

## Women's rugby team emerges as two-time champions

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The Tulane University women's rugby team are the Division II national champions for the second time in the team's history. (Photo by Bryce Ell Photography)

On Sunday, May 6, the Tulane University women's rugby team claimed the Division II National Championship title for the second time in the team's history. They scored a decisive 31-14 win against Claremont Colleges in the final matchup.

"It was the first time in the Final Four that we had been matched up with teams with a similar play and style to us," said Alexandra Clarke, co-captain of the team and a graduating senior studying biomedical engineering. "Normally, we're up against big teams who are really hard-hitters — kind of your traditional rugby team. But Fresno

State and Claremont Colleges were both smaller teams like us who just moved the ball really well.”

The women’s rugby team has advanced to the Division II Final Four each year since 2016, delivering impressive performances from a team in which the majority of the players are relatively new to the sport.

“Only a handful of people on the team have ever played rugby before they got to college,” said Clarke. “We play a lot of teams where rugby is a varsity sport at their school, with very rigorous practice schedules and trainers. All of our training outside of practice comes down to people being self-motivated and getting their friends to go to the gym. Our athleticism is based on our own motivation.”

Ultimately, the team credits its motivation and drive to the camaraderie and trust between its players.

“Rugby is unlike any other sport in just the community that it builds,” said Maddie Brenner, co-captain of the team and a graduating senior studying public health. “There are players that we have that are from all different countries, that have so many unique experiences and backgrounds, but we’re bonded by this unique thing.”

“Every match is like going to war together,” added Clarke.

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Alexandra Clarke