/wing, Reid Parsons is one of the best athletes I know. He works out really hard off the field and wants to win. You have a "bonus" with Reid, in that his brother Wyatt Parsons is a freshman on the team and is just like him.



Dinner at the clubhouse with KRF President Bob Tucker and outgoing KJRFC President Scott Merdinger

In looking at the positions played by these guys, you could have **Trevor Lister** at #8, feeding **Luke Connor** at #9, and then to **Chandler Owens** at #10. – That’s an awesome way to start the ball into a play. Then you have **Matt Barr** playing in the centers. He’s a real good player. He’s rooming with Wyatt, Luke, and Trevor. Senior wing, **Cole Williams** is returning. He was an All-State high school player in Colorado and has been a talented player his entire time at KU. Our big prop/#8, **Clayton Ginther** has another semester of school next fall. It would be great if he played. - I think all these guys will put the Jayhawks in a great place next fall.

OBQ: In spite of no games this past fall and spring, you have retained a talented roster and have a dedicated showing in practices numbers. – To what do you credit for this enthusiasm?

Merdinger: I’d credit the enthusiasm to the senior leadership as a whole. **When the younger guys came out, it was powerful for them to see all the seniors come to practice with nothing to play for other than pride and joy of developing the incoming freshman class.** The seniors wanted the freshman to enjoy rugby and to be able to compete at that level when they finally got a chance. That helped recruiting, because the players who had already bought into the club, recruited their friends. That “word of mouth thing” is one of the best things about this club. Because the players already knew the people they recruited, they didn’t bring anyone out that they knew wouldn’t have the character to buy into the program.

We tried to make practice fun, but serious. We played “touch rugby” and set up little games with the ball where we could compete. We did some smaller social events off field. Keeping practice fun is something we focused on. It made people want to come to practice,

even without a game scheduled. During our normal season, the Thursday practice is always serious and focused on the game ahead. The fun part of that is the winning. **In spite of this being a year with no games, this is the most positive team the coaches say they have ever had and it’s the most positive team I have been on at KU.**

OBQ: In early May, the players (on their own) organized a formal, end-of-semester party with dates. – Describe the event, its planning, and any residual impact it will have on the club.

Merdinger: Since it’s the senior year for several of us, we wanted to do something to end the year on the right note. So instead of a “banquet”, we decided to throw a semi-formal party with dates. Just to get the guys together for a little end of season celebration. The guys wore jackets and the dates wore gowns. It was a group of around 50. We were able to have people over to our apartment for some festivities, which was awesome. The Oread Hotel is right across the street. The weather was perfect. So we went up to the roof-top bar for some drinks. It’s the best view in Lawrence (except for **Rick Renfro’s** house). You could see the entire town from up there. We ended up at Johnny’s. – It was one of the best days of the year.

On that party; here is one of the reasons this was special. **Dave Kasten’s** teenage son **Cian Kasten** is in high school and practices with the club. He came and some of the seniors like **Isaac Schmidt** took him under their wing all night. That shows how well-



rounded a club we have; that a military guy like Dave Kasten could **TRUST** to send his 15 year old son to a party in a coat & tie with college kids and not worry about him.

OBQ: Comment on the disappointment of having such a terrific team in spring 2020 and then having to stop rugby for a year and half.

Merding: I'd describe the mid-season ending as "abrupt". Everyone was trying to process what

was happening. There were no "Goodbyes" especially to the Brits from Study Abroad who were on our team. Everyone just went home. We had a big win at Nebraska and basically the next day, school was cancelled.

We had worked so hard as a team. We had all the pieces in place, to not only go to the National Playoffs, but to have success. The team had gone to the National Playoffs when I was a freshman and sophomore, but that team in my junior year, where

school was cancelled, was far better than the prior teams. It was sad we couldn't compete. Then May came and we couldn't send off the seniors in the way we would have liked.

This past fall and this spring, we were hoping that things would be under control and we could play. It didn't work out, so it was sort of a false-hope, if you will. We made the most of it. The team stayed training and it was still valuable as the players got to know each other both on and off the field.

OBQ: Comment on the 2019/20 team having a terrific roster. We had 4 Study Abroad players with 3 of them playing consistently (University of Hull's **Harry Richardson and **Tom Oliver**, University of Leeds' **Levi Buckland** and **Tom Mitchell**). 4 players were mentioned as Goff Rugby Report's "Hot 100" (captain/flanker **Blake Mitton**, next fall's captain/flyhalf **Chandler Owens**, Study Abroad/inside center **Tom Oliver** and fullback **Sam Gasparovich**. We had a series of great props, like **Ian O'Laughlin**, who scored as much as any of the backs. – What does this say about Jayhawks' recruiting and retention of high-quality players?**

Merding: I think this says we have a quality group of guys on the field and people **WANT** to come and play with us. People see our name out there and they are attracted to the success we have had. It's not just showing up once. Every one of these players you mention was a consistent con-



tributor. They all “bought into the club” on and off the field. That’s the comradery aspect. At the end of the day, we are a tight-knit fraternity. It makes you want to play on the field and also enjoying the bonding time off the field.

Regarding just the playing perspective of the Study Abroad players, they were all phenomenal contributors and made every player on the roster exponentially better. Either by watching them play, or what they said at practice and watching them run through the drills. Any of those Brits could have been our team captain and yet they weren’t; **Blake Mitton** was our captain. Blake knew how to manage things off the field, but when they were all on the field; the Brits and Blake were fantastic. He would step back and let the Brits run things. There was never a power fight. Ultimately that ability to work together was why the team was so good.

OBQ: While at KU you went on 2 international rugby tours (New Zealand and Wales & Scotland). Your teams qualified for the National Playoffs the past 3 consecutive years. Your last season played was undefeated in college games. –

Looking back on it all, what do you think was the club’s greatest achievement?

Merdinger: When I was a freshman and sophomore, we got into the National Playoffs as an “at large” entry, because of the wins we had in a tough conference. But my junior year we had that terrific team that we talked about already and it went undefeated in the conference to qualify for the Playoffs.

I knew how good that team was and playing on it was probably the high point. **That’s the story... each year we got better and ended up with that great team.**

OBQ: Besides the “Covid Shut Down”, do you have regrets about the team in your 4 years at KU?

Merdinger: I wish we had done a better job of recruiting on campus. There is a key piece of the Lawrence community that we are not getting and that is the fraternities. We have some great players who have come from there like **Chandler Owens** and **Cole Williams**. There are people in fraternities who have prior rugby experience and didn’t play. I wish we had worked harder at recruiting those hidden players.

I applaud the tougher schedule that is being pursued now. I wish we had played a tougher schedule in my prior years.

OBQ: What was your personal greatest moment in rugby at KU?

Merdinger: In summer 2017, just a few days after I graduated from

high school in Chicago, I got on a plane alone and flew to L.A. I introduced myself to **Bob Tucker** in the airport. We flew together to New Zealand to join the Jayhawks’ New Zealand Tour. I didn’t know anybody on the Jayhawk team. The first game they had after my arrival was a night game. They put me in the backfield. I was fed the ball on a crash play by inside center **Jack Dienst** and sprinted for a try from 40 meters out. – **That was my greatest moment.** – It made me part of the team. It showed I could compete at this level, even as a high school player. That setting in New Zealand was so great. It made me commit to the sport and to the club.

OBQ: Your dad Steve was a star rugby player (#8) while an undergrad at KU in the late 1970’s. As an alum, he remains active with participation in the Westwick facility and with KRF. He’s been a successful businessman in finance in Chicago. – What can you say about him as your role model?

Merdinger: My dad has been my role model my entire life. It’s the way he conducts himself every day.



He knows himself incredibly well and he knows what he does well. He stays true to himself. That all plays out how he conducts his relationships on a professional level. Also the way he does things he enjoys. Every morning, he gets up at 4:00, regardless of the weather. He dedicates himself 100% to everything he does. He's a leader by example. It's more powerful than anything he could ever say.

My dad has remained hooked up to the club. His best friends have a Lawrence connection. He has brought me to a KU basketball game every year since I was 8 years old; staying at the Renfros'. I have seen the long-term relationships the club brings together. **That was one of the main reasons I decided to come to KU and play rugby. It's not just a community for 4 years while you are here; it's a community for a lifetime.**

OBQ: You have been involved in both management of the

club as VP for a year and then president for 2 years. You also served as the student rep on the KRF Board. This was done while being a committed player at games and training. You ALSO graduated with a GPA north of 3.5 with a tough "Finance Major". – Discuss managing that challenge and your motivation for such a level of achievement.

Merdinger: It comes down to time management. When I came to KU I decided I was going to focus on school and rugby and "give it my all". I have always been taught to finish what you start and to leave things better than when you found them.

Looking back on it, I hope that I left the club both on & off the field in a better place than when I started.

Next for Scott:

Scott graduated from KU on May 16 with a major in Finance and a certification in Leadership Studies. He is going home to Chicago to start an internship with a Chicago-based venture capital company that will be "virtual", so he can do it from home. Then in July he'll move to Nashville, where he can finish his internship. In August he will start a Masters in Finance at Vanderbilt. It's an accelerated program for Finance grads. It gets you "networking" to be ready to work for the major companies in banking and finance.

As much as he admires his father and would work well with him; Scott does not plan on joining his father's company. Scott wants to follow his own path in business. He is a "go getter" and wants to make his own way in business. In the near term, he is not even committed to returning to his home town, Chicago. Right now he is excited that he will be living in Nashville. ****



PARENTS & ALUMNI – Crowd Fund

Help us fund sending the team on a charter bus to
Play the Indiana Hoosiers the weekend of September 4.

It's a 7 and 1/2 hour drive in each direction.

The Jayhawks will have 2 nights in a hotel & dinner the arrival night.

To Donate go to: JayhawkRugby.com

Hit "Donate" link



Kansas

Write **"INDIANA"** in the memo
box under your dollar amount.



#10 Indiana

5-10-21 Goff Rugby Report Men's
Cross Divisional College Ranking

CROWD FUND!

Donate!

Trip Planned for
Labor Day Weekend

"Crowd Fund" a
Tax Deductible Gift

Target: \$8,000

It's a goal of the KJRFC to be
Nationally Ranked and be in
the National Playoffs.

You do this by playing a tough
schedule.

This will be a two-year, home &
away pair of games with Big 10
Powerhouse, Indiana.

Photo by GTH Images



**Remember...
The Jayhawks
build great
rugby teams!**

Jayhawks' College Games 2019/2020:

Fall Season

Central Missouri	44 - 7
Oklahoma State	57 - 0
Iowa State	31 - 12
Iowa	34 - 0
Missouri	41 - 10
Kansas State	69 - 0

Spring Season

Arkansas	44 - 13
Nebraska	58 - 7

Season Cancelled

378 Points Scored

49 Points Allowed

***Heart of America's Best Record - UNDEFEATED**

***Qualified for National Playoffs**

Thank You

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

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

Save The Date

Alumni Weekend

September 25, 2021

The club will return to having an **Alumni Weekend**, but this time it will be early fall.

An added bonus will be the return to Lawrence of *legendary* Brits **Matt & Paddy Delargy** who will greet old friends at Johnny's on Friday night the 24th at 7:00 PM. They will only be around for a few days, so be sure to attend.

The club is working on its **fall schedule**, but promises a quality match for the alumni to watch, before a Saturday evening **Banquet** with **awards for Alumni**, such as new **Life Members** and additions to the **Red Jacket Society**. **More information will be in the August edition of this Newsletter.**

Tell us you are coming, so we can get a head count for the banquet planning.

Send an email to : matthew.schwartz10@gmail.com

Title the email "Banquet", tell us your name and how many will be in your reservation (i.e. 1 or 2)

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND...

ROYALS NIGHT !!!



Don Harris is working on getting tickets, but Jackson County and the KC Royals have to relax the number of people allowed to attend together because of Covid.

Those restrictions are in the process of being relaxed as of the writing of this Newsletter edition, but the ticket purchase can't be made until this change occurs.

So with that contingency, Don is tentatively going to TRY to get tickets to:



New York Yankees

Wednesday, August 11 at 1:10 PM

SAVE THE DATE

Watch emails from Don, if you are already on his list. Contact the Newsletter if you would like to be added to Don's contact list.

The game plan to meet at a Johnny's Tavern in Kansas City and then get taken to and from game on a chartered bus.

The “Steering Committee”

Club takes advantage of slow down to improve

The 2020 pause created by the Covid Shut Down provided time for the Jayhawks to reflect on what and how they were doing.

In September 2020, the whole Jayhawk “org” of **KJRFC**, **KRF**, and **Westwick** committed to provide a way to tackle issues that crossed the turf of all 3 entities and to coordinate & monitor the entities’ direction and success.

The initial group involved was:

KJRFC: Matt Schwartz, Andy Stewart, Doug McCauley, Blake Mitton, and Scott Merdinger

KRF: Bob Tucker, Don Harris, Louie Riederer, Steve Lange, Rick Renfro, Paul Diedrich and David Kasten

The initial assignment was to define, select, monitor and decide compensation for the **Head Coach** and the re-defined position of **Executive Director** of KJRFC (Formally the CEO). These positions were previously elected by the players of the KJRFC. **The motivation for change was to provide a long-term, institutional focus to the selection of these two key positions to better assure the club’s success.**

The above group was each asked to list:

- 3 Things to Fix
- 3 Things that are Strengths
- 3 Things that are Most Important for the Future of the Club

From this feedback, selected topics were assigned:

Our - Why, What, and Way Forward: Andy Stewart

Recruiting: Scott Merdinger, Steve Lange, and Matt Schwartz

Marketing the Club: David Kasten

Westwick Experience: Louie Riederer and Rick Renfro

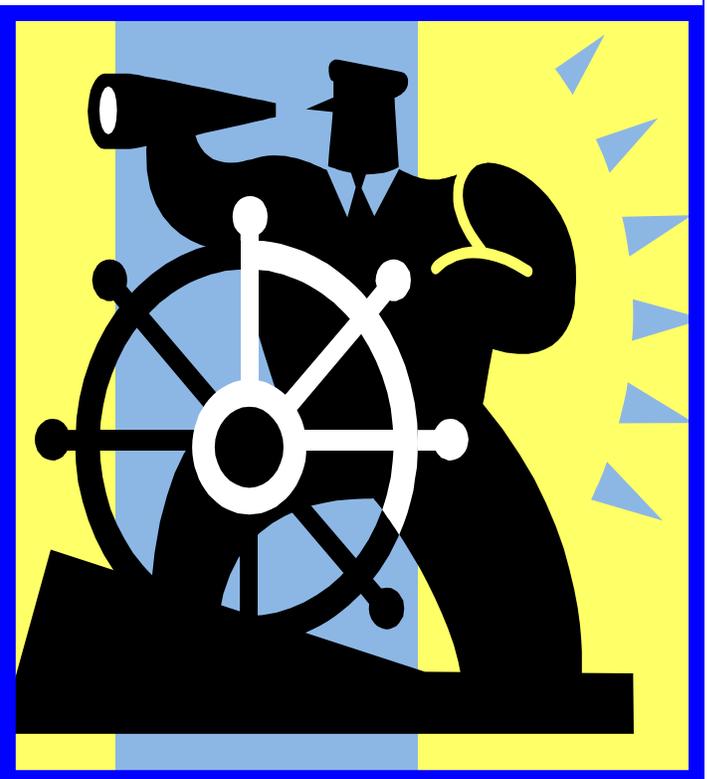
A **5 member Steering Committee** was appointed to strategize and challenge the various entities, made up of 2 from KJRFC, 2 from KRF, and an alum.

Selected were:

KJRFC’s Andy Stewart & Scott Merdinger (to eventually be replaced since graduated)

KRF’s Louie Riederer & Steve Lange
Alum David Kasten

The ongoing work of all involved breaks down into detail assignments that get pursued in ad hoc committees and report back in monthly meetings. Look for the pace of change in the “org” to accelerate as we get closer to next fall and return to normal club function. ****



Kansas Rugby Foundation's Biggest News from the 5-24-21 Quarterly Meeting

The KRF is the rugby clubs 501(c)3 charity that collects donor funds to support Westwick (club playing complex) and support of the club operations. The Board meets quarterly.

KRF voted to advance the process of building a **LOCKER ROOM** at the north end of the pitches. It will be accessed by a new road that will be built to connect to the existing parking lot on the west side of the complex. Player parking will be on either side of that new road.

Fans will continue to congregate in the complex's SW corner where there are bathroom facilities and food service.

The practice field with lights is on the far east side of the complex (beyond the east pitch), so the new road will shorten the walk from the

players' cars to practice. The road will also enable autos to deliver gear to the top of the big berm.

KRF's Building Committee of **Grant Lechtenberg**, **Scott Stites** and **Kevin Harder** will work with **Louie Riederer** to make preliminary plans and get bids on construction pricing in advance of the next KRF meeting in August. The plans and budget will then be considered and voted on to move forward.

The Building Committee has gathered a lot of input from coaches and players in the lead up to this project. The Locker Room building will be designed so it can be expanded in phases and later become a storage facility if a more elaborate club house is built in the future.

More on this in the next Newsletter

Seeking New Board Members

The KRF Board changed the top positions to have a **President**, **Past President**, and **President Elect**. This creates a trio of people who mentor their successors and enhance continuity. **Bob Tucker** is the President, **Don Harris** is the Past President. The President Elect position is **currently unfilled**. **We would like volunteers to be considered and would ideally have someone under 60 years old.**

The Board has no term limits, but members agree to a minimum 3 years. The KRF Board meets quarterly. The work of KRF is done in committees that report at the meetings. **We seek additional Board members who played after 1990.**

Sitting in on this KRF Meeting

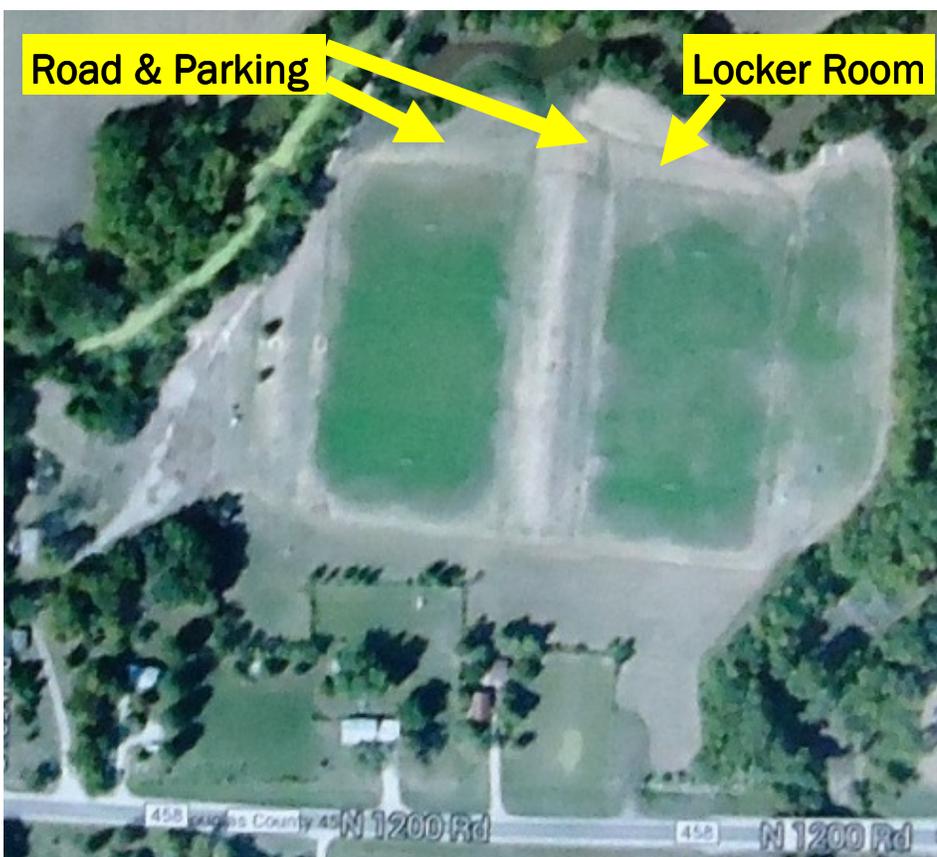
Grant Lechtenberg, **Paul Berardi**, **Lou Blanco**, **Louie Riederer**, **Doug McCauley**, **Rick Renfro**, **Paul Diedrich**, **Bob Tucker**, **Steve Lange**, **Reid Parsons**, **Dave Kasten**, **Andy Stewart**, **Kevin Harder**, and **Scott Stites**. (Some via Zoom)

Reid Parsons will be a senior next year and has joined the **KRF Board** and the **Steering Committee** as the "student representative". **Scott Merdinger** has held that position and will phase out as a "student", but remain on Board.

Conor Taft who works for the **KU Endowment Association** and was the club captain a decade ago has joined the KRF Board.

We encourage interested alumni and players to sit in on KRF meetings, but only the Board can vote.

The next KRF meeting will be in August. Details TBD and on conference call for out-of-towners. The club Facebook and emails will provide updates.****



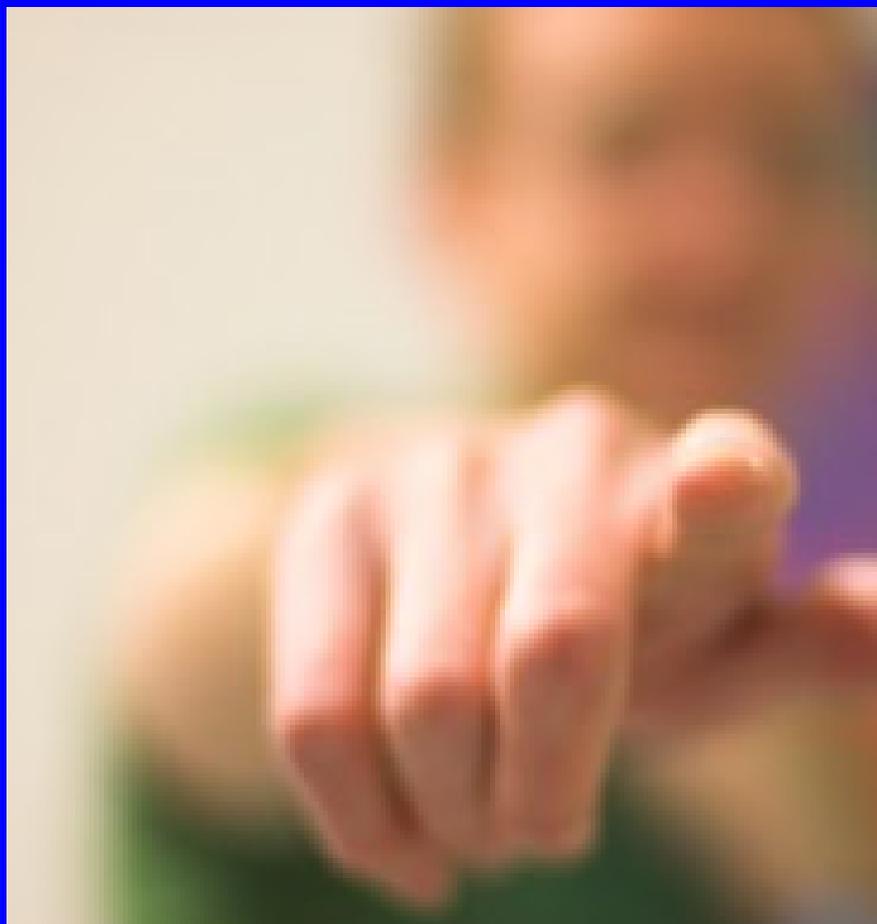
Jayhawks Doing Public Service

Over the past few years, as the club's on-field playing fortunes have steadily improved, the Jayhawks have also been committed to improving their community.

- After a tornado hit a local farm, the Jayhawks volunteered to help the family clean up the wreckage.
- When a game was cancelled, the players gathered at nearby Clinton Lake and removed the high-water debris from the lake's nature trail.
- The club maintains the trash-free appearance of a 2-mile stretch of Hwy 458 in front of **Westwick Rugby Complex**. That merits their name on the road's sign.
- Every fall they volunteer to help incoming students move their gear into the dorms.
- In addition to all of this, the club volunteers for:
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - Red Cross
 - Boys & Girls Clubs
 - Blood Drives
 - Chamber of Commerce July 4th Parade
 - St. Patrick's Day Parade
 - River Clean Up

In recognition of the club's record of service, the university recognized us as the "Club of the Year" out of 32 sports organizations on campus.





Do you have stocks you would like to donate **BEFORE** selling?

You avoid a “capital gains” tax and get full credit for the current market value!

For more information see [John Brown's](#) article in past Newsletter #25 (page 8).

[Steve Merdinger](#) has set up a nearly zero commission KRF trading account to receive such a gift.

Support your rugby club!

Put it on your credit card.

Go to www.jayhawkrugby.com

Hit “Donate”.

It's a PayPal link directly to our charity account.