



SMARTABASE
BY FUSION



Queensland Rugby League

From Building Fiscal Responsibility to Managing Concussions

About QRL

Queensland Rugby League (QRL) is the governing body for the game of rugby league in Queensland. QRL contributes to the development of talented players and provides participation pathways for all from the grassroots to elite level. It also manages the Queensland Maroons. David Maiden serves as QRL's Major Competitions Manager and Dion Haddad is the Competitions & Innovation Coordinator.



Opportunity

With 15 major clubs, an extensive juniors program, and teams from each area, QRL supports a large number of players, coaches, and administrators across a wide geographical area. QRL helps clubs take care of their athletes on and off the field and provides the framework for sound and sustainable club administration and fiscal responsibility. While they selected Smartabase to replace a concussion system that wasn't meeting expectations, QRL's staff was delighted to realize the platform could deliver efficiencies for operations too.



Challenge

The expanse of QRL's responsibilities was the primary hurdle in centralizing the data and automating the process. Much of QRL's operational data was stored in Excel spreadsheets and sent back and forth to clubs via email. In addition to creating data silos, it also resulted in an endless and time-consuming communication process and delays in approvals. On the player management side, entering information in the prior concussion system was clunky for physicians to use and had poor customer support.



Solution

QRL chose Smartabase to replace their existing concussion management system and optimize multiple fiscal and administrative workflows involving both the governing body and the clubs. In the back office, Smartabase serves as the central hub for contracts, salary caps, travel schedules, player rosters, and more. On the field, physicians utilize Smartabase to capture data on player concussions, list acute diagnosis, and indicate whether they need to enter QRL's return-to-play protocol.



Impact

For player care and performance, Smartabase has made it easier for physicians to record the required concussion management data. It also enables QRL and club staff to keep track of each player's status as they move through the return-to-play protocols. On the operations side, Smartabase has streamlined communication and improved collaboration with clubs across the state. Having a single data platform makes it easier for information to flow back and forth seamlessly and helps teams practice sound financial management.



The Opportunity



We looked at an AMS for managing concussions, but it's also become a submissions portal, information hub, and one-stop shop for us and our clubs.

– Dion Haddad, Competitions & Innovation Coordinator, QRL



Managing concussions is a top priority at every level of rugby league. Several years ago, QRL established a statewide protocol based on best practices created by neurologists, physicians, and other professionals who manage the continuum of care from the moment a player suffers a head injury, to their assessment and diagnosis, and on through the six stages required to return to practice and competitive play.

The software they initially selected offered most of what QRL needed, but when the vendor was acquired by a larger company, “the level of service dropped away,” said David Maiden, QRL’s Major Competitions Manager. “We realized we needed something better to manage concussions and complete the loop. This led us to Smartabase.”

As Maiden and his colleagues evaluated their other technology needs, they realized Smartabase had the potential to improve the management of documents, communication with clubs, salary cap/contracts compliance, and other aspects of QRL’s statewide competition operations.

“We intended to begin using Smartabase with concussions, but from a statewide competitions perspective, we actually began with our salary cap management and player contracts submission processes,” said Dion Haddad, QRL’s Competitions & Innovation Coordinator. “Since then, we’ve continued to find new ways to use Smartabase. It has become a central hub for us and our clubs.”



The Challenge



We manage a large area with many clubs – the capacity to exchange information is vital. There was a lot of email going back and forth, and clubs had to wait for us to approve contracts and other documents.

– Dave Maiden, Major Competitions Manager, QRL



As the second largest and third most populous state in Australia, Queensland encompasses a vast area. In addition to the 15 major QRL Rugby League clubs that compete in the Premiership and have developmental pathways for elite juniors, there are many smaller ones focused on local participation. QRL is tasked with overseeing them all, in addition to the Rugby League teams in Papua New Guinea.

The expanse of QRL’s responsibilities created a logistical headache. Clubs were continually sending email requests for information, each of which had to be responded to manually. Everything from player contracts to apparel requests to travel and training itineraries were sent via Excel spreadsheets, with every submission requiring

acknowledgement of receipt and/or approval. There were no standardized player contract templates, making it difficult for clubs to practice sound fiscal management and for QRL to ensure each club remained financially viable.

From a player care perspective, QRL needed a better way for its physicians to log incident data for each match day head injury. The previous system was clunky to use, only supported a limited range of devices, and was poorly supported, so QRL decided to find a more flexible platform for the initial information collection phase of its statewide concussion protocol.

The Solution

“ Smartabase does everything we need it to do and more, and every day we find a new use for it. **”**
- Dave Maiden

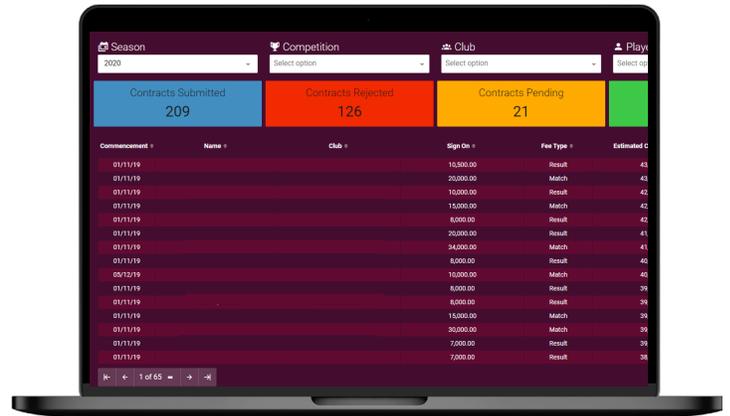


Today, Smartabase is used to manage the concussion protocol, contracts and salary caps, club resources, and communication between QRL and its member organizations.

Contract and Salary Cap Management

To ensure parity and sustainability, the 15 premier clubs under QRL’s purview have caps for individual player and total annual salaries. Every time a club wants to sign a new player or extend the contract of an existing athlete, they must send the documentation to QRL for approval. Smartabase expedites the submission and approval of templated contracts, enables future forecasting, and visualizes contract and salary cap data. This new process benefits QRL and clubs alike.

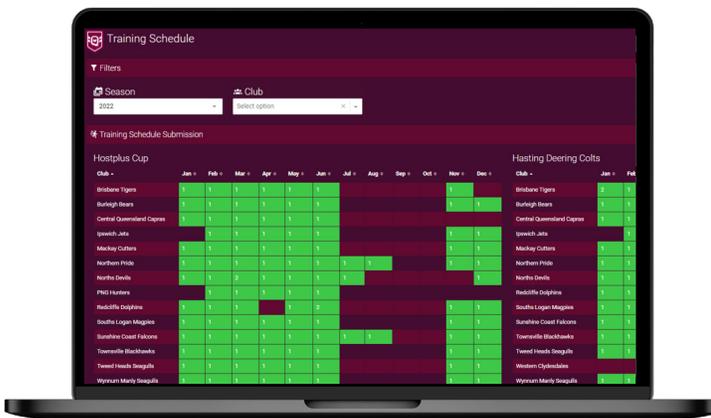
“With our Smartabase dashboards, clubs can see exactly what they’re going to spend on each of their players and have worst case scenarios based on their top seventeen players all the way through the roster,” Maiden said. “Smartabase allows us to forecast where they’re going to be in relation to individual and club salary caps so we can perform our checks and balances.”



Concussion Protocols

When a player suffers a blow to the head during a match between QRL member clubs, a doctor assigned to one of the organizations is ready to respond immediately. While providing acute care, they utilize the Smartabase Kiosk app and several other entry methods to record all the information required by QRL’s statewide concussion protocol in Smartabase. This can then be used to kick start the later stages of the player’s treatment until the point they’re ready to return to practicing and competing, whether it’s the six-day minimum, 11-day protocol, or a longer return-to-play process.

“The previous system required doctors to use an iPhone or iPad, but with Smartabase, they can enter concussion data with Apple or Android devices, which our users find easier and more flexible on match day,” Haddad said. “This year with the help of our pathways and performance team, we developed a dashboard so clubs can see who has come off the field for a concussion and what the diagnosis was.”





Club Resources

Before deploying Smartabase, every time a club needed access to player development lists, contact information for administrators, and other logistical information, they emailed a QRL employee and waited for a response. The staff member then had to locate the information and paste it into a reply message. Asking and answering questions repetitively in this way was inefficient for both parties.

“All frequently asked for information is now in Smartabase,” Haddad said. “People can use the club resource section to find whatever they need. It’s allowing them to access information immediately instead of having to ask us for it.”



The Impact



Using Smartabase has created more efficiency, transparency, and trust within our network. As a one-stop hub for us and our clubs, we’ve enabled data-informed decisions that help clubs deliver better care to their athletes and operate in a financially sustainable manner. – Dion Haddad



With so many clubs to manage over such a large state, Smartabase has helped consolidate information, close the gaps between QRL and its clubs, and expedite information sharing, all while ensuring compliance standards are maintained.

Deploying Smartabase has not only simplified and expedited administrative tasks, but also empowered QRL’s clubs to improve their contract and salary cap management process. Rather than going through a back-and-forth exchange, information is now available immediately, allowing clubs to make more proactive decisions around player signing and retention.

“Smartabase made the sharing contract and salary cap information instant. Once they press submit, they get a result immediately, and don’t have to wait for us to check anything – it just shows the dollar values straightaway. This helps the clubs understand where they sit within the salary cap, if they’re going to be over, and how much room they’ve got to sign another player.”

“Smartabase has given our clubs better practices in terms of financial management structures,” Maiden added. “It’s helping them set up their contracts better and reward those players who are performing well. We want our players and clubs to be financially sustainable, and we need to know that clubs are being fiscally responsible in an area that they spend a third of their revenue on so none of them falls by the wayside. We’re using Smartabase to share templates for structuring good contracts that lead to better financial practices.”

When caring for, evaluating, and treating head injuries, it’s essential that physicians quickly enter all the required information so they can focus on the needs of the affected player. Utilizing Smartabase on the sidelines empowers QRL’s medical staff to do exactly that. “The doctors who use Smartabase say it’s made it easier for them to input head injury protocol data on match day,” Haddad said. “It allows them to enter data quicker and allows them to see every single player within our competition. Smartabase has provided more flexibility in terms of how we collect data from a concussion perspective.”



The Impact

Continued...

One of the reasons QRL continues to find innovative ways to utilize Smartabase is that Haddad and a colleague on the pathways team completed the Smartabase Certification Course. This comprehensive program equips Smartabase users with the ability to build new forms and modify existing ones, visualize data in dashboards, set up and use notifications, and more.

“If I need to change something in Smartabase because of a new rule, I can go in and do it myself because I’ve been through the course,” Haddad said. “For example, COVID protocols were sprung on us a week before our competitions started. During that week, I quickly created a COVID form, sent it out to the clubs, and they started submitting it that weekend. It’s given us flexibility in terms of creating forms and procedures ourselves without having to wait for a developer to do it for us. Smartabase makes it easy to add and remove things and helps us to adapt as new things pop up, which is the nature of Rugby League.”

In the future, QRL intends to integrate Smartabase with Australia’s national rugby league database, which provides each player with a unique ID number that enables clubs, states, and the national team to track their progress throughout their careers. “Creating a link between Smartabase and the registration database will allow us to automatically mark players who’ve suffered a concussion as available or unavailable once they receive clearance from their doctors and check off the six return-to-play stages before that,” Maiden said. “Once we’ve integrated Smartabase and the national database, it will be the perfect scenario.”

About



Fusion Sport

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A global company founded in Brisbane, Australia in 2003 with international headquarters in Colorado and London, Fusion Sport is a global leader in using data to optimize human performance. The company’s performance and analytics platform, Smartabase, is the source of truth for national sporting federations, Olympic committees, many of the world’s highest-profile sporting teams, military research and operational wings, and performing arts organizations. To discuss how we can help you realize the full potential of your data and improve human performance, health, and wellness, contact us at sales@fusionsport.com.



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