

Ava Armstrong and Her New Love for Rugby

Rowan Watkins

Photos courtesy of Ava Armstrong

Ava Armstrong is a sophomore here at Golden High School (GHS). She just started playing rugby this year but has learned quickly. Armstrong plays for East Denver High School (EHS) because Golden doesn't offer rugby as a school sport.

Rugby is a team sport originating from Warkshire, England. The game revolves around getting the ball grounded behind or on the opposing team's try line which is called the in-goal zone. To move the ball you may kick it or throw it, but if you throw it you must throw it backwards.



Her favorite position to play is scrum-half. The scrum-half is one of the most important players on the field. They connect plays, organize the team, and throw important passes. Scrum is also a part of the game responsible for restarting the play. During a scrummage both teams are pushing the opposing team with almost all of their players interlinked generating equal force against one another. The ball is placed between the teams and when the whistle is blown each team tries to retrieve the ball the fastest. They link the team together and are one of the only positions in rugby where players are often smaller. Armstrong was named most valuable back for JV and varsity at EHS.

Rugby is a rare sport in Colorado and it can be hard to find a big enough team to play competitively. Because of this, Armstrong has to play for EHS. The sport of rugby is complex and hard to master, making it intimidating for new players. But the game is easy to learn when you have a good coach, patience, and the determination to keep trying even when you fail. Rugby has two different types of games, sevens and 15s. When playing sevens there are seven people on the field for each team and the games are only 14 minutes long with seven-minute halves. In 15s there are 15 players on the field for each team and the games are 80 minutes with 40-minute halves. Armstrong prefers to play sevens because she gets to move around the field more and can create more plays with the space they have. One of the main reasons rugby is so hard to get into is the need for more committed coaches. Rugby coaches are often retired or active pro coaches who can only devote some time to the team.

Armstrong explains the situation when she says, "We just fired our old coaches because they were too committed to their own team. . . every rugby coach is pro or was pro, so it is hard to find someone who can commit to coaching."



Youth rugby teaches players life skills and teaches their bodies cardiovascular endurance. Rugby is one of the most inclusive sports played by over 1 million people in the US and 8.5 million worldwide. Rugby is most popular in many European countries but over the past two decades; it has grown in popularity in the States. Rugby keeps your body healthy and teaches your mind discipline, leadership, and bodily control. Armstrong found a new and welcoming community when she began playing.

"If I didn't have rugby, I don't know where I would be."

The game's fast-paced nature and physicality forces teams to work together and rely on one another. Armstrong stated, "Rugby built me a great community and I learned to trust others more easily." Growing a community, trusting one another, and playing together makes it easier to feel like you belong. Rugby, and any sport for that matter, puts you on a level playing field and allows you to show off your skills to people who understand the game and its expertise needed to succeed. Overall, Armstrong has found a new community and a new love for the sport of rugby through putting herself out there.