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## **Rugby in Lebanon started with the Beirut Phoenician Rugby Club**

The BPRUFC was formed in October 1995 in response to a request from the British Embassy for a rugby team to play HMS Cardiff, a Royal Navy warship that docked in Beirut for a few days in November 1995.

BPRUFC was founded by:

Col. Big Bird (deceased)

David Melvin (left the region)

Alex Jammal

Many of the club's retired members remain on the committee and have taken on an active role in promoting rugby in Lebanon. Today the BPRUFC is a squad of 15 players fronted by Club Chairman Alex Jammal who was reinstated in 2009. In 2006 The Beirut Phoenicians has proven its capability of winning at home the 3rd Beirut 10's. This Tournament hosted two more teams than the previous year. As for Dubai 7's, the Beirut Phoenicians were very proud to rank second after having won all the games over the couple days of this major event. That gave the opportunity for the Lebanese Team to play the final on the main pitch with more than 25.000 spectators watching the game.

That last achievement had set a new standard for the Club, but even more for the Lebanese Rugby Federation. This Federation has been the Lebanon Rugby 15's Committee project for 2006. It had been initiated by the founders of Rugby 15 in Lebanon, Mr. Alex JAMMAL and Mr. Mike JAMMAL, as well as other members like Mr. Serge SABBAGHA, Mr. Bassam HUSSEINI, Mr. Chady TOUMA, Mr. Georges AOUN and Mr. Ghassan HAJJAR.

**1996:** 1st tour In February 1996, the BPRFC toured Cyprus and played two matches against British Army teams from the Episkopi and Akrotiri bases on the Island of Cyprus. In June 1996 we played the 1st game via Fijian UNIFIL Battalion in Tyre, South Lebanon, and the match was called Qana Memorial Cup, in memory of the tragic events at the Fijian Battalion HQ in Qana on the 18th April, 1996.

In July 1996, BPRUFC officially became a member of the Arabian Gulf Rugby Union, a member of the IRB. On October 4th the club hosted and played the London Lebanese XV, beating them 12 - nil. On November 20th, 1996 the BPRUFC flew to Dubai to take part in the prestigious Dubai Seven's Tournament with representatives from all over the world, many of whom was surprised and impressed that Beirut was able to field such a competent side.

**1997:** March 1997 the 1st game via Egypt, the BPRFC flew to Cairo with its supporters to play the Cairo XV, defeating them 40- nil. In June 1997 1st game via Jordan, the BPRFC hosted and played the Amman XV, winning the match 12- nil.

**1998:** From small beginnings, the Beirut Phoenicians Rugby Club has become a formidable sporting institution. The Club now boasts a membership of over 50 played, the vast majority being Lebanese citizens. In December the club went to Dubai with its strongest team since it started, reach the final of the Khan jar Silver Trophy and lost in the final 30 seconds.

**2000:** Took part in the International 10's Tournament in Cyprus.

**2001:** February we beat the Amman XV 41-0 and proved to ourselves more than anyone, who ruled club

rugby in the Middle East. We participated in the Cyprus International 10's and the Dubai International 7's.

**2002:** We started sporadic training for students in Notre Dame Jamhour leading to the eventual establishment of the Black Lions.

**2003:** Established a new Rugby Union league, other than the Arabian League, that would coordinate with the representative of the IRB, based in Dubai. The new Rugby Union league would be comprised of teams from the Lebanon, Jordan, Cairo and Alexandria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria.

**2004:** The Highlight of the year was the organization and success of the first ever Rugby Union Tournament in Lebanon, "Beirut International Ten-a-Side" that took place on 11th – 12th June, being the first such venue. There were six teams that participated, Cyprus, Jordan, Cairo, two teams from Lebanon and a mixed Barbarian team. The final was between Beirut via Cyprus which Cyprus won 13-12 with a penalty conversion in the last seconds of the game. We played for the 1st time, the Zenobian XV of Syria newly formal club with a new local rugby union team established, (Jamhour Black Lions) we played them on a monthly basis throughout the year.

**2005:** After a very long (7 year) awaited acceptance from the Ministry of Youth and Sports recognizing Rugby Union as a sport in the Lebanon and approval of our club license. Beirut International Ten a side was a success, we lost the final against Dubai Exiles in a hard fought final 7-5.

**2006:** The Beirut Phoenicians has proven its capability of winning at home the 3rd Beirut 10's. This Tournament hosted two more teams than the previous year. As for Dubai 7's, the Beirut Phoenicians were very proud to rank second after having won all the games over the couple days of this major event. That gave the opportunity for the Lebanese Team to play the final on the main pitch with more than 25.000 spectators watching the game. That last achievement had set a new standard for the Club, but even more for the Lebanese Rugby Federation.

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**2007:** The Lebanon Rugby 15 committee has worked on the promotion of Rugby in the country, its main target being the new clubs creation program. Beirut reached the semi-finals of the Dubai Rugby 7s.

**2008:** A successful year for the Beirut Phoenicians – two wins against the Montcalm French Navy, reached the semi-finals of the Dubai Rugby 7s, and won matches against the Syrian National rugby team and the Mashreq League against a Jordanian team.

**2009:** Another successful year with wins against the Syrian eagles as well as the title of the UNIFIL-Qana Cup.

Further achievements: the Lebanese Rugby Union Federation was ratified as a National body in Lebanon in December 2009, made an associate member of Asian Rugby Football Union in December 2010 and successfully fully established a Long Term Athlete Development program in High Schools and Universities. Through the LRUF, teams were sent to: the 4<sup>th</sup> World University Sevens Championship in Porto, Portugal – July 2010; the Arabian Challenge 7's in Beirut – April 2010; Beirut 10's in Beirut June 2010.

In early **2009** the Rugby XV committee decided to proceed with making a Lebanese Rugby Union Federation (LRUF) and presented the necessary papers which were approved by the Ministry of Sport in November 2009. At the same time a new coach was appointed, Mr. Robbie Yule, from New Zealand who had previously trained the Sri Lankan national team and the Iranian national team. His role was not only to coach the national team and the clubs but to develop the game in the schools and universities. This he did very well and the LRUF are indebted to Robbie's hard work between October 2009 and December 2010 during which he took rugby union from a social game to a serious and developing sport. His task has now been taken over by Stephen Wrigglesworth who joined the LRUF temporarily from April to June 2011 and who signed a new one-year contract from September 2011 to the end of July 2012.

Below is a summary of all games from November 2009 to July 2011. The LRUF has a new and exciting season for **2011-2012** – please find it here on the website.

Country	Tournament / Games	Level Reached
Beirut November 2009	First Beirut international 7s	Beirut select team won
Dubai Dec 2009	Dubai 7s	Lost
Dubai April 2010	Arabian 7s	Beirut Select won
Beirut April 2010	Beirut Select against French UNIFIL (Tyre)	Beirut Select won
Dubai May 2010	International Match via Jordan	Beat Jordan (division higher)
Beirut June 2010	Vie French UNIFIL (Tyre)	Beirut Select won
Portugal July 2010	World Cup Universities	Lost
Beirut August 2010	Beirut against Paphos Tigers RFC	Beirut Select won
Beirut September 2010	Beirut Select against Doha	Lost

(friendly)

Doha October 2010	Beirut Select against Doha. North Gulf 4 Competition	Lost
Beirut November 2010	Via Kuwait – North Gulf 4	Lost
Dubai December 2010	Dubai 7's. Lost in semi-final of Gulf Open Competition	Lost semi final
Beirut December 2010	Via American University of Cairo	Beirut Select won
Beirut January 2011	Via American University of Cairo	Beirut Select won
Beirut March 2011	Via Doha – North Gulf 4	Lost
Beirut April 2011	Via Abu Dhabi Harlequins (Beirut Select)	Lost
Dubai May 2011	Via Uzbekistan (A5N)	Won
Dubai May 2011	Via Qatar (A5N)	Lost (semi final)
Beirut May 2011	Beirut International 10s	Won by Gray Wolves
Beirut July 2011	Lebanese Championship 2010- 2011 Final	
Beirut July 2011	Lebanese University Championships 2010-2011	