

Getxo Women's Rugby Club: 28 players show their conviction

Taldean jokatzeko diren kiroletatik, errugbia da, beharbada, jarraitzaile gutxien dituenetakoa eta, beraz, komunikabideetan islada txikienetakoa duena eta baliabide ekonomiko apalenetakoak dituena. Horri erantzen badiogu nesken taldea dela, are larriagoa da arazoa. Hala ere, Getxo Rugbyko neskek ez dira kikiltzen eta duten gogo eta kemen guttia ipintzen dute ahalik eta sari eta txapelketa gehien irabazteko.

It takes great courage in your own convictions to take up a such a little known sport. In fact, other than Biarritz Olympique, there aren't even any prominent men's rugby teams in the Basque Country. In the 2006-07 season, players from the Getxo Women's Rugby Club have won the 10s tournament held in October 2006 and came second in the Basque League behind Gaztedi from Vitoria-Gasteiz. The previous

season, the same two teams took the top two spots, but swapped places so they will compete nationally for the Copa de la Reina (Queen's Cup).

The Getxo rugby team is made up of 28 players, mainly from the province of Bizkaia with varied professional backgrounds such as medicine, pharmacy, psychology, secretaries or, for the time being, simply students. Their ages range from 17 to 35 years old.

Over the last seventeen years, around fifty Getxo girls have passed through the women's team, working their way up through the reserves. A vast number of players from this women's team have gone on to play for the Basque Country regional team. Some of them have also been called up to play in competitions as part of the Absolute Women's team and six of their players have played internationally with the Spanish Team.

Looking to the future, the Getxo Women's Rugby Club has set up a women's school for lower categories, they aim to promote women's rugby in the surrounding area



and consolidate their position as one of the top four teams in the country, working towards a better level of competitiveness.

At the moment, Getxo is trying to tackle a series of problems. First and foremost, a lack of players. This means they can only play in one category and have to use players whose ages span a wide age range, with all the physical differences that entails. Then there's the lack of competitiveness in the Basque Country and the meager economic resources available for trips to other parts Spain.

So the club has two major weak points: competition and training. This highlights the need for greater attention from the media, more financial resources and greater implication from public institutions.



Their impressive track record boasts winning the Basque League eleven times over the past twelve years. The 2000-2001 season was awash with success: they won the Spanish Championship, the Copa de la Reina and they were also awarded the Emakunde award (from the Basque Women's Institute).

MAITANE MENDIGUREN *captain*

“Rugby isn't such a hard sport, it's just a contact sport.”

Graduate in History with a post-graduate degree in Documentation and Heritage Preservation, Maitane Mendiguren, joint team captain for the past year with Alba Estanyol, began playing for Getxo at 16. “Before that I did rhythmic gymnastics, but when I finished the schools' section I needed to join a federation to continue and as I wasn't good enough.... We used to train at the Fadura sports centre, which is where I discovered rugby. We met the Getxo players and they encouraged us to join the team. There are just the two of us left now.”

Maitane Mendiguren solidly rejects people describing rugby as a rough or hard sport. “It isn't purposely violent; it's just a contact sport. The objective is to throw the ball behind the line at the other end of the field; you have to get there somehow.” You could think that it's

all about force but I can assure you as captain that it isn't actually necessary; there are many different positions within the team and it's also important to be a good runner in this sport. “There's a position to match every body shape and size; forwards are stronger and the others have to run.”

She admits that she was thrilled to have been made captain, because she was voted in and so it “shows what your team thinks about you.” Her role is not clearly defined and “depends on each person's personality. Alba and I are very different.” However, some things are crystal clear: “We have to create a group, because rugby requires a strong team spirit; it's as though it was a game between friends and we try to boost this spirit, complementing the trainer's work.”

But the captain pines for

competitiveness in a League with too few teams, suffering from lack of public support and almost no coverage in the press. These complaints come up time and again in most women's sports except when they reach elite level. “There are six teams in the Basque League and we play every couple of weeks. The top two teams compete in the national League and in this case that's Gaztedi from Vitoria-Gasteiz and us. So really it's normal that there's no fan base and we don't have many spectators. It's generally our family, boyfriends and some friends, except when we play in the semi-finals, when more people come and watch from town because they've seen the posters we put up. When we won the Copa de la Reina, we got a four line mention in the press, although our players compete regularly for the Spanish team.”