
PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Rugby League kicks off at Rizal Memorial Four teams participate in round 1 with 2 games



(Pic 1) Group photo of all four teams at Rizal Stadium

Manila, August 11, 2024. The Philippine National Rugby League (PNRL) rugby league's local season started on a high note, with 2 games in round 1 taking place at Manila's Rizal Memorial Stadium on Sunday, August 11. This stadium is no stranger to momentous games, hosting notable football and rugby matches.

A special mention must go to our sponsors – KEVS PLACE & ERICK ELEFANTE, and partners – Philippine Sports Commission, their support is key to the PNRLS domestic rugby league activities.

This season of the PNRL will see four teams in competition, with three newly formed teams trying their hand at rugby league. The Braves and Gorillas come from a traditional rugby background, participating in PRFU 15's and 7's tournaments, whereas the Panthers are newcomers from Pampanga, collaborating with Clark Jets players to bolster their team.

Game 1 of round 1 kicking off just after 1pm, Braves RFC put forth an impressive display of skill, determination, and collaboration. They took to the field with energy and tackled their challenge with enthusiasm, offering spectators a compelling show.

Right from the start, there was clear synergy between the forwards and backs. A coordinated effort from the team led to an early try with individual brilliance from Johnsen Lalongisip, whose speed and smart play led to a second try in the opening half.

For the Panthers, it was a debut match to remember, as they claimed their very first victory in the PNRL Domestic Shield against the Cavite-based Braves. Under the leadership of captain Marcky Teresa and co-captain Gian Disonglo, the team demonstrated sheer resolve.

The match's opening half saw Francis Masin scoring twice, while Jonel Madrona contributed another, placing the Panthers narrowly ahead at halftime with 12-10.



(Pic 2) Braves RFC v Pampanga Panthers



(Pic 3) Braves RFC v Pampanga Panthers

As the second half progressed and despite facing setbacks like the injury to Francis Masin and Harris Johnson's penalty time in the Sin Bin, the Panthers displayed formidable resilience. Braves' strategic changes initially caused disruption but led to a shift in momentum, Dave Tuscano left his mark with strong runs that enabled him to score a vital try, warranting admiration from both his colleagues and the Philippine National Rugby League. Cris John Engreso played a pivotal role for the Panthers, creating opportunities, including Daeniel Ilanan's fourth try. Joemari Rauras and Angelo Arsolon made important defensive plays, with Gian Disonglo's steal becoming a key highlight of the game.

Jonel Madrona clinched the game for the Panthers with two decisive tries in the last five minutes, concluding the game with a close 24-22 victory over the Braves. This earned

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Madrona the Man of the Match award, the game marking a history-making moment for both Pampanga Panthers and Braves RFC whose debut and subsequent matches were a testament to their hard work.

Must make special mention to Braves RFC's Ivan Acilo strategic plays provided stability to the team, while Lenard Perejan's agility skills were crucial in maintaining momentum. Zept Villanueva's energy and tactical awareness added depth to the Braves' game plan, contributing to a well-rounded and solid team performance.



(Pic 4) Braves RFC & Pampanga Panthers, team player of the match



(Pic 5) Team photo - Braves RFC & Pampanga Panthers

Game 2 kicked off at 3.30pm, the well-established Manila Storm went head-to-head with the debutant Gorillas Rugby Club. Despite being newcomers to the revered sport, the Gorillas presented a formidable challenge to the Storm.



(Pic 6) Manila Storm & Gorillas Rugby tunnel walk out

The Storm's initial try was a product of an impressive collective effort, with Julian Feleo completing the play beautifully. Larcel Caparros, known for his prowess in Philippine Touch, successfully executed the conversion.

For many in the Gorillas lineup, it was their inaugural rugby league match. Under the leadership of the young captain Otto Devantier and the experienced Miguel Velis, the team had a rigorous start facing the physically dominant Manila Storm.

Early scores put the Gorillas at a disadvantage, but Niel Pickford's seasoned skills ensured a try before the break, which was converted by Devantier. At halftime, Storm led 16-6.

As the second half unfolded, the Gorillas adapted and built-up strength, thanks to Marc Smoliner and Ethan Ignacio's dynamic runs. Maximus Ignacio managed to pierce through the defence for a critical try following a penalty.



(Pic 7) Gorillas player



(Pic 8) Manila Storm player

In the final 15 minutes, the Storm escalated their efforts, resulting in three tries from Jan Norbin Puig and Lito Ramirez, including one originating from a strategic play by the Ramirez brothers, capped off with a 'magic pass' to Lito Ramirez. Caparros' two conversions finalized the score at 28-12, securing the win for the Storm.

Manila Storm's scorers included John Denmar Usman with two tries, Jan Norbin Puig and Lito Ramirez each adding further tries, accompanied by two successful conversions from Larcel Caparros, in addition to Julian Feleo's noteworthy performance earning him Storm player of the match honours.

Despite the defeat, the opening round was stellar for the Gorillas, showing early signs that they would develop into a formidable contender as the season advances. In a gesture of true sportsmanship, the Storm named Gorillas' Maximus Ignacio as the Gorillas man of the match.



(Pic 9) Manila Storm & Gorillas Rugby team player of the match



(Pic 10) Team photo – Manila Storm & Gorillas Rugby

GAME 1 RESULTS:

| PANTHERS | | BRAVES RFC | |
|----------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| FIRST HALF | | | |
| Try | Conversion | Try | Conversion |
| Francis Masin | “” | Johnsen Calipjo | Billy Cardeño |
| Jonel Madrona | “” | Johnsen Calipjo | “” |
| Francis Masin | “” | | |
| 12 | 0 | 8 | 2 |
| 12 | | 10 | |
| SECOND HALF | | | |
| Daeniel Ilanan | “” | Zept Villanueva | “” |
| Jonel Madrona | “” | Dave Tuscano | “” |
| Jonel Madrona | “” | Lenard Perejan | “” |
| 12 | 0 | 12 | 0 |
| 24 | | 22 | |

GAME 2 RESULTS:

GAME RESULTS

| MANILA STORM | | GORILLAS RUGBY | |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| FIRST HALF | | | |
| Try | Conversion | Try | Conversion |
| John Denmar | "" | Neil Pickford | Otto Devantier |
| John Denmar | "" | | |
| Julian Feleo | Larcel Caparros | | |
| 12 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| 14 | | 6 | |
| SECOND HALF | | | |
| Lito Ramirez | "" | Maximus Ignacio | Otto Devantier |
| Jan Norbin | "" | | |
| Lito Ramirez | Larcel Caparros | | |
| 12 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| 28 | | 12 | |

About the PNRL

Pambansang Ragbi Liga NG Pilipinas (PNRL) is the governing body of Rugby League Football in the Philippines. Its mission is to enable all Filipinos to have a healthy lifestyle through their participation in Rugby League Football and to be competitive amongst the Asian Rugby League playing nations. The PNRL focus is the promotion, development, and efficient administration of Rugby League in the Philippines. The PNRL is non-profit volunteer organization, who are a member of the Philippine Olympic Committee and the Philippine Sports Commission. The Philippines is a member of the Asia-Pacific Rugby League Confederation (APRLC) and an observer member of the International Rugby League (IRL).