

International Player Testimonies!



Howie Heller | 2024 *West Point, GA USA*

My experience at the WP academy was a unique and unforgettable one. My expectations going into the academy were solely about rugby, not thinking about the other aspects of the academy such as the relationships with other players/coaches.

I was blown away at how much I learned as a person, because I was exposed to so many different cultures and made friends with different types of people.

As a player from a non-rugby nation, learning about the rugby culture in SA expanded my understanding of the game. South Africans love to play free, physical rugby that relies on feeling the game rather than thinking about it. It was incredible to watch players that play rugby seamlessly, and then to play and learn around them made me a better player.

As a 9, working with coach Bolla improved my passing and decision making. I learned a lot in the gym, especially about fitness and it helped me establish a baseline for me that I can take into my club season.

The most valuable thing I took away was to have fun playing the game. Coach Warren's philosophy of encouraging exciting rugby, as well as seeing how much fun the other players had while doing drills, playing etc. showed me to not take everything so seriously while playing.

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Scott Ciamarichello | 2024 *Green Bay, WI USA*

The positives of my experience in South Africa:
The coaching and the program focused on player development, extensive quality field sessions, including position-specific sessions.

My teammates and coaches were very welcoming.

I had the freedom of going on hikes and going out at night.

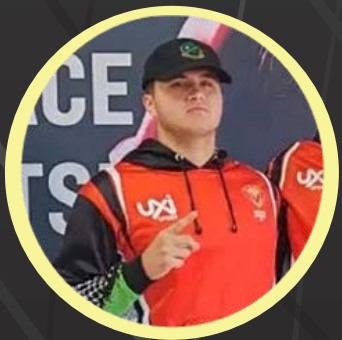
The areas that I specifically worked on and improved were fitness, tackling height, tracking on defense, reading and creating space, amongst others. I would say I improved on everything I was there to work on. The coaches were extremely helpful and knowledgeable, so it was easy to learn and perform at the level I needed too. Overall my experience at the Academy was positive and very helpful in expanding my knowledge and overall performance.

If I had any questions or doubts, I was able to ask any coach and they would show me the right way of doing things and answer my questions fully. The players at the academy were very welcoming and I could not thank them enough for helping me perform as well as showing me their culture. It was definitely a once in a lifetime experience being able to play rugby in one of the best countries you can play.

After practice and lift sessions I enjoyed being able to go into town and go to the stores, going on hikes etc. I really enjoyed how strong the rugby culture was and being able to experience it firsthand at one of the top clubs in South Africa was truly life changing and inspiring.

I definitely will take a lot of things I learned back and help grow the game locally here in Green Bay.

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Cate Coetzee | 2024 *Great Falls, VA USA*

UXi/WPIRI is truly honoured to have Cate Coetzee with us for a whole month! Cate comes all the way from Washington DC in the United States, where she previously played for Great Falls Youth Rugby. She joined us on August 26th and will be staying until September 27th, preparing for her exciting next chapter—playing rugby at university in South Africa starting in February.

As our **first-ever international female rugby player**, Cate has been a true trailblazer. She has embraced every opportunity, learning and growing under the guidance of our talented coaches. Cate shared that her experience so far has been fantastic, particularly highlighting the dedication and attentiveness of the coaches and staff who have helped her sharpen her skills and boost her confidence for the next phase of her rugby career.

We are so proud to be part of her journey, and we hope she enjoys the remainder of her time here with us at WPIRI!

"I feel truly blessed to have had the opportunity to participate in the UXi Rugby Academy. In just one month, I've experienced tremendous growth—both on and off the field.

The high-performance environment challenged me to push past my limits, and the support from coaches, teammates, and staff helped me elevate every aspect of my game.

Beyond the physical development, I've gained a deeper understanding of the sport, built lifelong friendships, and walked away with a renewed sense of confidence and purpose. This experience has left an indelible mark on me, and I'm incredibly grateful for every moment spent here."

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