

NOLA Gold Rugby relies on Tulane Doctors for care on and off the pitch

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Catch all the action of NOLA Gold Rugby March 19, which is Tulane Night out at the Shrine on Airline. (Photo provided)

The sport requires the cardiovascular endurance of soccer with the toughness of football, but rugby is a fast-paced, physical game all its own. The men of the major league NOLA Gold Rugby team train year-round and play under the medical guidance of Tulane Institute of Sports Medicine.

Wendell Heard, MD, associate professor of sports medicine at Tulane University School of Medicine, serves as the lead team physician. Michael O'Brien, MD, Jacques Courseault, MD, and Buddy Savoie, MD, also assist as team physicians. Pat Mahoney is the head trainer for the team, physical therapist Andre Labbe is director of rehabilitation and return to play, and DeAndre Walker serves as assistant athletic

trainer.

“It’s very physical, and the big difference you’ll notice is that these guys don’t wear pads,” said Heard. “We see the whole gamut of injuries. There are plenty of muscle strains and pulls. Plenty of ligamentous knee injuries, meniscal injuries and a fair number of shoulder injuries.”

Professional rugby consists of two 40-minute halves of continuous play on a field – or pitch – that’s 100 meters long, more than a football field in length. All 15 players on each team are responsible for offense, defense, tackling, ball-handling and scoring. The team with the most points at the end of 80 minutes wins. Because rugby players don’t wear pads, they use special tackling techniques to minimize injuries.

“It’s been a great learning experience,” said Heard. “I’ve been a team doctor for Tulane Athletics since 2012 and I played rugby for two or three years in medical school, but not at this high level. It’s been really enjoyable to work with this team.”

NOLA Gold Rugby plays at the Shrine on Airline in Metairie. [Click here for the full schedule of games.](#)

“It’s a lot of fun for anybody who enjoys sports,” said Heard. “Even if you don’t enjoy sports and you just like to enjoy the weather and have a beer.”

Tulane Night with NOLA Gold Rugby is coming up March 19 at 7pm. Discounted tickets in selected sections are available by using the code “TULANE” at checkout. [Click here to purchase.](#)