

WINTER, 2026

# WSU Men's Rugby Alumni-Round Up

The game brought us together.

The club keeps us together.



## First, a word of THANKS!

Greetings All! The Alumni committee has built out a better / new website, and we're working to improve communication. That'll include periodic newsletters. In this first run, we'll focus in the current club and recent events.

First a word of thanks to the folks who helped our club rebound – coming out of Covid. That stretch was not kind to collegiate club rugby and many clubs folded. A hard reset was needed to restore and rebuild what was lost. A handful of Winona ruggers hung around – and made a push for recruits. For nearly everyone – the game was new. Leaders and mentors were few. DOGG Alum – and Winona resident – Rob Thorsen stepped up to coach and lead the crew. THANK YOU THOR!

## IN THIS ISSUE

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Calendar updates for the months ahead

### **Alumni Showcase / Coaches Corner**

Learn more about one of our distinguished alumni ruggers, and hear from coach Rob Thorson

### **Money Matters (THAT MATTER!)**

A review of club expenses, finances and our fundraising goals.

### **Upcoming & Ongoing**

Connecting past players to each other and the club we love

# Spring 2026 Schedule

In the fall of 2025, the boys lost some close ones & finished strong. There is plenty of optimism as they head into the spring season. They defend fearlessly and are figuring out how to score. Consistent numbers will help the club get to the next level.

**February 28th** - Frozen River 10s – Lacrosse, WI

**March 7th** - St. Ben's 15s – St. Joseph, MN

**March 28th** - Mudfest's 7s – Platteville, WI

**April 11th** - Alumni gathering – Winona, MN

**April 25th-26th** - All Saint's Tournament - Clearwater, MN

**June 27th** - Lakefront 7s - Milwaukee, WI

## Money Matters

The men's and women's club both get an annual stipend from the school. As the figure is tied to the number of club members, the club's growth means more money. Southeastern Tech began charging rent a few years back. The school has assisted to some extent but we can't rely on consistent support at this time. Money in the bank is critical; fundraising isn't a one-and-done deal.

The Alumni committee has committed to sharing an annual financial statement, moving forward. Alums are encouraged to donate to the club – to assist with field rental expense, jerseys / equipment **AND** compensation for coaches. It'll be critical to lock down a full-time coach heading into the fall of 2026.

## Alumni Showcase

For this showcase, we learn more about Parker Butch – a 2024 graduate, club president & the man who led the “new” club from '22 – '24



Parker Butch arrived at Winona in the Fall of 2021. He met ruggers early, but wasn't able to play until Covid restrictions were lifted. He started serving as club President at that time and helped to rebuild the club. He graduated spring of 2024.

Parker grew up west of Milwaukee and is living and working there now – utilizing his degree in Materials Engineering. He played loose forward (mostly 8). Early on, Parker fell in love with the “controlled-chaos” of the game – along with the camaraderie and friendships that are built.

During his time, the club was competing in the developmental division – where they excelled. The club competed in the regional championship in St. Louis, MO. Parker helped to re-establish a “rugby house” in Winona and hosted some alum there during our 35<sup>th</sup> Reunion.

Parker's younger brother has enrolled at Winona and is playing for the club now as well.



## Coaches Corner

Thor played with club from '03 – '07. He graduated with a degree in graphic design, and currently lives in Winona with his wife and daughter. Rob stepped up to coach as the club was coming out of Covid – and he's on the pitch 2-3 days a week. We asked how the current club is doing and plans moving forward. Here's a recap of the insights he had to share:

"Like any Winona side, the boys can hit. They stall out a bit on the attack, but set pieces are getting better. There are some good athletes in the mix. We have a good 'core' group, some leaders have stepped up & recruitment efforts are solid. While we have more than 20 on the roster, we travelled with 17 and 18 guys a couple times last Fall. We could use another half-dozen guys to commit to the game and club. Those numbers will give the team a needed lift. Currently, St. Thomas and Mankato have the best sides in the state. They have numbers and are well coached. I plan to step away after the spring season, but can say working with these guys has been a blast for me."

## The Store is open

Need some WSU Rugby flair?

Shop online through the club store:

[Winona State University –  
World Rugby Shop](#)

## Upcoming & Ongoing:

**Alumni Gatherings:** at different times in the last year, alum have met for informal gatherings – Surly Brewing, All Saints tournament, etc. Look for similar opportunities in the year ahead. We'll communicate opps as they come together.

**Next Alum Event – April 11<sup>th</sup>:** Historically, alumni reunion turnout has been good at each 5-year interval and spotty on the off-years. Our goal is to get more guys showing up...while ALSO giving the current players a chance to schedule a proper match. **For 2026, the boys will host a home game vs Faribault - with a third-half scrimmage for alum.** Join us if you can: call your guys, bring your kit.....make a night of it if you wish.

**Stay Connected:** a new and improved website has been built out. While it's a work in progress, it's a nice step up and will help to keep alumni connected to the club. Please reach out with any feedback or bugs.

Check it out: [wsumensrugby.com](http://wsumensrugby.com)

## Ways to Donate!

Alumni's financial support for the club is a big help – and it tends to arrive on our 5-year anniversary intervals. We need more people to step up, and contribute more consistently. Consider one-time donations or an ongoing (tax deductible) contribution to the Alumni's Foundation Fund. Zelle and Venmo may become an option soon.

[winona.edu/give](http://winona.edu/give)

**Designation: Other**

**Other Designation: Men's Rugby - 30158**

**HEAD's UP:** For 2026, Alums who donate at least \$120 to the club (during the calendar year) will get a new ball for their shelf. Ideally, you will be AT the April 11<sup>th</sup> gathering to collect your rugby ball in person. You can pay by check or cash in person at that time as well.



**Lastly:** If you have a question, info or an idea you'd like to share with Alumni Committee member, please reach out! We'd love to hear from you:

[alumni@wsumensrugby.com](mailto:alumni@wsumensrugby.com)