



Photo by Alan Hodge

Gastonia Gargoyles rugby player Allen LeCroy gets a lift from teammates to show how one rule of the British sport allows passes to be made over the heads of opponents in a manner not seen during American football games.

## Want to play rugby? Get ready to taste some turf!

By Alan Hodge

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When most folks think of team sports in our area, its football, baseball, and basketball that come to mind, but there's also a group of local lads who enjoy a rough and tumble sport that can trace its roots back to the 1400s in Great Britain.

The game they play is rugby and to those unfamiliar with the rules it looks like two teams clad only in t-shirts and shorts chasing an egg-shaped ball and engaging in a brawl for its possession.

Rugby takes its name from the Rugby School in England where it was played as early as 1750. Back then, there were no limits to the number of players on each side and sometimes hundreds would fill a field with what was called "an enormous rolling maul". Perhaps due to the large number of injuries, Rugby School finally wrote a rulebook in 1845 that toned things down somewhat.

These days, rugby is enjoyed by tens of millions of fans in over 100 nations around the world, but is still relatively rare in the United

States.

The Gastonia Rugby Football Club Gargoyles (GRFC) is our area's link to the game. The club's call to action pretty well sums up what it takes to play rugby with the motto "wimps need not apply".

The GRFC got started in 2004 and draws members from a wide area including Belmont, Mount Holly, Cherryville, Kings Mountain, Morganton, Hickory, and Clover. The club plays teams such as the Charlotte Socialites and the Greenville Griffons in games that are action-packed and body ache-making.

The idea in rugby is to score points by passing, kicking, and grounding the oval ball that's used. The game is uncomplicated with only 22 rules of play.

The fact that the action is more or less continuous with few stoppages or time outs adds to the "rolling maul" sense one gets from watching or playing the game, but that doesn't mean it's a free-for-all. In rugby you can't hit anyone that isn't carrying the ball, and that eliminates a lot of blindsides injuries such as concussions.

The lack of padding also

makes rugby play less forceful since the mass of a person is reduced when all they have on are shoes, a shirt, and shorts.

The GRFC practices on Wednesdays at North Belmont Park on Hickory Grove Rd. and puts as much effort into each "scrum" as the plays are called as possible. The practices are held in all sorts of weather and afterward club members often retire to a pub to nurse their hurts with a pint of Guinness.

Bill Blackett of Belmont is president of GRFC and says members come from a variety of backgrounds and age ranges.

"I am an IT project manager," he said. "We also have former East Gaston High students, a City of Gastonia employee, a music distribution company owner, a policeman from Stanley, and a doctor that all participate. Player ages range from eighteen to forty-nine years."

What draws a person to rugby? For Rick Itsari of Cherryville, it was about challenging himself.

"I had back surgery and people said I would never be the same," Itsari said. "I

wanted to prove them wrong."

Former Kings Mountain pee wee football assistant coach Allen LeCroy also felt rugby offered him a new and interesting outlet for his own athletic urges.

"I was bored with jogging," LeCroy said.

As for Blackett, the fact that his father was a native of New Castle, England instilled a love of rugby at an early age.

"I had relatives that played rugby over there," he said.

The GRFC is interested in expanding its player and fan base. Potential players as young as age 16, depending on size, can come out and give rucking and scrumming a shot. Blackett says he has even contacted several local schools about forming teams.

"We are especially interested in starting a high school team," he said.

If you think you have what it takes to play rugby, or to get a schedule of when and where the Gargoyles's play, visit the club's website at [www.gastoniarc.com](http://www.gastoniarc.com) and get ready to taste some turf.

## Tips For A Safe Halloween



Sheriff  
Alan Norman

Soon our streets will be scattered with little ghosts, goblins and witches trick-or-treating this Halloween. "Halloween should be filled with surprise and enjoyment, and following some common sense practices, can keep events safer and more fun," said Sheriff Alan Norman of Cleveland County.

The Sheriff reminds all Cleveland County residents to follow these safety tips:

### Motorists:

- Watch for children darting out from between parked cars.
- Watch for children walking on roadways, medians and curbs.
- Enter and exit driveways and alleys carefully.
- At twilight and later in the evening, watch for children in dark clothing.

### Parents:

- Make sure that an adult or an older responsible youth will be supervising the outing for children under age 12.
- Check the sex offender registry at [www.ncdoj.gov](http://www.ncdoj.gov) when planning your child's trick-or-treat route. You can view maps that pinpoint registered offenders' addresses in your neighborhood, and sign up to get email alerts when an offender moves nearby.
- Plan and discuss the route trick-or-treaters intend to follow. Know the names of older children's companions.
- Make sure older kids trick-or-treat in a group.
- Instruct your children to travel only in familiar areas and along an established route.
- Teach your children to stop only at houses or apartment buildings that are well-lit and never to enter a stranger's home.
- Establish a return time.
- Tell your youngsters not to eat any treat until they return home.
- Review all appropriate trick-or-treat safety precautions, including pedestrian/traffic safety rules.
- All children need to know their home telephone number and how to call 9-1-1 in case of emergency.
- Pin a slip of paper with the child's name, address and telephone number inside a pocket in case the youngster gets separated from the group.

### Costume Design:

- Only fire-retardant materials should be used for costumes.
- Costumes should be loose so warm clothes can be worn underneath.
- Costumes should not be so long that they are a tripping hazard.
- Make sure that shoes fit well to prevent trips and falls.
- If children are allowed out after dark, outfits should be made with light colored materials. Strips of retro-reflective tape should be used to make children visible.

### Face Design:

- Do not use masks as they can obstruct a child's vision. Use facial make-up instead.
- When buying special Halloween makeup, check for packages containing ingredients that are labeled "Made with U.S. Approved Color Additives," "Laboratory Tested," "Meets Federal Standards for Cosmetics," or "Non-Toxic." Follow manufacturer's instruction for application.
- If masks are worn, they should have nose and mouth openings and large eye holes.

### Accessories:

- Knives, swords and other accessories should be made from cardboard or flexible materials. Do not allow children to carry sharp objects.
- Bags or sacks carried by youngsters should be light-colored or trimmed with retro-reflective tape if children are allowed out after dark.
- Carrying flashlights with fresh batteries will help children see better and be seen more clearly.

### While Trick-or-Treating:

- Do not enter homes or apartments without adult supervision.
- Walk; do not run, from house to house. Do not cross yards and lawns where unseen objects or the uneven terrain can present tripping hazards.
- Walk on sidewalks, not in the street.
- Walk on the left side of the road, facing traffic if there are no sidewalks.

### Treats:

- Give children an early meal before going out.
- Insist that treats be brought home for inspection before anything is eaten.
- Wash fruit and slice it into small pieces.
- Throwaway any candy that is unwrapped or partially wrapped, or has a strange odor, color or texture.

### Homeowners/Decorations:

- Keep candles and Jack O' Lanterns away from landings and doorsteps where costumes could brush against the flame.
- Remove obstacles from lawns, steps and porches when expecting trick-or-treaters.
- Keep candles and Jack O' Lanterns away from curtains, decorations and other combustibles that could catch fire.
- Do not leave your house unattended.

The Cleveland County Sheriff's Office will be able to scan your child's candy for any metal objects on Halloween night from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Parents should accompany their children through the front doors of the Courthouse. Once inside, officers will use our scanner, which we normally use to check bags before allowing people to enter the courtrooms, to scan their candy.

"Halloween is a fun time in Cleveland County," Sheriff Norman concluded, "but let's make it a safe time as well. The major dangers are not from witches or spirits but rather from falls and pedestrian/car crashes.

## HOW TO REACH US

Contact the Herald by coming by the office at 700 E. Gold St.; call 704-739-7496, fax 704-739-0611 or Email [lib.kmherald@gmail.com](mailto:lib.kmherald@gmail.com)



Brooke Hamrick, kindergarten, daughter of Angel Hamrick, Victoria Grace Lovell, middle, first grader, and her brother, William Blake Lovell, second grader, children of Jill and Terry Lovell, won the East School "Color the Mayor" contest sponsored by the city during Public Energy Week. The students won a \$25 gift certificate to Toys R Us and their photograph taken with Mayor Rick Murphrey.