

総合英語レベル8 第7回 ラグビーについて

予習課題：次の英文を読んで、内容を理解しなさい。

Rugby football exists in three different forms. The game was originally devised by the English upper-classes in the early 19th century, and its first international match—between England and Scotland—was in 1871. This 15-a-side game of rugby union maintained an almost exclusively amateur status until 1995, when players were finally allowed to turn professional. In this (イ) they were following the 13-a-side professional game of rugby league, which had been established 100 years earlier as a predominantly working-class sport. Both branches of the game, along with the smaller and faster seven-a-side version, have been successfully developing national and international championships, with the lucrative TV deals these entail.

Rugby union is played, at club level, in over 100 countries. Canadian and US universities played each other in the late 19th century, but the sport became marginalized by American Football. It has thrived at elite level in former British colonies, which have dominated the Rugby (Union) World Cup. In Europe, the British-based Home International Championship, established in 1883, became the Six Nation Championship in 2000.

A professionalized rugby union league was formed in England in 1997, becoming, in 2005/6, the Guinness Premiership. European Club Rugby (ERC) formed the Heineken Cup to realize “the potential of European club rugby, by creating matches of unique drama”, as stated by ERC boss Jean-Pierre Lux in 1999. The World Cup, inaugurated in 1987, expanded in this professionalized and commercialized climate. Its worldwide partners for 2011—Master Card, Emirates Airline, and Heineken—matched the financial, travel, and drinking needs of modern rugby fan.

Rugby football is a team game named after the English public school where it was first played—with 120 players on each side. The game was taken on to England’s ancient universities, where it developed into the 15-a-side rugby union format, dominated by an educated elite and a strict amateur code.

Rugby league broke from the union game in 1895, when 21 clubs met in Huddersfield, Yorkshire, and formed the Northern Union. It was played by professional, and watched by paying spectators in the industrial heartlands of northern England. The league game involves 13 team members, and is faster paced than rugby union.

The seven-a-side format has been promoted by Dubai, UAE, with an annual international tournament involving 16 countries. In 2009, the International Olympic Committee granted men’s and women’s Rugby Sevens a place in the starting line-up of Summer Olympics from Rio de Janeiro 2016. This scaled-down sport could be played in the center of the athletics stadium and would therefore not require additional expenditure.

(注) 15-a-side : 1 チーム 15 名の、predominantly : 大部分は、marginalized : 周辺に追いやられた、
thrive : 盛んになる