

## Nigeria Rugby League

In 2010 the Nigerian Government withdrew from administering a number of sports including Rugby. A PROMINENT Nigerian corporate answered the call for private sector support by aligning themselves with Youth Rugby, and iTry was born.

Since then iTry has gone from strength to strength and in 2014 we rolled out in Kano with a further twelve schools and four community based teams, as we continue our vision of bringing Rugby to every corner of Nigeria.

Out of this initiative Mr Adebisi with key members of the team embarked on registration of Nigeria Rugby League and finally received approval from the Nigerian Olympic Committee (at the end of 2019) which in turn allowed the International Rugby League (IRL) to approve Nigeria as an affiliate member of the International Rugby League.

Having been approved Mr Adebisi and the initial team set out to build a first class team to drive the success of developing the game in Nigeria. Being extremely ambitious and very focused on the task the Nigeria Rugby League Association (NRLA) Bid and won hosting a major tournament in Nigeria, The Middle East and Africa Rugby League World Cup Pre Qualifiers. To add to this success the National Team (Green Hawks of Nigeria) won the competition having beaten Ghana in the semi final and going on to beat Morocco in the final. It is noteworthy to add the Nigeria was the youngest team in the game, yet set itself aside from the competition. This success saw Nigeria ranked no. 1 in Africa and 28 in the global rankings. All this achieved in the first year on the NRLA.

## Governance

The NRLA has an independent

Now the task at hand, in 2019, was to develop a National League, National Team and a competition for schools. This was achieved 100%, however the Schools league concentrated initially on Kano alone and was extremely successful with 40 schools competing.

Plans to improve upon the 2019 success are already underway, with our application for Observer membership being completed and set to be submitted for approval any day now. A year we made history by winning. Making it more impressive was the fact that no financial support was offered and all was achieved through donations from Trustees, Board and family members.

2020 will see an expansion of the schools league into Lagos with several schools already showing interest in joining. NRLA will fully support the schools that subscribe. The intention in Lagos is that the schools would be adopted by the clubs in Lagos. Each club would be expected to take 2-3 schools under their umbrella.

The clubs are expected to run independently under the guidance and terms and conditions as set by the NRLA.

2020 Plan [IM JUST HIGHLIGHTING KEY THINGS FOR THE YEARS CALENDER HERE. THIS NEEDS TO BE WRITTEN UP TO CAPTIVATE]

APRIL – JOE MBU IN LAGOS TO RUN TRAINING CAMP AND NRLA HOST GAME TO PICK THE LOCAL REPS TO JOIN 10 INTERNATIONAL NIGERIANS FOR THE NATIONAL TEAM AT THE MEA. NORTH WEST VERSUS SOUTH WEST. AS WE ARE DEFENDING THIS IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE PLAN EARLY AND HAVE OUR BEST INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS AVIALABLE TO PLAY. WE WANT TO WIN AND CONTINUE MAKING HISTORY. THIS ISN’ T OUT OF OUT REACH AND IS ACTUALLY REALISTIC WITH THE RIGHT PLAYERS.

APRIL – REFEREE AND COACHES TRAINING

APRIL – LAGOS HAVEN TO HOST PROGRAM IN LIFE SKILLS FOR KIDS AND ORGANISE A TOURNAMENT FOR THE KIDS FOR U13 (MIXED TAG) AND U18 (FULL CONTACT). AN EXHIBITION GAME WOULD ALSO BE ORGANISED (TENTATIVELY BETWEEN KANO GAZELLES AND LAGOS HAVEN). SICKLE CELL SCANNING FO RTHE KIDS WOULD ALSO BE UNDERTAKEN.

APRIL – SEPTEMBER. SCHOOLS PARTICIPATION AND SCHOOLS COMPETITION, KEY HERE IS THAT CLUBS UNDER THE NRLA ARE TAKNIIG INITIATIVE FOR CSR IN ORDER TO ATTRACT SPONSIORSHIP. WE COULD ALSO CONSIDER AN INAUGURAL FRIENDLY GAME FOR WOMEN IN ORDER TO KICK OFF THE FEMALE LEAGUE IN LAGOS.

MAY – LOCAL BASED NATIONAL TEAM TO PLAY GHANA AN POSSIBLY CAMEROUN.

MAY-AUGUST – UK BASED NATIONAL TEAM TO PLAY 2 GAMES. WE WOULD TARGET JAMAICA AND ENGLAND KNIGHTS OR ELITE. SIMILARLY A HERITAGE GAME (FOR EMERGING NATIONS ONLY) COULD BE ORGANISED IN AUSTRALIA TO INCLUDE AUS/NZ AND PACIFIC ISLANDS (ANY COUNTRY CLOSE ENOUGH TO AUS). THIS WOULD GO A LONG WAY IN SECURING OUR RELATIONSHIP IN AUS AND BRINIGN NIGERIANS WHO PLAY OUT OF THE WOODWORK, AFTERALL SUCH PLAYERS WILL BE IN SCHOOLS, AMATEUR CLUBS AS WELL AS PROFESSIONAL. IT MAY ALSO INSPIRE NIGERIAN YOUTH WHO ARE THERE THAT ASPIRING TO PLAY FOR NIGERIA IS AN ACHIEVABLE GOAL AS WE ARE SERIOUS.

9S OPEN TOURNAMENT FRIENDLY– TEAMS (EXISTING/NEW CLUBS, MAKESHIFT TEAMS, CORPORATES ALL WELCOME. WOULD HAVE TO PAY ENTRY FEE AND THIS CAN BE OPEN TO OTHER NATIONS. ENTRY FEE SHOULD INCLUDE KIT, SOME REFRESHMENTS, TEAM ENTRY TO CHARITY EVENT (WITH AUCTION). FUNDS TO BE SPLIT BETWEEN NRLA AND A YOUTH CHARITY OR SPORTS FOUNDATION FOR EXAMPLE (70/30 IN FAVOUR OF NRLA).

MAY/JUNE - GALA DINNER – A DINNER SHOULD BE ARRANGED TO RAISE FUNDS IN THE UK. OUR STARS IN THE UK SHOULD BE ABLE TO PUSH THIS. DIRECTORS IN UK SHOULD ARRANGE THIS. NATURALLY WE WOULD ASSIST. AND A GALA DINNER IN NIGERI SHOULD BE ARRANGED. ESSENCE IS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR NRLA ACTIVITIES (MEA PRIMARY FOCUS, BUT NRLA ADMIN AND DAILY NEEDS MUST BE CONSIDERED). AS WE ARE DEFENDING THE CHAMPIONSHIP IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE

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Achieving the above will propel NRLA into the global stage and set us aside from many other national sports.

The NRLA is working on adding several other international partnerships to the league clubs. Our existing clubs in Kano and upcoming and existing (without partners) elsewhere would be affiliated with an international club in due course. Naturally this is instrumental in raising the game in Nigeria as the support to be provided by the international clubs would be invaluable.

We are already working on contracts for players to further their careers by joining teams in the UK and Australia in the first instance. This would come in the form of contracts with Academies, feeder clubs for professional clubs and top ranked amateur clubs. The international clubs would support their stay in the target country by way of attracting sponsorship through providing employment for the chosen players (this ensures they have a guaranteed income) as well as bonuses for being picked and winning a game. We have utmost faith that once our players are afforded this opportunity, we will see a number of our local players playing at the very top of the game within a few years globally.

The next decade should see a solid structure in place for Rugby League in Nigeria. It is essential to state that Nigeria cannot do it alone and in this way we would have to support other African countries in developing the game. Over the years we would establish regional competitions in 13 and 9 aside, for national teams and clubs (separately) to participate in. The success of Rugby League in Nigeria will be largely tied to the growth of the game in the region.

Nigeria is currently on the right path to become a full member as affiliate membership is being worked on and would be achieved in the next month.

To become a full member the NRLA would solidify the structure of Rugby league in Nigeria as follows:

1. Be able to demonstrate the financial stability of the organisation.
2. Conduct regular rugby league competitions within the country as follows:
  - a) Minimum 8 open age teams each playing a minimum of 6 regular season matches, not including play-offs
  - b) Minimum 4 open age reserve division teams each playing a minimum of 3 regular season matches, not including play-offs
  - c) Minimum six-team junior club (or school) competition with each team playing a minimum of four regular season matches, not including play-offs. The age range of the

competition may be anything from U14 to U18, with the six named teams all being of the same age category.

d) At least 500 registered participants (players, coaches and match officials)

Approved international programme at more than one level which must include full international and may in addition include "A" international, student, junior (Under 18 or younger) and wheelchair. All at Male or Female.

An approved Development Plan, correctly resourced with annual reports lodged with IRL.

Have a designated, active media manager and be able to show a functioning media operation.

In order to achieve full membership in 2022 the NRLA will need to secure sufficient revenue by working with Local and International stakeholders, registering with community youth programs, working closely with athletes in minor sports in order to convert them to Rugby League, grants from International Donors, government, sponsorship from corporates and HNIs.

To secure such we would continue to run an efficient ship at NRLA, continue winning and creating awareness in the game and essentially demonstrating the success of Rugby League in alleviating poverty, education, in improving health and reducing crime in the country. We would make the nation proud and aim to be ranked in the top 15 this year. To do so the more international outings we successfully undertake the more likely this outcome.

We look forward to the continued success of Rugby League in Nigeria and the Green Hawks leading the way in the region and the larger continent. We look forward to continued support from all interested parties in assisting us to achieve our goal and continue this already historic movement.

**Michael Ogunbiyi**

**Director Strategy and Planning**

**Nigeria Rugby League Association**