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Rugby in Switzerland

Very few people know that rugby has been played in Switzerland for over 100 years. In 1904 the now famous soccer club, Grasshoppers, started out as a rugby club. During the second World War the game died, and restarted again in the 1960s. The current Swiss League was founded in 1972. The Swiss Rugby Team is ranked in 30th position on the IRB World rankings. Many players are Swiss-born as well as New Zealanders, Australians, South Africans, Argentinians, Canadians and Americans.

There are 24 rugby clubs in Switzerland and they play from March to November (excluding July). The teams include men, women and juniors with over 4,500 licensed players. The strongest teams come from the french speaking part of Switzerland, as they have many farmers in their teams. The six division A clubs are Zurich, Geneva, Avusy, Hermance, Nyon and Cern. To be registered each club must supply a referee, who are mostly ex-pats. The Hermance club is the only Swiss team with professional players who are paid a small amount. All players in the competitions must have a job in Switzerland, although they may live in France. The players can not live on their earnings from rugby alone. Most Swiss rugby players pay around CHF2500.00 a year to play their sport. This money goes towards insurance, referees and a contribution to the National Team. The IRB gives the Swiss Rugby Union 25,000 pounds annually, which together with sponsorships, allows the game to exist on approximately CHF200,000 per year. I don't think that rugby in New Zealand would survive on this amount of money annually!!! As for players paying the equivalent of CHF2,500 to play ... well we wouldn't have any active clubs in NZ!!! In reality, many

New Zealanders don't know how lucky they are to be able to play so many sports for such low subscriptions.

A regular and popular event is the Neuchatel Sevens. This event attracts local teams as well as teams from various countries.

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- Looking for a nice host-family, if possible offering an opportunity to earn my living - expenses and some pocket-money. Anything from farming to computing or ski-instructing is welcome.

**Please reply to: Florian Hirt
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