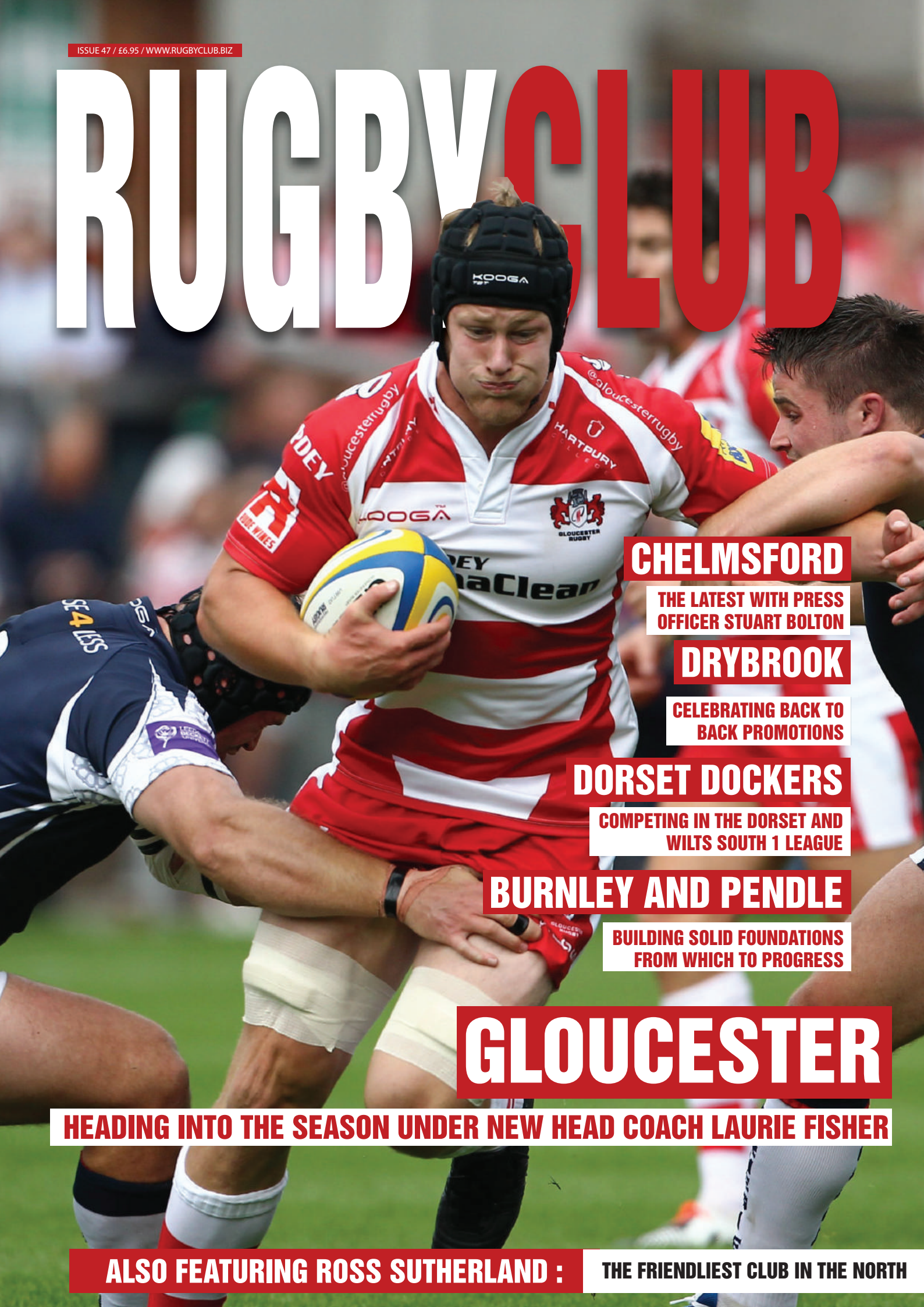


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GLOUCESTER

The off-season is generally a quiet time in the calendar for rugby fans across the country, however this has been far from the case for Gloucester RFC this time around with a number of exciting developments taking place. Rugby Club Magazine takes a look at some of the most significant.



Laurie Fisher

The former Director of Rugby at the Brumbies, Laurie Fisher joins the club with a strong reputation for developing young talent which would seem to be a perfect fit for the current Gloucester squad. His ability to get the best out of his forwards is sure to have the always vociferous Shed support at its hostile and vocal best.

Speaking to the club's official website, CEO Stephen Vaughan was clearly delighted with the appointment, saying, "Once we spoke with Laurie and exchanged ideas and presented our vision of where we want to take the club, it was immediately apparent that this was a great fit. We're absolutely thrilled that he'll be joining us at Kingsholm as part of the new coaching set up.

He deservedly enjoys a reputation as one of the shrewdest minds in world rugby, an individual who has continually sought to improve himself and his coaching methods. The references and feedback we have had regarding Laurie from high quality people that have worked with him have been very impressive indeed."

James Hook

As soon as Perpignan was relegated, James Hook became one of the most sought after players of the summer. It is a testament to the plans that Gloucester has in place that it has been them to secure his signature which is a major coup for the club.

Hook has won 75 caps for Wales, and is a quality kicker with plenty of skills with ball in hand and will be a valuable asset for the Cherry and Whites.



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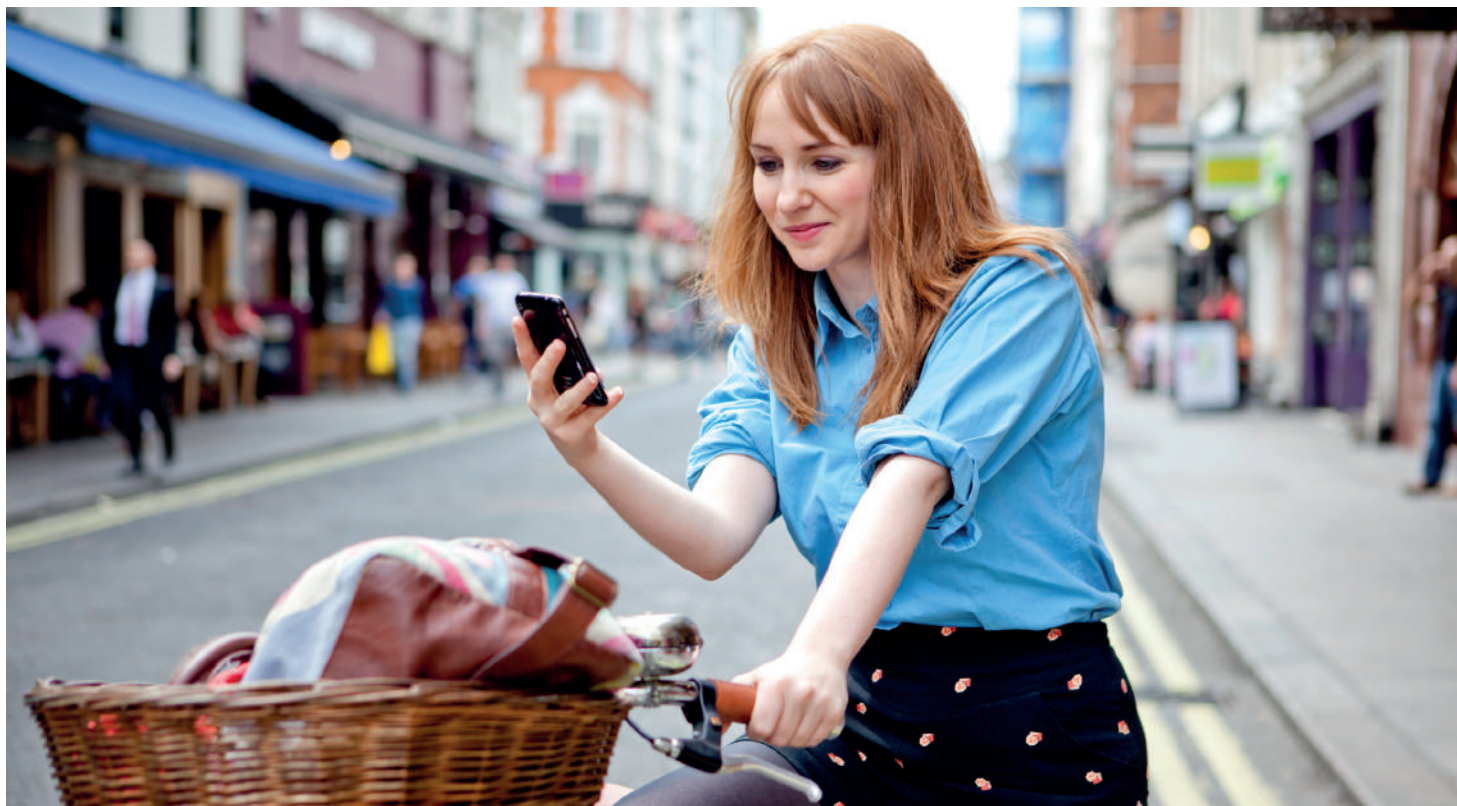


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At Greyfriars Quarter this means that homebuyers could secure the Highgrove one bedroom apartment with a deposit of just £5,250 with Help to Buy, and the family-sized Fairford home with a deposit of just £10,250.

For those keen to move up, or down, the housing ladder, but who don't have a buyer for their existing home, Linden Homes' Part Exchange scheme offers a hassle-free solution. Here, Linden becomes the guaranteed cash buyer, allowing movers to buy and sell in one easy move, with no estate agent's fees.

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Sue Scholfield added: "Now is the perfect time to buy a new home with confidence and Greyfriars Quarter is ideal for those looking to enjoy the benefits of living in a city centre locality, as well as the peace of mind that comes from buying new."



Computer generated image shows typical Linden homes.

Hook was clearly eager to get started as he explained to gloucesterrugby.co.uk, “The talent in the squad is terrific, the training facilities are top notch and it’s a wonderful area for myself and my family to settle in. And I had a taste of the Kingsholm atmosphere last season when I played here for Perpignan. That was phenomenal and I can’t wait to experience that again.

The prospect of playing for Gloucester in the Aviva Premiership is massively exciting. It’s a new challenge, but one I’m looking forward to hugely. I can’t wait to get started.”

New Leadership

The team will also be led by a new captain on the field with England centre Billy Twelvetrees set to take over the role. In his 3rd season at the club since joining from Leicester Tigers he has been handed the key role by Fisher and Director of Rugby David Humphreys. In a statement on the club’s website he said, “It is an honour to take the role of club captain of this great club...”

“The talent in the squad is terrific, the training facilities are top notch and it’s a wonderful area for myself and my family to settle in.”

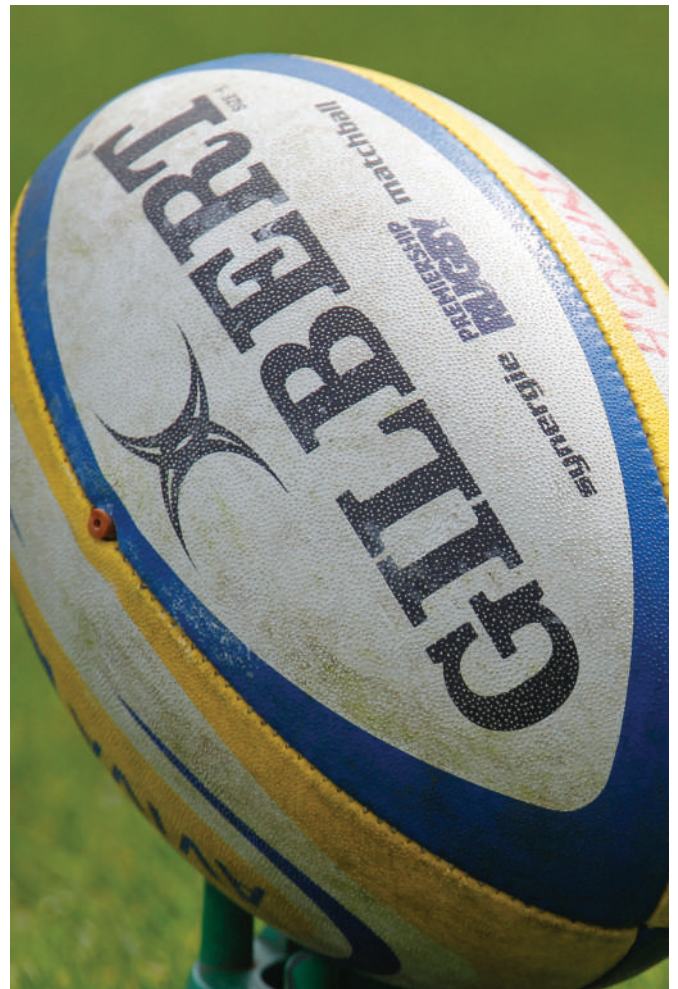


IMAGE COURTESY OF MARTIN BENNET/GLOUCESTER RUGBY

"I've had the honour to have represented two of England's greatest clubs in Leicester Tigers and the Cherry and Whites and to now have the privilege to captain Gloucester is something I dreamt of and I am thankful to the coaches for entrusting me with the role."

The club gave a glimpse of their huge potential recently when they wrapped up the Premiership Rugby 7s title, defeating Northampton, Cardiff Blues and the Dragons on route to the trophy with Steph Reynolds playing a starring role.

This triumph should provide Gloucester plenty of momentum ahead of what is sure to be an exciting campaign for everybody involved with the club. Rugby Club Magazine would like to take this opportunity to wish them the best of luck.



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“I’ve had the honour to have represented two of England’s greatest clubs in Leicester Tigers and the Cherry and Whites and to now have the privilege to captain Gloucester is something I dreamt of and I am thankful to the coaches for entrusting me with the role.”

CHELMSFORD

Chelmsford RFC is a great example of a well-run club that plays a vital role in their local community. Rugby Club Magazine caught up with the club's Press Officer Stuart Bolton to find out more about the good work that they have been doing.

He told us, "I've been involved with the club for 44 years as a player, supporter, volunteer and committee member, having been Assistant Treasurer, Treasurer and a member of the Fundraising Committee.

Some of my favourite memories include making my 1st XV debut in 1972, going on tour to Canada in 1980 and again in 1988, playing for the Chelmsford Undertakers, a feared veteran's side and taking part in the World Golden Oldies Festival in London in 1985.

Being part of the Fundraising Committee that oversaw the building of our new two storey clubhouse in 2006 and an extension in 2010, that raised the profile of our club considerably was also something that I was proud to be a part of.

Director of Coaching Eddie Gooby also took the time to speak to us, saying, "My first season was pretty special getting promoted from London Four North East to League Three (now Two) and winning the Essex

Intermediate Cup, however, I would say that my 4th season when we avoided relegation on the last day of the season is perhaps my fondest memory.

Initially we were told that Ipswich had won so the mood in the club was very subdued, however, after a phone call to check the result, I found out that Ipswich had lost, so we stayed up and Ipswich were relegated. The club partied hard and long that night and we have not looked back since. That was a big turning point for us.

At the moment the club is on a high and with a large group of young players, the energy is fantastic, everyone is positive and looking forward to the new season. Last season was frustrating for the coaching team as we lost our first 2 games and won the next 9 beating all the top teams. We then got stuck in the mud losing a few games before winning our last four matches. The best way I can describe the season was it was a roller coaster ride.

After finishing fourth for the 2nd year running we need to improve and set the tone higher. With a possible league restructure next season I would want to go up as one of the stronger teams from London North East 2 Level 7 to level 6.



President Andy Green told us how the club looks to maximise its commercial potential, whilst also giving us an insight into the challenges they face and their hopes for the future.

He said, "We are constantly seeking further sponsorships/grants and have a fundraising committee whose purpose is solely these goals. Indications for the forthcoming season show that income from these sources will be at an all time high. On the other hand our overheads have never been so high.

A major challenge for us is to maintain our large mini and youth sections and to ensure that as many of these youngsters move through to the senior section. In this way, four plus senior men's teams and a ladies team can be maintained. Should England be successful in next year's RWC, then we would expect an influx of schoolchildren coming to the club, as in 2003 we saw a 28% rise joining the club by way of Minis/Youth and in 2007, a 17% rise in the number of Minis/Youth players.

This would mean the need for more coaches and as with most clubs there is always a need for more volunteers. The age group of those who actively support the club, volunteering, and generally being active in the club is getting older. Younger volunteers are required.

Our ambitions are as follows:

- Promotion from London North East Division Two (level 7) to level 6
- To provide greater and better coaching for all age groups so that more teams gain success and more players improve their standards and gain representative honours
- To prepare for our centennial celebrations in 2019/20
- To enhance our place in the community."

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Cheltenham Saracens was founded in 1975 after changing its name from Cheltenham Colt Old Boys. The rugby club was part of Cheltenham Saracens Sports Club and when the sports club was moving to a new club house in 1975 were asked to change its name to Cheltenham Saracens Rugby Club. We stayed part of the sports club till 2006.

Saracens always had a strong rugby section running 4 senior teams up until the mid-90s. The club started to struggle between 1998/2003 as we were not attracting many players. With a lot of rugby clubs in the Cheltenham area we found ourselves down to one senior side.

Due to dropping player numbers the rugby section decided to break away and open its own club house. The breakaway came in 2007 and we moved in to our new club in 2009. Since then things have gone from strength to strength and we now run 3 senior sides and sometimes get a 4th out.

With our club house on the same ground as our pitches, away sides stay for longer after the games hence our finances are in a lot better shape. We have two seniors' pitches with our 1st team pitch barriered off all round. A balcony was finished in 2011 and gives a great view of rugby being played on our 1st team pitch.



“With a nice combination of youth and senior players the club is looking forward to a bright future.”

We had a grant from Sport England to renovate our changing rooms and kitchen. With the work now all completed the club looks ready to host many more happy years of rugby.

With the teams doing well playing numbers have never been so good. Our 1sts got promoted for the second time in four years last season. We are now a level 8 club for the first time in our history. We also won our Cheltenham Combination Senior Cup last season after a gap of 30 years. The 1sts this year will be lead again by Jim McMahon who is a former Lydney and Cheltenham captain. Our 2nd and 3rd teams have won their Reserve leagues and got promoted many times. Also they too have won their Combination cups as well.

Our coaches this year are Ollie Morgan and Leroy Hughes. Ollie who played fullback at Gloucester RFC takes the roles of backs coach, and Leroy, former Mosley and Cheltenham, coaches the forwards. With a nice combination of youth and senior players the club is looking forward to a bright future.



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BRAINTREE

Braintree RFC plays their home games on Beckers Green Road in Essex and their first team currently competes in the London North East Division. They are led by the team of President Edward Parsley and Chairman Barrie Winwood and are looking to progress under their guidance.

Last season it would be fair to say that their first team did not perhaps enjoy the season that they would have liked, putting together a record of having won 6 and lost 16 of their 22 matches. This saw them finish near the bottom of the table with 38 points on the board.

Their attentions will now have turned towards the new season and ensuring that they are able to hit the ground running. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality signings they should be in for a better campaign all around.

A standout feature of the Braintree set-up is the superb youth section that they have in place. This part of the club looks to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered. It will certainly be exciting to see how their youngsters are able to develop over the coming years.

In order to help their players to make the sometimes difficult transition into the senior game Braintree also run additional sides. This allows them to give players experience of adult level rugby even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.

Another benefit of having more than one team is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or suspension they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

Braintree is clearly a club that plays a vital role in the local community and this is thanks to their hard working Committee. Hopefully they will be able to continue in the same manner for many years to come and Rugby Club Magazine wishes them the best of luck.



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DRYBROOK



Drybrook RFC has enjoyed fantastic success in the last couple of seasons, winning back to back promotions. Rugby Club Magazine caught up with their Chairman Paul Mason to find out what has been behind their success.

“The club has worked hard to promote its image of fun, fitness and friendship and will do everything it can to maintain this reputation.”

Youth

He told us, “The club places a lot of importance on youth rugby and were one of the pioneers in establishing a youth section when mini and junior rugby was introduced by the RFU back in the 1970’s. Today the club’s junior section is as strong as ever with boy’s teams ranging from U7’s to U17’s and girl’s teams at U13, U15 and U18 level.”

The club tries to run a Colts XV whenever possible and in 2014/15 have a team in the Gloucestershire U18 leagues. The club also have the older age group boys (under 16 and under 17) training on the same night as the seniors. As soon as boys become eligible to play senior rugby they are encouraged to take part in the senior training sessions and are introduced into the appropriate senior team according to ability.”



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Progression

“We regularly provide players to the county age group teams and have a good working relationship with Hartpury College. Some of their younger students get game time and invaluable experience with us and in return one or two have been re-signed by the college to play National League rugby.

In recent years, Andy Chesters, Rik Cottrell and Rorie Day have made the step up to National League rugby. The club has yet to have a player gain full international honours with the England men’s XV but have had Paul Beech (Under 21) and Pete Meek (Under 16 schools) selected in the last 20 years.

One area where the club can boast 2 full internationals is in the current England Women’s XV with both Natasha Hunt and Ceri Large former members of the club’s junior sections.”

Community

“We are very much a community club and have become the social focal point for the village and surrounding area. The club is the headquarters of a number of local organisations and can even boast a ladies Morris dancing team, the local British Legion and a Pigeon Racing club amongst its associate members.

In 2012, the club was awarded for its excellent community approach by staging the launch of the new England rugby kit in conjunction with sponsors Canterbury. England Captain Chris Robshaw was one among a whole host of celebrities and media organisations that descended on Drybrook for the day.”

Facilities

“Most visiting teams are very complimentary about Drybrook’s facilities. We own all of our own facilities and have 3 pitches, one of which is floodlit. We recently installed 2 covered spectator areas and in readiness for next season have completely re-vamped the changing quarters and added a gym and fitness suite.”



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Challenges/Ambitions

“The club is situated in a hot bed of rugby, the Forest of Dean, so it is always a challenge trying to attract players from the locality amid stiff local competition. The challenge from other sports and pastimes also remain high.

The club’s aim is to be one of the highest placed teams in the locality and to continue to improve its facilities and experience for all members whether they be players, supporters or associate members. The club has worked hard to promote its image of fun, fitness and friendship and will do everything it can to maintain this reputation.”



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Vale Butchers have been a supporter of Drybrook Rugby club for over thirty years. A number of our staff have played for the club at all levels. Kevin Brown, Rob Norbury, Sam Pepper, Luke Roberts, and my two sons Robin and Andrew. One season all the staff had cup medals. Once, the coach had to collect Rob and Kev from the shop as they were playing in Cornwall and had to work first. The rugby club have always made their facilities available, whether for the church or youth clubs. When you go into the club you see people from eight to eighty and they are all welcomed warmly. My son Andrew who played from colts to firsts said it’s the best club he has played for on and off the pitch. It’s great to see the club doing so well. They are a great facility for the whole village.

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WOODRUSH

First established in 1966, Woodrush RFC is based on Icknield Street in the West Midlands and they competed in the Midlands 4 West League last season. They are led by the team of Chairman Andy Gibbs and President Ken Hussey and have made a considerable amount of progress under their guidance.

Their first team enjoyed a fantastic campaign last time around, putting together a record of having won 16 and lost just 2 of their 18 matches. This saw them finish top of the table with 77 points to claim the league title which was a fantastic achievement for the club.

A particular highlight of the team's play was the attacking brand of rugby that they managed to produce on a consistent basis. This was evidenced by the fact that they racked up 591 points which meant that they were the top scoring side in the league.

Playing with such an open style certainly meant that any supporters attending their matches were well entertained and should encourage more of the

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I have personal ties to the club for playing reasons but it is a great privilege to be a part of what I believe is a very unique and tight knit group of people. Our company is family owned and run and Woodrush is like a family of its own and I think this is the secret to both our success."

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community to get behind the club in the future. It will also help them to attract and retain high quality players. Woodrush certainly did not ignore their defensive duties however and have developed a reputation for being a tough tackling no nonsense outfit. They had the best defence in the league as well which gave their attacking players the perfect platform from which to go out and produce the goods.

Being so hard to breach gives Woodrush the option of grinding out results even when they are not at their best and this was important for their Championship run. It is also vital for the times when the British weather makes it difficult to produce free flowing, running rugby.

The team will now have turned their attentions towards preparing for the 2014/15 campaign as they will want to put together another good season. As long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they will be in with a great chance of doing just that.

They are not a club to focus solely upon their senior section however and they also have a number of youth teams in place. These sides look to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

Becketts Farm has been a proud sponsor of Woodrush RFC since 2008 and the management extend their warmest congratulations to the entire club for their recent league win and promotion.

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It is important for any side to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered. It will certainly be exciting to see how their juniors are able to develop over the coming years.

To help their youngsters to make the sometimes difficult transition into senior level rugby they also have an additional side in place. This allows them to give players experience of the adult game even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.

Another benefit of having more than one time is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or work commitments they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

Woodrush's superb campaign last time around was a just reward for all of the hard work that has been put into the club. Rugby Club Magazine would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them on their recent success and also wish them the best of luck for the future.



“First established in 1966, Woodrush RFC is based on Icknield Street in the West Midlands and they competed in the Midlands 4 West League last season. They are led by the team of Chairman Andy Gibbs and President Ken Hussey and have made a considerable amount of progress under their guidance.”

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ABERDEENSHIRE

“Aberdeenshire is a club that is committed to playing a vital role in the local community”

Based at the Woodside Sports Complex on Station Road, Aberdeenshire RFC competed in the RS Caledonia 1 League. They are led by the team of President Martin Doig and Secretary Andy Sutherland and the team has made a considerable amount of progress under their guidance.

Indeed, they enjoyed a terrific season last time around as they put together a record of having won 15 and lost just 3 of their 18 league matches. This saw them finish top of the table with 72 points on the board which was a superb achievement for the club.

This is not a club that will stand still however and their attentions will now have turned towards making sure that they are well prepared for the new campaign. As long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they should be in for another successful season.

A particular highlight of the team’s performances last time around was the attacking brand of rugby that they managed to produce. This certainly ensured that any supporters attending their matches were well entertained and should encourage more of the community to get behind them in the future.

Their defensive duties were certainly not neglected however as they built a reputation for being a tough

tackling, fully committed defensive unit. They had the best defence in the league and this gave them the platform that they needed in order to go out and play with freedom when they had the ball.

Aberdeenshire is a club that is committed to playing a vital role in the local community and it is with this in mind that they have more than one senior team running. This allows them to give far more people an opportunity to play the game.

Another benefit of having more than one side is that it allows the 1st XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or suspension then they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

There is much to admire about the Aberdeenshire set-up and they thoroughly deserve the success that they have been achieving in recent times. Hopefully they will be able to keep up the good work for many years to come and everyone at Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck for the new season.



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ABERDEEN GRAMMAR

Aberdeen Grammar RFC is based on 86 Queens Road in Aberdeen and their first team will be competing in the BT National Division 1 this season. They are led by the team of President Graham Barron and Chairman Gordon Thomson and the team is looking to progress under their guidance.

It would be fair to say that their first team did not perhaps enjoy the campaign that they would have like last time around as they put together a record of having won 3 and lost 15 of their 18 matches. This saw them finish bottom of the league with 23 points.

The team will be keen to bounce straight back this time around and put last season's campaign behind them. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they will have a good chance of doing so.

Aberdeen Grammar does not focus solely upon senior rugby and this is reflected by the fact that they also have youth sides running. These team's look to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered. Given their first team's performances last time around, now would seem like an ideal opportunity to blood some young talent.

To help their juniors to make the sometimes difficult transition into senior level rugby the team also has run more than one side. This allows them to give players



experience of the adult game even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.

Another benefit of having more than one team is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or suspension they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

To complement the playing side of the club they also have a superb set of off the field. Their centre has two bars, TV facilities (including Sky Sports), a gymnasium, a snooker room and a large garden with a barbeque area.

They make membership to their club centre available to all and look to provide anyone visiting with a warm welcome. Having such high quality facilities gives them the potential to earn valuable additional revenue which can be particularly important during the off-season when they are unable to rely upon matchday income.

Aberdeen Grammar is clearly a club which is well-run both on and off the field. If they are able to continue their good work they are sure to be able to look forwards to a bright and successful future and Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck.



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ABERDEEN WANDERERS



Aberdeen Wanderers RFC is now in its 86th year and still maintains a tradition that its doors are open to anyone who wants to play rugby, no matter their age or ability. The Youth Section was formalised in 1991, and has constantly grown over the years to such a level where we now field teams at all age levels, including Micro, Midi, U15 and U18. Consequently, a number of Aberdeen Wanderers Youth Players have been selected for the North & Caledonia District Representative Squads.

The most notable success of the youth section has been Jason White, who began playing his rugby with the U13 team, and went on to earn honours with the Scottish Schools team, the Scotland U19 and 21 sides and finally Captaining the National team. We were pleased to acknowledge, not only his skill but his continued interest in the club when we renamed our pavilion in his honour in 2006.

As part of our development programme we felt that there was a great need for a Youth Development Officer within the area, and helped set up the Aberdeen Youth Rugby Association in conjunction with other city clubs and the advised by the Council. This now supports street rugby and three Development officers in the area.

The senior section now field two teams within the Caledonia North League structure. This is relatively recent development and is a reflection of the dedication of our youth coaches who have developed

players and encouraged them to remain with the Club. It is also a genuine reflection of the friendly ethos encouraged at the Club so our senior teams are composed of ex youth squad players, their university friends, children of ex senior players and their relatives along with many a member of the transient oil industry who finds a welcome to the Club when they are in the area.

At the U18 level we have an excellent team who recently dominated their Northern League with a clear record. There has been a gradual development of their skills over a number of years, but we have also benefited from some new players who have been encouraged to join having heard of us through their schools and experienced the level of commitment from players, coaching staff and the backroom support.

With some sixty players between S1 and S3 we are hoping to build on the U18 experience and continue to develop these teams. We have actively encouraged development of rugby in local schools where our SRU trained coaches offer both taster and development courses in conjunction with the Aberdeen Youth Rugby Associations Development Officer. This has led to an increase in our numbers but has also meant that teams have now developed in at least two schools where rugby was never played before, and also meant that both girls and boys have been able to try something new.

“Aberdeen Wanderers RFC is now in its 86th year and still maintains a tradition that its doors are open to anyone who wants to play rugby, no matter their age or ability.”

In the primary age range (minis and micros) we can now field teams at every age group and are actively participating in the many youth festivals organised throughout the North East.

One of our largest challenges has been to develop our facilities, however the space we have is extremely limited, and as you can imagine with long dark winters here in Northern Scotland the single pitch has a slow grass recovery rate and takes a phenomenal amount of punishment. It was identified that the pitch drainage had also suffered and so we took the decision to fully replace it. A lot of fundraising later and with support from SportScotland we were due to start the work, however a pitch invasion by thirty eight caravans and assorted lorries and vans meant that we had to delay while a court order was sought to have them removed.

However almost a year late we now see the beginnings of a strong grass growth on the work areas and hope to play our first home game in August. While the pitch was under repair we also took steps to lay foundations for floodlights and the necessary cable – but we now are actively seeking sponsors to help us erect the towers.

This enforced withdrawal from Groats Road has added additional costs and stress to all involved, and we must pass our thanks to other local Clubs who have rallied to help us when they could by making pitches available, but we hope that the 2014/15 season will lead to bigger (and if we get the funding for the floodlights) better things.



READING

Reading RFC play their home games at Holme Park on Sonning Lane in Berkshire and their first team currently competes in the South West 1 East Division. They are led by the team of President Ian Cameron-Webb and Chairman Andy Clark and are looking to progress under their guidance.

The club's first team put together a superb campaign last time around, compiling a record of having won 11, drawn 1 and lost 14 of their matches. This saw them finish in a safe mid table position with 63 points on the board.

This should provide the club with a good platform upon which to build as they look ahead towards their 2014/15 effort. As long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they will be in with a good chance of going on to claim a higher league finish.

One reason for the team to be optimistic about next season is the attacking brand of rugby that they managed to produce last year. This was reflected by

“The club’s first team put together a superb campaign last time around, compiling a record of having won 11, drawn 1 and lost 14 of their matches.”

the fact that they scored a considerably larger number of points than the teams around them, totalling 650 in the league.

This certainly meant that any supporters attending their matches were well entertained and should encourage more of the community to get behind the club in the future. Bringing more people in to the club will have the added bonus of providing them with a valuable source of extra income.



Reading is not a club that focuses solely upon their senior section however and they also have a number of youth teams in place. These sides look to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered. Coaching staff overseeing their juniors are confident that they have a number of prospects with the potential to have a successful future in the game.

In order to help their youngsters to successfully make the transition into the senior game the club also has a

number of additional sides. This allows them to give players experience of adult level rugby even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action.

Another benefit of having so many sides is that it allows the first team to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or work commitments they will have the option of calling up replacements with a limited amount of disruption.

Reading is clearly a club that is thriving at a number of different levels and hopefully they will be able to continue the good work for many years to come. Everyone at Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck.



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MALTON & NORTON

Malton and Norton RUFC is a great example of a club that plays a vital role in their local community, providing people with an opportunity to get involved in the game. Rugby Club Magazine caught up with their Secretary Bill Laidler to find out more about the good work that they have been doing lately.

“Youth Rugby is very important to the club. Without our Junior Section we would find it very difficult to maintain our numbers.”

Involvement

He told us, “I have been involved at Malton & Norton RUFC since 1980 as a player, coach, and now Hon. Secretary. I also act as 1st XV manager. I was attracted to M&N by the friendly nature of the club and the ambitions they had here at that time.”

The Role

“The most rewarding aspect of my current role is seeing projects succeed. The most recent being the completion of an extension to the changing facilities

of the club. On the playing side it is always nice to see products of the club youth system move to higher levels.

Recently Tom Francis signed professional forms with Exeter Chiefs having moved from M&N two years ago to Doncaster and then London Scottish. In addition Will Witty is currently with Newcastle Falcons having signed with them last season. In addition Ali Heard has played for the England Counties U20s and his sister Tatyana and Rachel Lund are in the England Ladies Squad. All have moved on but still have close links with M&N.”

Youth

“Youth Rugby is very important to the club. Without our Junior Section we would find it very difficult to maintain our numbers. We are currently working on plans to ensure that we keep many of our players beyond the danger age of 16 when some tend to drift away. The Director of Rugby, Pat McCarthy and Head Coach, Chri Creber work very closely with the older age group sides to ensure a good supply of players to the senior sides.”



Positive

“Despite suffering relegation last season the mood within the club is very good. Numbers at pre-season training have been excellent and a number of new players have come along. M&N RUFC is very much a community club and our most pressing ambition is to regain our place at Level 6.”

Clearly there are a lot of things being done right at Malton and Norton and this should enable the club to look forwards to a bright and successful future. Everyone at Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck.





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MERTON

Based at the Morden Recreation Ground on Faversham Road in Surrey Merton RFC enjoyed a successful campaign last time around. Rugby Club Magazine caught up with their Chairman Jack Canniff to find out how preparations are going for the new season.

Involvement.

He told us, "I have been involved with the club since I was 15 years of age, when I was brought down by a school friend. At the time, I was playing rugby for my school on Saturday mornings, for Merton Colts in the afternoon, and football on Sundays. After a couple of years continuing with both sports, it was the social side of Merton rugby that converted me from a round ball player, even if I did keep up the game on a non-regular basis."

Memories

"Like most rugby clubs, I would say that many great memories are from time spent on tours, as well as the buzz in the clubhouse after all the teams have done well on a Saturday. Clearly, with the former, not too much can be said about it, but there have certainly been many great Saturday nights in the clubhouse, and that usually involves alcohol, games and singing. The seasons where we have achieved promotion are particularly pleasing memories, as it means that all the hard work over the season from both players and coaches has been worthwhile, and it gives the club the chance to celebrate the achievement.

I would also say that Merton is a great place to make lifelong friends, an aspect that is sometimes pointed out to our younger players. We had one of our boys celebrate his 19th birthday at the club last season, and what was particularly pleasing was to see him go off in a very large group, made up predominantly of lads that he had met through the club."

"It is our aim to offer rugby to as many people as possible, and continue to have three successful XV's, as well as maintaining the social side."

Atmosphere

"The mood here is very good at the moment, as all three XV's were relatively successful last season, the 1st XV gaining promotion by finishing runners up, the 2nd XV topping their League, and the 3rd XV (the Hornets) ending up in third spot, and thoroughly enjoying their campaign, despite just missing out on promotion. Of course, this is no guarantee for the new season, but at least it means that spirits will be high in pre-season which, hopefully, can be carried into the matches at all levels."

Youth

"Youth rugby is important to Merton, even if we do not run mini and junior rugby sections, as there are other local clubs with established set ups. We have run a junior section in the past, but nowadays we try



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to concentrate on trying to re-introduce players to the game that have not played since school or University, as well as encouraging new players to give it a go and enjoy both the playing and social aspect of the club. We are fortunate to have a number of sons of former players that have come through the ranks, and they usually start at the youth level before progressing to a higher standard.”

Community

“Merton is a genuine community club, based in the middle of one of the largest council estates in the country, and attracts many players from the local area, along with others that are based in the Northern underground line corridor. We have very close links with the local Council, notwithstanding the fact that we play in one of their leisure facilities, and are seen as an outlet for the local youths.

We are also very generously sponsored by a local business, Ganley’s Irish Bar, of Morden, and active links have been forged between their management and the club to our mutual benefit.”

Facilities

“Our facility can be described as basic, homely and a proper rugby club. We are solely a rugby club and do not cater for other sports, meaning that it has a true rugby club atmosphere, and one that is the envy of others that either share facilities or play out of pubs. As the service is owned by the local authority, we are very

limited as to any plans to expand or improve facilities, although we do provide the upkeep for the clubhouse and liaise with the Council on the provision.”

Challenges

“The biggest challenges for us are to keep the club flourishing and to continue to attract and retain enough players at all levels to improve our squad resources and put out as many teams as possible on a Saturday. We are by no means complacent, and realise that it will take a lot of hard work to retain our playing numbers.

As we play at a Council owned ground, we are also aware of the financial constraints in local government and that the availability of pitches may become an issue, as other local clubs with less available playing fields have begun to make use of the facilities at Morden Recreation Ground.”

Ambitions

“It is our aim to offer rugby to as many people as possible, and continue to have three successful XVs, as well as maintaining the social side. At the moment, the goal for our 1st XV is to rise back up to the top tier of the Surrey Leagues, where we have not been for a few years now. To move any higher would need considerable financial backing, and we are determined to retain our junior amateur status, whilst still achieving success for Merton both on and off the field.”



CHEDDAR VALLEY

Cheddar Valley is based on Sharpham Road in Somerset and their first team competed in the Tribute Somerset 2 South West Division last season. They are led by Chairman Patrick Cullen who is supported by Secretary Gareth Chew and the club has made a considerable amount of progress under their guidance.

They enjoyed a terrific league campaign last time around as they ran away from the other teams in their Division to finish top of the table. This was a superb achievement for the side and one which they have every right to be proud of.

Their attentions will now have turned towards ensuring that they are fully prepared for the 2014/15 campaign. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions then they should be in with a great chance of having another successful season.

A particular highlight of the team's performances during their 2013/14 effort was the attacking brand of rugby that they managed to produce. This was reflected by the fact that they finished top scorers in their league by a considerable margin and certainly ensured that any supporters attending their matches were well entertained.

This should encourage more of the local community to get behind the club and this in turn can help to provide the club with a valuable source of additional revenue.



Playing with such style will also help players to produce their best rugby and enjoy being a part of the set-up. Cheddar Valley is not a club that focuses solely upon senior level rugby however and they also have a number of youth sides in place. These team's look to provide youngsters from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that Cheddar Valley appears to have covered. It will certainly be exciting to watch to see how their juniors are able to develop in the coming years. Cheddar Valley's superb season was a just reward for all the effort that has been put into making the club a success in recent years. Hopefully they will be able to keep up the good work that they have been doing for many years to come.



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ROSS SUTHERLAND

Ross Sutherland Rugby Club holds a unique position in club sports. Based in the former naval port of Invergordon, and as the county club for both Ross-shire and Sutherland (hence the name!), it has the largest catchment of any sports club in the UK; coming in at over 13,000km² (5,000 sq.miles). To put this into context, their catchment is the same size as Montenegro.

Understandably, running a club in an area this size can present its difficulties but that doesn't stop Ross Sutherland from competing.

With over 180 kids the club has thriving mini and junior sections, including an ever-expanding Micros section for children in the U7's. The U16s are the regular trophy winners at the club having two Bowl trophies, a Cup Final appearance and a league title in the last three seasons.

At a senior level the club compete in a regional league, Caledonia League 2, stretching from Shetland to Stornoway to Aberdeen. Travel can quite literally be a nightmare.

Last season the team got stuck in Stornoway when the ferry broke down. A hastily arranged hotel and a long trip down the Western Isles and over the sea to Skye the following day before hiring minibuses to get them back to Invergordon seems normal enough except the entire team were dressed as their favourite animals. Just another rugby away day!

The similarity with the Balkan state doesn't end with geography though. Where former Hartlepool player David Lowe has helped rugby to become the fastest growing sport in Montenegro, Club President Andy Mohun and his team have taken the initiative to grow the game at home.

With over 12,500 volunteer hours and almost 3,000 coaching hours delivered in the last year the club were recognised for their efforts to increase sporting opportunities for young people by Ross and Cromarty Sports Council who presented them with their Club of the Year award.



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As Andy explains, this success has come from taking a different approach to engaging with the community.

“We’ve long recognised that geography has been a major barrier to people, and kids in particular, getting access to rugby, but still we have people making return trips of over 100 miles just to train and play. In the past we set up hubs at Plockton and Golspie High Schools to help give us a foothold in the more rural areas.”

“As a community-focussed club we decided that we needed to do more to support access to rugby and promote the benefits of our club. Working closely with Active Schools Co-ordinators throughout the area we built up a better mutual understanding of sports provision and developed a framework that allowed us to both support their work and develop our club.”

The Community and Rugby Development Team (CARD), comprises of two Coaches plus support staff. It is their role to go out into the Community to develop and support Rugby. Last season, we were involved in promoting the game in over 50 Primary and 7 Secondary schools, plus running Camps and out of school events. We believe that this is crucial to get into the smallest and most remote schools! You never know; there’s a future international player somewhere out there – they just need a chance to prove themselves.

So where next for the club?

“Well first on the horizon,” says Andy, “is the small matter of Positive Coaching Scotland accreditation. We have been working towards this over the course of the last year and are nearing the final stages.”

“This has been a very good experience and it has enabled us to tie in Community and Rugby Development to get the buy-in of players and parents,



and our wider rugby family to what we are trying to achieve.”

Having spent a lot of time, effort and money on the club facilities over the past 3 years, we now have a first class pitch, the best in the North of Scotland, as well as a warm and friendly Club house in which to entertain our visitors. We have recently pushed to become a central hub for many events in the Rugby calendar; hosting School cup finals, regional Girls camps as well as being a venue for many of the Island teams wishing to reduce their travel mileage. However, all of this work costs in terms of time and money. We are hoping that our successful Community and Rugby Development team will attract not only more players but parents and helpers as well.

As with any Sports club nowadays, we couldn’t manage without the support of small and large businesses in the area. It is through their generosity that we are able to continue with the expansion of the Club and Rugby in the North of Scotland. A big thanks goes to MF Marine for supporting the 1st XV team and Port of Cromarty Firth for their backing in youth and Rugby Development.

We’re always up for a challenge; youth games, senior matches – we’ll play. So if you fancy a cuppa or a “dram”, need somewhere to rest your weary legs whilst on holiday pop in and see us. “Ross Sutherland Rugby Club – The friendliest Club in the North”



DORSET DOCKERS



Dorset Dockers RFC play their home games at Potterne Park in Verwood and is a relatively new set-up having first been established in 2013. They are led by the team of Chairman Martin O'Kelly and President James Cook and the club has made a considerable amount of progress under their

The team is due to compete in the Dorset and Wilts 1 South League having secured promotion following a terrific campaign last time around. Of their 20 league matches they managed to win all 20 fixtures which unsurprisingly saw them run away with the title. A particular highlight of the team's play was the attacking brand of rugby that they managed to produce as they racked up an incredible 1110 points in the league. This certainly ensured that anyone attending their matches was well entertained and should encourage more of the local community to get behind the team in the future.

Playing such an exciting style will also help the club to attract and retain high quality players as they look to move forwards. Dorset Dockers approach to the game means that they are enjoying a growing reputation for playing in the right manner.

Dorset Dockers will be keen to continue moving forwards and use their form last season as a

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“Dorset Dockers will be keen to continue moving forwards and use their form last season as a springboard towards future successes.”

springboard towards future successes. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they are likely to be challenging for honours once again.

They are not a club looking to focus solely upon their senior section however as they have also set up a new colts side. This team will look to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and adding a colts side should help them in this respect. It will certainly be exciting to see how their youngsters are able to develop over the coming years. Dorset Dockers are able to provide their colts with a clear pathway into senior rugby as they also have a 2nd team in place. This allows youngsters to gain experience of the adult game even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.



Another benefit of having more than one senior team is that it allows the first team to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or work commitments they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

There is much to admire about the Dorset Dockers set-up and they have started with a bang as a new club. There does not seem to be any reason as to why they will not be able to continue in the same manner in the years to come.

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BANFF

Banff Rugby Club plays a vital role in their local community and has some exciting plans in place for the future. Rugby Club Magazine caught up with Club Representative Calum Christie to find out more.

Involvement

He told us, "I first joined Banff as a player in 2010 after returning north from Aberystwyth. Having originally played Rugby Union I switched codes whilst in Wales and played rugby league throughout University.

I'm originally from the area so knew about the club and inevitably Banff rekindled my love for rugby union and the rest, as they say, is history. My involvement has grown since then and I'm now a Vice Captain as well as being responsible for the club's publicity."

Atmosphere

"The mood at the club is great just now! We're going through a significant development phase as we look to improve the club for the future and there is a real buzz to take the club forward. On the field, we've implemented a solid coaching set up and have a young enthusiastic squad who are keen to put last seasons run of poor results behind them. The future is definitely bright!"

Youth

"Youth rugby is extremely important to the club as ultimately our young players are the future of the club. This is obvious when you look at the number of players in the seniors who have come through the age grades!

As well as a successful minis and micros section our Club Development Officer John Smith Warren is doing a fantastic job providing rugby training within local

schools; laying the foundations for us to re-establish our juniors section and achieve our aim of providing rugby for all ages."

Community

"Banff Rugby Club is 100% a community club. Our aim is to make rugby inclusive for everyone. We employ a Club Development Officer who is doing a fantastic job within our local schools and the club plays host to a number of interschool tag rugby competitions which are run in partnership with the local councils Active Schools Programme.

The club also runs Easter and Summer rugby camps which the Seniors get involved in. We've got a good relationship with other local sports clubs and community groups who make use of our facilities. We're not complacent though and we're striving hard to make the club the heart of the local community."

Facilities

"We're based in the grounds of the picturesque Duff House and have got a great set up with two pitches (one of which is flood lit) which are owned and maintained by the local council. I'm probably biased but I think we have one of the best pitches in the league!

The clubhouse is brilliantly placed and as well as offering fantastic facilities for visiting teams it offers spectators the chance to watch the game under cover, an essential attribute for the North East's unpredictable weather!



Visiting teams are welcomed into the clubhouse post match and often comment on how warm and friendly the atmosphere is. We have a number of dedicated volunteers who run the bar and the guys muck in with food so it's a really positive atmosphere."

Challenges

"I'd say the biggest challenge for us is the recruitment of players. In a football dominated area it can be difficult to make playing rugby an attractive prospect. We are having success though and are starting to see a good few players joining the club.

Another challenge, which I'm sure is one faced by many amateur clubs across the country is maintaining a sound financial grounding. In the current climate it's not cheap to run a rugby club but we have some fantastic sponsors and are looking at improving our commercial potential to raise further funds."

Ambitions

"The club has big aspirations for the next five years. We're implementing a development plan which will see us develop the club on and off the field and build on the clubs solid foundations.

On the field, we want to give as many people the opportunity to play rugby as possible. We will

strengthen our minis/micros and look to rebuild our juniors section. We're also in the initial stages of setting up a ladies team and within 5 years we would like to see them be established and playing within the BT Womens National Leagues. For our 1st XV our aims are simply to recruit and retain a larger player base, develop the squad and strive for promotion.

Off the field, we want to build on our "club" mentality by strengthening our ties within the local community and making the club the heart of the local community. We'll do this by using our work with local sports and community clubs to communicate the clubs ethos. We are also developing a varied social calendar to help us to attract more members.

Banff RFC is looking forward to the new season and would like to take the opportunity to thank all those involved with the club for their efforts and to our sponsors for their ongoing support."



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CHESTERFIELD PANTHERS

Based on Dunston Road in Derbyshire, Chesterfield Panthers RUFC currently competes in the Midlands 4 East (North). They are led by the team of President Michelle Lord and Chairman Chris Johnson and they have made a considerable amount of progress under their guidance.

Their first team enjoyed a superb campaign last time around as they compiled a league record of having won 20, drawn 1 and lost 1 of their 22 matches. This saw them win the league by some distance which was a superb achievement for the club as they racked up 98 points.

A particular highlight of the team's play was the attacking brand of rugby that they managed to produce on a consistent basis. This was reflected by the fact that they were top scorers in the league, racking up 766 points.

This certainly meant that anyone attending their matches were well entertained and should encourage more of the local community to get behind them in the future. This has the potential to provide the club with a valuable source of additional revenue particularly during the off-season when they are unable to rely upon matchday income.

The team will be keen to use last season's successes as a platform to push on and have another great campaign. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they will have great chance of claiming more silverware.

Chesterfield Panthers are not a club to focus solely upon their senior section however and they also have a thriving youth set-up. This part of the club looks to provide young players from the local area with an



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Chesterfield Rugby Club heats up with NIBE

Chesterfield-based renewable heating pioneer NIBE is a proud sponsor of local rugby club Chesterfield Panthers RUFC – making the ideal green partnership for the local area.

The sponsorship has seen NIBE provide branded kits to the 400-strong club, which is run by volunteers. The NIBE kits are worn not only by the First XV, but also across all 16 of the club's teams, which include a ladies' team and 13 youth teams.

Phil Hurley, managing director at NIBE, explains: "We're very proud to be sponsoring Chesterfield Panthers. It's incredibly important for us to support our local community here in Chesterfield and we couldn't think of a better way. We are huge fans of the club and are very happy to have our name on the players' kits.

Phil Hurley continues: "With energy costs skyrocketing, it has never made better sense for rugby clubhouses to switch to renewable heating systems. Not only do they provide energy security and help protect against fuel price hikes, thanks to the government's Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) they can also generate an annual income for 20 years."

The non-domestic RHI is a government-backed scheme that aims to increase uptake of renewable heating systems amongst businesses and other non-residential buildings. Under the scheme, rugby clubs that fit a qualifying technology could be rewarded for the renewable heat they generate over a 20-year period. A tariff structure sets out how much each system can earn over the length of the scheme, with up-to-date tariff information available at Ofgem.gov.uk.

For more information about the Renewable Heat Incentive or NIBE's range of eligible technologies please visit www.nibe.co.uk or call 0845 095 1200.

"With kitchens and changing rooms creating a high hot water demand, rugby clubhouses are often the ideal application for renewable heating systems. We hope to be able to continue our support for the Panthers by helping to keep players and supporters warm with the installation of one of our units at the clubhouse in the near future."

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opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered. It will certainly be exciting to see how their youngsters are able to develop over the coming years.

In order to help their youngsters to make the step up to senior level rugby they also run more than one team. This allows them to give young players an opportunity to experience the adult game even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.

Another benefit of having more than one side is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or suspension they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

Chesterfield Panthers superb season is thanks to the fantastic work that has been put into making them a success. Hopefully they will be able to continue in the same manner for many years to come and everyone at Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck.



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SARACENS

Saracens are one of the biggest club's in the country and they do some fantastic work both on and off the field. They made it to Premiership Rugby Final last year before narrowly missing out on the silverware to Northampton Saints by a scoreline of 20-24.

This should not take away from what was a very positive campaign however in which they played some truly breath-taking rugby. This was reflected by the fact that they topped the league table in the regular season, winning 19 and losing just 3 of their 22 matches.

The club will now be keen to bounce back from the disappointment of narrowly missing out on the trophy in 2014/15. They are sure to be amongst the key contenders once again and if they can learn from last years' experience they will be in with a great chance of going one better.

During last season's campaign the club also celebrating the 1st anniversary of their revolutionary synthetic pitch when they took on Newcastle Falcons on January 26th.

The Stadium Director at Allianz Park, Gordon Banks, explained why they stand by their choice of introducing their pitch, saying, "The most obvious endorsement of our judgement was the team finishing top of the league last year. Clearly that isn't entirely down to the turf by any means, but it completely negates any argument that the surface would adversely affect play.

From a financial standpoint, other professional clubs will spend up to £150,000 per season on pitch maintenance, so within four years we would have saved significantly on the investment. Whilst I am

pleased, more importantly the team are very happy with the turf and my board is delighted with what it has done for the club's P&L."

The financial benefits of synthetic surfaces are numerous. As the pitches can be used constantly, the revenue capacity is substantial with some pitches capable of bringing in over £200,000 per year in new income, something natural turf cannot supply.

Artificial turf gives clubs the flexibility to divide up a playing area for greater participating numbers, without fear of damaging the pitch. Natural surfaces cannot sustain this degree of use, especially in poor weather, so clubs can enhance links with youngsters and the local community by providing a facility for them. When coupled with savings on watering, pesticides and reduced maintenance, synthetic turf becomes a valuable asset.

Away from the field of play the Saracens Sport Foundation does a fantastic amount of work in the local community. They state that their mission is to, "inspire communities and change lives through the power of sport."

They look to provide opportunities for children, young people and older adults to lead active, healthy lifestyles with support from the Saracens brand, professional players and high quality staff. They are based around the four core pillars of sports development, health and wellbeing, inclusion and education and training and now engage with over 70,000 participants annually.

Saracens are clearly a terrific club on and off the field of play and the country as a whole can be grateful to have them as a leading light in our professional game.



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MAESTEG

CELTIC

Maesteg Celtic RFC is based at Bridgend Road in Mid Glamorgan and their first team competed in Division 4 South-West of the Swalec Leagues. They are led by the team of Chairman Ian Davies who is supported by Treasurer Richard Southgate and the club has made a considerable amount of progress under their guidance.

They enjoyed a strong campaign last time around as they put together a record of having won 13, drawn 1 and lost 8 of their 22 matches. This saw them finish near the top of the table with 62 points on the board.

This should provide the team with a good platform upon which to build as they look ahead towards the 2014/15 campaign. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they will be in with a good chance of having a successful season.

A particular highlight of the team's play last year was the superb defensive record that they managed to put together. Over the course of the season they were one of the best defensive sides in the league and developed a reputation for being a tough tackling, well-disciplined unit.

Being able to rely on such a solid defence helps give the team a solid base to go out and produce winning performances. They will be looking to continue in the same manner in the new season and are sure to prove a tough nut to crack.



Maesteg Celtic is not a club to focus solely upon their senior section however and they also have a number of youth sides in place. These teams look to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered. It will certainly be exciting to see how their youngsters are able to develop over the coming years.

There is clearly much to admire about the set-up that Maesteg Celtic currently has in place and this is sure to be rewarded with success over the coming years. Everyone at Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck for the new season.

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ESSINGTON



Essington RUFC plays their home games at the High Hill Centre in Staffordshire and their first team currently competes in Midlands 5 West. They are led by the team of President Dave Brawn and Chairman Steve Brittain and they are looking to progress under their guidance.

Last season they put together a solid campaign as they compiled a record of having won 7 and lost 7 of their 14 league matches. This saw them finish in a safe mid table position with 37 points on the board.

Their attentions will now have turned towards the 2014/15 campaign and ensuring that they are ready to hit the ground running. Last season's efforts should provide them with a solid platform from which to build and so long as they are able to retain the same group of players they will be hoping to push on up the table.

Essington is a club that is committed to playing an important role in their local community and this is reflected by the fact that they have an additional senior side in place. This allows them to give twice as many players a game every weekend.

Another benefit of having more than one senior team is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or suspension they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption. Essington are also able to boast some high quality facilities and this allows them to host events such as Weddings, Christenings, Birthday Parties and Bar Mitzvahs. They are able to offer a comprehensive bar, ample parking, tables for food, and room to dance for up to 150 people.

This is vital for the club as it has the potential to provide them with a valuable source of additional income. This can be particularly important during the off-season when they are unable to rely upon matchday income but still have bills that need to be met.

Essington is a club that appears to be on the up and this is thanks to the hard work that their Committee have been putting into making them a success. It will certainly be exciting to watch to see how they are able to progress over the coming years and everyone at Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck for the new season.

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FIRWOOD WATERLOO

Firwood Waterloo RFC plays their home games at The Memorial Ground on St Anthony's Road, Merseyside and their first team currently competes in the SSE National League 3 North. They are led by the team of President Lol Connor and Chairman Dave Raywood and the club is looking to progress under their guidance.

Their first team put together a steady campaign last time around as they compiled a record of having won 10, drawn 1 and lost 15 of their 26 matches. This saw them finish in a mid-table position with 55 points on the board.

The team will now have turned towards the new season and making sure that they do things right in pre-season to ensure that they are well prepared for their opening fixture. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they should be in for a positive year.

Firwood Waterloo is not a club to focus solely upon their senior section however and they also have a number of youth sides in place. These teams look to provide youngsters from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area they appear to have covered. It will certainly be exciting to see how their juniors are able to develop over the coming years.

In order to ensure that their young players enjoy a smooth transition into the senior game they also have a 2nd XV running. This allows them to give them experience of adult level rugby even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.

Another benefit of having more than one side is that it allows the 1st XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or work commitments they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

There is much to admire about the set-up that Firwood Waterloo currently has and this is thanks to the hard work that their Committee puts into the club. Hopefully they will be able to continue in the same manner for many years to come.



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NEWMARKET

Newmarket RFC is a great example of a well run rugby club and they have some exciting plans for the future. Rugby Club Magazine caught up with the club's Chairman John Adams to find out more.

He said, "I have been involved in the club for the past 14 years on and off having first taken an interest when my son started to play at the age of 7 years. We have a very good social side to the club with some excellent lunches! All wins are good wins for us here.

Youth rugby is of huge importance and we have great training and playing from minis up –the hard part is to keep the colts and bringing them on to play at senior level. Young players are encouraged to train with the seniors and we then assess them to make sure they are going the right way and feed them in through the second team. It's sometimes hard for them to have the confidence to play with senior players but we hope our players will encourage them especially in training.

We have a lot of youth players playing at county level and the girls have also represented Eastern Counties and two have got rugby scholarships for ASSE colleges. We have had players who have gone on to National Levels and Pat Tapley is currently playing for Bedford Blues 1st team.

“Youth rugby is of huge importance and we have great training and playing from minis up –the hard part is to keep the colts and bringing them on to play at senior level.”



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Newmarket RUFC is based in the town and we like to think that we are a club for the community. We are very fortunate with our pitches; they drain exceptionally well and it's very rare to have a game called off or for it to be very wet. We like to think our clubhouse has a good atmosphere but would like to go forward now to re vamp it so it can be used as a community venue as well as rugby clubhouse. We are in the process of negotiations with the local council to enable us to do so.

Once we have the go ahead to build a new clubhouse and the ground is secure for the rugby club we can then look to raise the monies for this and use the facilities on a more commercial basis.

The biggest challenge we face is securing the ground as a long term venue so we can then concentrate on the future. Getting promoted back to London 3 would be good and staying in that league, we need to have bigger squad to take the pressure; it's hard for players to commit to every match as a lot have to juggle work and families as well." Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck for their new campaign.



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MACKIE FP

Based on Slug Road in Aberdeenshire, Mackie Academy FP competed in the RBS Caledonia League Division 1 last season. They are led by President Andrew Mitchell who is supported by Secretary Shona Dyer and the club is looking to progress under their leadership. The club prides itself on giving visitors a warm welcome and playing a vital role in the local community.

Last season, it would be fair to say that their first team did not perhaps enjoy the campaign that they would have liked as they put together a record of having won 5 and lost 13 of their 18 matches. This saw them finish near the bottom of the league with 31 points on the board.

There were some positives to take out of the season however and one of these was that they showed they were capable of putting points on the board when they were on their game. In total they racked up 352 points in the league helped by some fluent displays of attacking rugby.

Playing with such style will certainly ensure that any supporters attending their games will be well

entertained and this should encourage more of the community to get behind them in the future. The key now will be ensuring that they are able to produce the goods on a more consistent basis in order to allow them to win a higher percentage of fixtures.

The club's attentions will now have turned towards the 2014/15 campaign and ensuring that they are able to get off to a good start. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they should be able to claim a higher finish.

As mentioned, Mackie Academy FP is a club that is committed to playing an important role in the local community and a major part of this relates to the work that they do with young players. They have a number of youth teams set up which look to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered.



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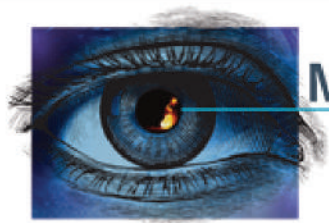
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Coaching staff overseeing their junior section are confident that a number of them have the potential to have a successful future in the game. It will certainly be exciting to see how they are able to develop over the coming years.

In order to help ease junior players into senior level rugby Mackie Academy FP also runs more than one team. This allows them to give players experience of the adult game even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.

Another benefit of running extra teams is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or work commitments they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption. They can also use these teams to ease players back into action when they are returning from injury.

Mackie Academy FP's disappointing league season should not take away from the good work that has been getting done at the club. Hopefully they will be able to continue in the same manner for many years to come and everyone at Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck.



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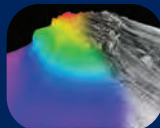
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BRIDGEND

BLUE BULLS

Bridgend Blue Bulls RLFC is based in Pyle in Wales and they currently compete in the Welsh Premier of the Rugby League Conference. They are led by Chairman Lee Harben-Jones whilst Stephen Smith manages the team and they are progressing well under their guidance.

They have a history of which they have every right to be proud, being the most successful amateur rugby league team in Wales having won the Welsh Premier a record 6 times as well as winning the Harry Jepson Trophy twice.

After being set +up the club wasted no time establishing themselves as a heavyweight competitor as they won the league in each year up to 2008. They were particularly dominant in 2003 and 2004 when they managed to win all of their games.

This time around they have enjoyed a strong league season again, putting together a record of having won 8 and lost just 2 of their 10 matches. This saw them finish 3rd in the standings which was enough to qualify for the play-offs.

A particular highlight of the team's form has been the attacking brand of rugby that they have been producing

and this is reflected by the fact that they were the top scorers in the league. In total they racked up 520 points at a rate of more than 50 per game.

This certainly meant that any supporters were well entertained and should encourage more of the community to get behind the club in the future. Playing with such flair will also help them to attract and retain the players needed to enable them to continue to be successful.

The team's potential was there for everyone to see during the season and they demonstrated how strong they can be in the semi-final against Torfaen Tigers. They won by a score of 36 points to 20 in a powerful display, never falling behind at any stage. This sets up an encounter with Aber Valley Wolves in what is sure to be a terrific encounter between two high quality sides. The Grand Final is due to take place on Sunday 17th August at Taffs Wells.

Bridgend Blue Bulls are a fantastic club that are consistently achieving good results on the field of play. Hopefully they will be able to continue to do well in the years to come and Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck for the Grand Final.

Michael Harpur
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GRASSHOPPERS

Grasshoppers RFC are a great example of the vital role a club can play in its local community in a variety of different ways. Rugby Club Magazine caught up with Club Chairman Gary Cunningham to find out more.

Involvement

He told us, "I joined Grasshoppers in 1994 after moving into the area and meeting friends who were already involved in the club. What first struck me at Grasshoppers was the welcoming and family atmosphere."

It was definitely a club that provided great facilities, great rugby and something for everybody - regardless of ability. I am delighted that these traditions have been enhanced and built on over the years and we remain a club renowned for our friendliness and our volunteers as well as our rugby."

Atmosphere

"The mood here is excellent. Earlier this year we were selected by England Rugby 2015 to launch the RWC2015 Volunteer Programme 'The Pack' which saw Jonny Wilkinson and England Rugby 2015 CEO, Debbie Jevans, come to the club with the world cup to launch the programme."

Pre-season training has just began and coaches and players are excited about the challenge. Player retention has been excellent with a number of new faces joining us for the coming season."

Youth

"Youth rugby is of the utmost importance to us. We set up our mini and youth sections in the 2003/2004 season on the back of England's World Cup success. We had previously run youth and Colt sides on an ad hoc basis but realised that the best form of senior recruitment was to generate our own home grown players."

We now run sides from Knee-Highs (4-6 year olds), through every age group up to Under 18. We also have girls' sides at Under 13, 15 and 18 level. Our Junior sides compete in the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Leagues and to date we have enjoyed 8 league titles and 15 promotions. Last season we were selected by the RFU as a pilot site for the new initiative 'Kids First Rugby' which puts the child at the centre of everything."

Integration

"Seeing players progress to our senior ranks is vitally important to us. To this end, our Director of Rugby, Matt Gilmore, has introduced a specific programme



designed to manage the transition to senior rugby for 17 to 19 year olds. Our third team now operates as a development squad enabling the younger players to experience adult rugby within the merit leagues and to play alongside some older heads. Our coaches provide skill development and one to one coaching for the development squad.

We have an excellent track record of bringing home grown players through to the seniors, including at First Team level. For one league game last season, 12 of the 18 First Team squad had come through our own Junior section."

Community

"We are definitely a community club, we work closely with a number of primary and secondary schools in our community many of whom enjoy free use of our facilities. We provide coaches to schools to help supplement their own resources and help promote the game in the wider community. Our contribution to the community has previously been recognised by Middlesex County with the President's award for Community work."

Facilities

"Our facilities are well known throughout the county and wider and always attract favourable comments. We are very proud of our facilities but at the same time are always looking at ways to improve them for our members and visitors. This summer has seen us complete a refurbishment of our gymnasium. Last year we were awarded a Sport England Inspired Facilities Grant to install a stand-alone women's and girls' changing facility and we hope to have this installed in the very near future. Also, we are currently going through an RFU funding application to install additional floodlighting which will see us have three fully floodlit pitches."



Challenges

"A major challenge for us is to maintain a strong playing base across the whole club. I believe that rugby, and sport in general, has seen a fall in player participation due to factors such as the current financial climate as well as young people having an increasing demand within their professional careers."

Ambitions

"We want to achieve promotion within the London Leagues for our First Team and to see continued improvement for all our teams throughout minis/youth/ girls and seniors. Whilst aiming for this though, of paramount importance, and at the core of everything we do, will be to keep our 100% amateur status, to continue to provide the best possible facilities for our members and the best possible rugby for all abilities and to enhance our reputation in the local community as well as the wider rugby family."




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DARTFORDIANS

“Dartfordians’ are not a club to focus solely upon their senior section as they also have a thriving youth set-up in place.”

Dartfordians’ RFC are based at the War Memorial Clubhouse on Bourne Road in Kent and their first team currently competes in the London 3 South East Division. They are led by the team of President John Oakes and Chairman Jarrod Lawrence and the club has made a considerable amount of progress under their guidance.

The club has a history of which they have every right to be proud and their most recent triumph came in 2009/10 when they were crowned Kent 1 Champions. They also won the London 3 South East League in 2003/2004.

Going further back they have a strong record in 7’s competition, having won the North Kent competition on no fewer than 5 times. One of those was in 1970/71 when they also made it to the finals of the Middlesex finals at Twickenham. Their current group of players will be keen to add to these successes over the coming years.

Last season they enjoyed a promising campaign as they put together a record of having won 13, drawn 3 and lost 6 of their 22 matches. This saw them finish near the top of the table with 73 points on the board. A particular highlight of the team’s performances was the attacking brand of rugby that they managed to produce. This was reflected by the fact that they were one of the top scorers in their league, racking up an impressive 582 points.

Playing with such flair certainly ensured that any supporters attending their matches were well entertained and should encourage more of the local community to get behind the club in the future. This in turn has the potential to provide them with a valuable source of additional revenue.

Their attentions will now have turned towards preparing for the 2014/15 campaign and making sure that they have a good pre-season so that they can hit the ground running. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they should be in with a good chance of mounting a title challenge.

Dartfordians’ are not a club to focus solely upon their senior section as they also have a thriving youth set-up in place. This part of the club looks to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any team to be able to produce their own talent particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area they appear to have covered. It will certainly be exciting to see how their youngsters are able to develop over the coming years.

In order to help their juniors to make the sometimes difficult transition into the senior game they also run additional sides. This allows them to give players experience of the adult game even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.

Another benefit of having so many teams is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or work commitments they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption. There is much to admire about the work that

Dartfordians’ has been doing in recent times and they clearly play a vital role in their local community. If they can continue in the same manner they are sure to be able to look forwards to a bright future.



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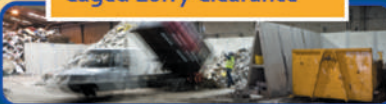
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VALE OF LUNE



Vale of Lune RFC is based on Powderhouse Lane in Lancashire and their 1st team currently competes in the North 1 West Division. They are led by the team of President Norman Hailes and Chairman Paul McLaren and are looking to progress under their guidance.

Last season the team put together a solid campaign as they managed to win 10, draw 4 and lose 12 of their 26 matches. This saw them finish in a safe mid table position with 64 points on the board.

This should provide them with a good platform upon which to build as they look ahead to the 2014/15 season. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they will be in with a good chance of claiming a higher league finish. A particular highlight of the team's form last time around was the attacking brand of rugby that they managed to produce. This was reflected by the fact that they outscored the teams around them, racking up a total of 675 points.

This certainly ensured that any supporters watching their matches were well entertained and this should encourage more of the local community to get behind

“Vale of Lune is clearly a great example of a well-run community establishment and this is thanks to the hard work that their Committee has been putting into the club.”

the club in the future. This may help to provide them with a valuable source of additional income.

Vale of Lune is not a club that focuses solely upon their senior section however and they also have a number of youth sides in place. These teams look to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is something that they appear to have covered. Their coaching staff are confident that they have a number of juniors currently involved with the potential to go on and represent the first team.

In order to help their young players to successfully make the transition into the senior game Vale of Lune also run additional sides. This allows them to give players experience of adult level rugby even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.



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Another benefit of having more than one team is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or work commitments they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

Vale of Lune is clearly a great example of a well-run community establishment and this is thanks to the hard work that their Committee has been putting into the club. Hopefully they will be able to keep up the good work that they have been doing for many years to come and Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck.



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BURNLEY & PENDLE

As a relatively new club, Burnley and Pendle has made a tremendous amount of progress. Rugby Club Magazine caught up with Club Secretary Robert Lennard to find out more.

Beginnings

He told us, "I have been involved with the club since it's inception in 2010. It was formed by Ryan Bradley, the current CEO of Rochdale Hornets. Ryan was playing Union at the time for the local club Burnley RUFC. He was employed by the RFL as Development Officer for the Bury, Bolton & Rochdale areas. Even though it was out of his area, he was the driving force behind the club."

Interest

"With the community game moving to the summer, a number of local union players fancied giving League a go. Quite a few had played League at university and were keen to pick it up again. When I heard on the 'rugby grapevine', that a Rugby League team was being formed in Burnley, I was keen to get involved in whatever capacity."

Atmosphere

"The general mood at the club is great. We have attracted sponsorship from local businesses. The numbers at training are fantastic and this is transferring to the field of play, where we are having a successful season so far. We are showing that we can compete against long established clubs from the traditional heartlands of the game. We are attracting players from beyond the two boroughs of Burnley and Pendle looking to develop their game. The atmosphere at the club is terrific with players of different experience and ability working well together."

In Ryan Mirfield and Sam Walker, we do have one or two Rugby League players with experience of the pro Academy system at Wigan Warriors and Keighley Cougars respectively. Their experience is invaluable in bringing on the novice players."

Youth

"We are great believers in developing young players in the correct manner. At open age players can take part

at the age of 16. We have a duty of care to the young players and will not introduce anyone to senior rugby until they are ready. We are extremely fortunate to have at our club, as President and Coaching Consultant, Mr Brian Foley.

Brian has spent a lifetime in the game and for over ten years was Head of Youth Development and Performance at Wigan Warriors. Brian has been instrumental in helping to realise the potential of so many young players that now play in Super League and the International teams of both codes of Rugby. The development of young players at our club could not be in safer hands."

Challenges

"The biggest challenge over the next five years is to attract even more players to the club along with funding to support our efforts. The establishment of a youth section is essential to put into place a production line for the senior squad. We need the formation of a second team as well, in order that everyone who wants to take up Rugby League has an opportunity to play the game."

Because of the lack of facilities available to us we have had to be content with playing in the North West Mens League Entry Division. This is a development league for start up teams and A and B teams of the established clubs. With the construction of The Prairie Sports Village, when the time is right, we will be looking to enter the North West Men's League proper. We are not rushing to do things. We are building solid foundations on which to build."



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TREHARRIS

Treharris RFC is based on New Forest Road in Mid Glamorgan and their first team currently competes in the SWALEC Leagues 5 South Central Division. They are led by Chairman Steve Richards who is supported by Secretary Graham Mack and the team has made a considerable amount of progress under their guidance.

Last season their team put together a solid campaign, compiling a record of having won 17 and lost 5 of their 22 matches. This saw them finish near the top of the table with 81 points from their 22 matches.

A particular highlight of the team's play was the attacking brand of rugby that they managed to produce on a consistent basis. This was demonstrated by the fact that they were among the top scorers in the league and is a reflection of the superb work that their coaching team has been carrying out.

Playing with such style certainly ensured that any supporters attending their matches were well entertained and should encourage more of the local community to get behind the team. It will also help to attract and retain high quality players which will help the team to progress.

The club's attentions will now have turned towards the new campaign and making sure that they are able to hit the ground running. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they are likely to find themselves right amongst the main contenders in the league. A standout feature of the Treharris set-up is the superb youth section that they have in place. This part of the

club looks to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered. It will certainly be exciting to watch to see how their youngsters are able to develop over the coming years. There is much to admire about the set-up that Treharris has in place and this is a testament to the superb work that their Committee have been doing. Hopefully they will be able to continue in the same manner for many years to come and everyone at Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck for the new campaign.

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CASTLE CARY

Castle Cary RFC plays their home games at Brookhouse Field in Somerset and their first team currently competes in the Tribute Somerset 1 Division. They are led by the team of President Chris Watts and Chairman Paul Lester-Hinchliffe and are looking to progress under their guidance.

“Last season the team put together a promising campaign as they found themselves amongst the top teams in the league.”

Last season the team put together a promising campaign as they found themselves amongst the top teams in the league. Unfortunately they lost some momentum towards the end of the season but still ended up finishing close to the leaders.

This should provide the team with a good platform from which to build as they look ahead towards the 2014/15 campaign. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two

quality additions they should be in with a good chance of claiming the title.

Castle Cary is not a club to focus solely upon their senior section however and they also have a number of youth teams in place. This part of their set-up looks to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area they appear to have covered. It will certainly be exciting to watch to see how their juniors are able to develop over the coming years.

In order to help their youngsters to make the transition into senior level rugby they run more than one team. This allows them to give players experience of the adult game even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.



Another benefit of having more than one side is that it allows the first team to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or suspension they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

The club is also able to boast some high quality facilities which they make available for the public to hire. They are able to host events including wedding receptions, anniversary parties, seminars, discos and birthday parties.

As well as helping the local community this also has the potential to provide the club with a valuable source of additional income. This can be particularly important as it gives them revenue out of season when they can't rely on matchdays but still have bills that need to be paid.

Castle Cary is clearly a club that has a superb set-up both on and off the field and this is thanks to the time, effort and commitment that their Committee has put into making them a success. Hopefully they will be able to continue in the same manner for many years to come and everyone at Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck.



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BEXLEY



Bexley RFC currently runs three Saturday teams, all in leagues, with their 1st XV competing in Kent League I, the National Junior Vase, and Shepherd Neame Vase cup competitions. This season they are hoping to put out a Vets team in a proposed local Vets League.

“Our challenges and ambitions for the next 5 years are to grow the club, attract more players particularly at mini and junior level.”

The Club has a great tradition in youth rugby, having originated from young enthusiasts and by continuing to be sustained with regular recruitment's from local schools over the years. They recognise the importance of encouraging young people to get involved in the game, and as a result established “The Mini-Rugby Section” in September 1997.

The section meets regularly for coaching/training and matches on Sunday mornings at their Bexley Park Ground. The numbers are growing, with boys and girls in all age groups U7, U8, U9, U10, U11, U12 with qualified coaches to provide good guidance. The new season will start on Sunday 7th September 2014 with coaching at 10:30.

Club Secretary Alan Perry told us more about the club starting with his involvement, saying, “I first got

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involved with Bexley RFC when my step-son started in the juniors 14 years ago - he is now 26 and a 1st team squad member.

I found the club a friendly place with like minded parents wanting their children to enjoy a real team sport. After about 3 years I volunteered to help the age group coach as team manager. I've been club secretary since 2007 which was our 50th anniversary year.

We are a relatively young club and last season our 1st XV won the Kent II league title so the mood is one of excitement and hope with a new challenge in a higher league. Of last season's 1st team squad no fewer than 8 players came up through our youth set up with another 5 playing in the 2nd team.

Youth rugby is the life blood for many clubs and we are rebuilding our mini and junior sections after a few barren years. We have RFU qualified coaches at all levels with senior players supporting the minis making the club feel as one.

We are a registered community amateur sports club and welcome players young and not so young of all abilities to give rugby a try. Some of our senior players have only been playing the game for a couple of years and the progress they have made is very encouraging. Our nickname is The Hermits, after the hermit crab that

lives in another crabs shell, as we have never had our own ground or club house. We use Bexley Park Sport & Social Clubs facilities complete with bar, changing rooms and we have put up floodlights for use of other sports as well as rugby. However we are very keen to find enough land to develop our own pitches and club house within Bexley borough.

Our challenges and ambitions for the next 5 years are to grow the club, attract more players particularly at mini and junior level. We will look to work with local schools and the community to bring sport to a greater young audience and hopefully attract more local business to support our aims. The new season sees our 1st XV in Kent I and that will bring extra challenges. Most importantly we want to fulfil the aims of RFU Accreditation which we gained in April this year."



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MELTON MOWBRAY

Melton Mowbray RFC is based on Burton Road in Leicestershire and their first team currently competes in the Midlands 2 East (North) Division. They are led by the team of Chairman John Hill and President Rob Goldthorpe and the team has made a considerable amount of progress under their guidance.

It would be fair to say that their first team did not perhaps enjoy the start to the season that they would have liked last time around as they struggled in the league. They eventually ended up finishing bottom of the table.

The team will be keen to put this disappointment behind them and will now have turned their attentions towards preparing for the new season. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they should be in for an improved campaign.

Melton Mowbray is not a club that focuses solely upon their senior section however and they also have a number of youth sides in place. These teams look to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area they appear to have covered. With the first team struggling now would seem like an ideal opportunity to blood some of these youngsters.

To help their juniors to make the sometimes difficult transition into senior level rugby Melton Mowbray also runs more than one team. This allows them to give players experience of the adult game even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process. Another benefit of having more than one side is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or suspension they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

Although Melton Mowbray did not perhaps enjoy the season that they would have liked last time around this should not take away from the good work that they have been doing. They clearly play a vital role in their local community and hopefully will be able to continue in the same manner for many years to come.



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CIRENCESTER

Cirencester RFC plays their home games at The White Way in Gloucestershire and their first team currently competes in the Gloucester Premier League. They are led by the team of President Nick Theakston and Chairman Tim Thompson and the club is looking to progress under their guidance.

It would be fair to say that last season was a strange one for the first team as they put together a league record of having won 14, drawn 1 and lost 11 of their 26 matches. They were relegated however due to extenuating circumstances.

The relegation will give the team a chance to re-build in a lower league and the club's attentions will now be on ensuring that they have a positive pre-season to make sure they can hit the ground running. If they are able to do this then they should be in with a good chance of a successful campaign.

A standout feature of the Cirencester set-up is the superb youth set-up that they have in place. This part of the club looks to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any team to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered. With the team dropping down a league now would seem like an ideal opportunity to blood some youngsters.

In order to help their players to make the sometimes difficult transition into the senior game they also have additional sides running. This allows them to provide them with experience of the adult game even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.

Another benefit of having more than one side is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or work commitments they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

Although Cirencester has just been relegated this should not take away from the good work that has been getting done at the club. Hopefully they will be able to continue to play a vital role in their local community for many years to come.



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WELLS

Wells RFC is based at Charter Way in Somerset and is set to compete in the Tribute South West 1 Division. Rugby Club Magazine caught up with the club's Director of Rugby Peter Kennedy to find out how they are getting along.

Involvement

"I moved to the area due to my wife (former England Women's wing Pip Atkinson) deciding to take up a job as Director of Sport and at the same time allow us to look after her Mother. I had coached at Bedford, Exeter, Worcester and Bristol, before short stints more locally at Bournemouth and North Dorset, when Wells approached me.

In the three seasons since then, Wells have achieved great things and hopefully someone with my experience has helped a mainly young squad achieve 2 promotions and the Nat Senior Vase victory at Twickenham in that time."

The Role

"The key challenge is actually keeping the players motivated! They are a challenging lot and yet I had the feeling when I first joined that most were happy with playing local Somerset Rugby – indeed, the club had never played anywhere else!

Achieving r/up spot in Western Cos (N) was far higher than many expected and although we lost the P/Off to Bideford, we made no mistake this season, winning Southern Cos (S) with three matches to spare. That league had 4 competitive teams in it and we fell off our normal high standards towards the end, when others had more to play for. We will need to get back to high levels pretty quick now we are in SW1."



Atmosphere

"On and off the field the mood is good and I would say excited! We have a ground move hopefully being approved – could take another couple of years to start building. The Colts are now very much a part of the senior set up, with last year's Colts skipper now the 2nd XV V/Capt – Will Greenman.

The 2s will be skippered by Tom White who will certainly lead by example, being a member of the 1st XV Squad. Jake Knight takes up the 1st XV Captaincy having won both the Player and Player's Player of the Year Awards and made his County Championship debut for Somerset in May and will be supported by Alex Payne who had an outstanding season and won Supporters Player of the Year."



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Integration

“As I mentioned, we have changed the emphasis on rugby in the club for 16yr olds and above. They do a pretty tough pre-season and the first 8 to 10 weeks of the season in age groups and then we look to move those who are eligible and capable upwards. The vast majority of the current 1st XV came up through the Junior ranks, so the model was there, but will hopefully only get better in the future.”

Community

“We are a community club in every sense of the word – Minis to Juniors to Colts to Seniors plus our growing Girls set up – all excellent stuff. We also have links with schools such as Wells Blue, Wells Cathedral, King’s Bruton and Downside but geographically speaking it is difficult for us.”

Commercial

“We have an outstanding group of people who are volunteers actively looking at raising sponsorship. This has generated literally tens of thousands of pounds in the last 3 years and continues to amaze me. Being successful on the field often leads to crowds of around 3-400 turning up!”

Challenges/Ambitions

“SW1 is a massive step up for us. We acknowledge we will be playing against clubs who have Premiership Academy players dual registered, Overseas Players and Coaches and budgets far greater than ours. But we have pride in the club badge and ethos and if we front up as we did in Western Counties against the likes of Hornets (Weston super Mare) we will give a number a fright. We want to achieve stability in SW1 and who knows we may even win the Somerset Senior Cup sometime soon – if it is still played!”



IPSWICH YM

Ipswich YM RUFC is a great example of a club that plays a vital role in their local community and this is reflected by the fact that they were the first Eastern Counties rugby club to be awarded the status of an RFU Whole Seal of Approval.

Last season their first team put together a steady season in the league as they put together a record close to winning as many games as they lost. This saw them finish in a safe mid table position which should provide them with a solid platform upon which to build. Their attentions will now have turned to making sure that they are well prepared for the new campaign. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they will be confident of claiming a higher league finish. A major part of the great work that the club does in the community relates to their youth section. This part of their set up looks to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any team to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered. It will certainly be exciting to see how their juniors develop in the coming years.

To help their young players to make the sometimes difficult transition into the senior game they also run additional sides. This allows them to give youngsters experience of adult level rugby even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process.

Another benefit of having extra sides is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or work commitments they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

There is much to admire about the set-up that Ipswich YM currently has and this is thanks to the hard work that their Committee has put into the club. Hopefully they will be able to continue to make progress and achieve plenty of success on the field of play in the coming years.

“It is important for any team to be able to produce their own talent”



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WELLINGTON



“Wellington is a club that clearly plays a vital role in their local community and this is thanks to the hard work that their Committee put into the club.”

First established in 1874, Wellington RFC plays their home games at the Athletic Ground on Corams Lane in Somerset and their first team competes in the Tribute Western Counties South West Division. They are led by the team of President Greg Dyke and Chairman Ashley Colman and the club is looking to progress under their guidance.

Last season they had a steady campaign as they put together a record of having won 9, drawn 2 and lost 15 of their 26 matches. This saw them finish in a safe mid-table position with 52 points on the board.

This should provide them with a solid platform upon which to build as they look ahead towards the new season. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and perhaps make one or two quality additions they should be in with a good chance of having a successful campaign.

Wellington is not a club to focus solely upon their senior section however as they also have a number of youth teams in place. These sides look to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered. It will certainly be exciting to watch to see how they are able to develop over the coming years.

In order to help their youngsters to successfully make the transition into the senior game, Wellington also runs a number of additional sides. This allows them to give players experience of the adult game even if they are not yet considered ready for first team action which can be an important step in the development process. Another benefit of having so many sides is that it allows the first XV to benefit from far greater strength in depth. If they are ever left short on numbers through injury or work commitments they have the option of calling players up with a limited amount of disruption.

Wellington is a club that clearly plays a vital role in their local community and this is thanks to the hard work that their Committee put into the club. Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish them the best of luck for the new season.

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ABERDARE

Aberdare RFC is based at 49 Gloucester Street, Mid Glamorgan and their first team competed in the SWALEC 3 South East Division last season. They are led by the team of President Humphrey Evans and Chairman William Pritchard and they are looking to progress under their guidance.

They are a thriving club which undoubtedly plays a vital role in their local community that looks to provide anybody visiting them with a warm welcome and encourage people looking to play the game to get involved regardless of their ability.

They are the child of the Aberaman Rugby Club which celebrated its centenary year in 1992 having changed their name after a relocation in 1995. The current group of players will be keen to build on their history over the coming years.

It would be fair to say that their first team did not perhaps enjoy the campaign that they would have liked last time around as they put together a record of having won 5, drawn 1 and lost 16 of their 22 matches. This saw them finish 2nd from bottom in the league with 30 points on the board.

The team will now be keen to put last season's disappointment behind them and have turned their attentions towards the new campaign. So long as they are able to retain their current group of players and strengthen with a couple of new signings they should be able to improve significantly.

One of the standout features of the Aberdare set-up is the superb youth section that they have in place. This part of the club looks to provide young players from the local area with an opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable environment whilst helping them to reach their full potential.

It is important for any club to be able to produce their own talent, particularly in the current financial climate and this is an area that they appear to have covered. Coaching staff overseeing youth development are confident that they have a number of juniors that have a bright future within the game.

Both on and off the field they have some superb facilities including a high quality club house which enables them to cater for events including weddings, funerals, parties and special occasions. They are also able to cater for business meetings and seminars in their newly refurbished conference rooms.

Having high quality facilities such as these has the potential to provide the club with a valuable source of additional revenue. This can be particularly important when they are unable to rely upon matchday income during the off-season when they still have bills to pay.

Although Aberdare did not enjoy the campaign that they would have liked last time around this should not take away from the good work that has been getting done at the club. They clearly play a vital role in their local area and it is to be hoped that they are able to continue in the same manner for many years to come.

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FULLERIANS

Fullerians RFC is a club that has made a tremendous amount of progress in recent years and are now looking forwards to a bright future. Club Chairman Kevin Brind took the time to tell us more about the good work that they have been doing.

He started by telling us about his involvement with the club, saying, "I have been involved since I was 15 (33 years). They were one of the few teams in the area that ran a colts team so as a 15 year old I was keen. The most challenging part of being Chairman is that for the last 6 years I get pulled from all directions!"

It can be challenging is dealing with people with a range of personalities and ideas. People always tell you what we could be doing but rarely lend a hand! The club was struggling 6 years ago in all areas, on the field and playing and in the bar and kitchen. This has been turned around by a wonderful committee and now we enjoy a great atmosphere, bar and kitchen supplying great food. It is very rewarding seeing us still push out 4-5 senior teams each week and see our pitches full with minis and juniors playing rugby."

The mood at the club is excellent. Good food, beer and company makes for a great club. The playing isn't bad either! Youth rugby is very important to us, without it we have no future. We had over 25 17 year olds play for the senior section of the club last season which was excellent.

We are one of the big 5 clubs in Hertfordshire with regard to mini and junior numbers in our squads. We



have just set up an Academy to aid in this difficult transition. Having the senior colts train on the same night as the seniors has helped and of course stash and socials always help!

The facility is what lets us down at the moment. We have out grown it and have planning permission to expand. We need money and have raised nearly £60,000 ourselves but need nearer the £300,000 mark to add the necessary changing rooms and social space to meet demands. We were turned down by a recent Sport England bid which was disappointing but will have to try again. We have favourable comments from visiting refs and teams on our friendliness, food and beer. Our pitches look great thanks to our groundsman.

We want to improve the club house facility and keep people in the sport especially in that 16-21 year old age bracket and to keep pushing 4-5 senior teams out a week. It is important to keep costs down so members can enjoy food drink and playing without being fleeced.

Hopefully we can be a level 7 club in the future, possibly 6 club and will benefit from an improved facility with more changing rooms and larger social space whilst continuing to progress our large mini and junior section."

 **Travis Perkins**

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CAITHNESS



Caithness RFC plays their home games at the Millbank Rugby Ground in Thurso and Wick and their first team competed in the Caledonia League Division 1 last season. They are a club that plays a vital role in their local community with a successful first team and a number of youth sides in place. Rugby Club Magazine caught up with the club's Chairman George Sinclair to find out more about the good work that they have been doing on and off the pitch.

He told us, "I first became involved as a regular spectator at games and in 2008 was asked to join committee. I was then made Vice Chairman in May 2009 before becoming Chairman last May(2013). I never played rugby, just a keen fan. Being a livestock farmer and married with a four year old son one of the biggest challenges for me is finding time for the role. It is certainly very rewarding and sometimes demanding with so much happening at the club in the last 12 months.

The mood here is very positive with us gaining Coaching Scotland accreditation in April 2013. Murrayfield put in new posts last summer and our secretary Shona Kirk won a competition to win the old international posts which were installed at Millbank the day before our first competitive game of the season in August. Shona has put in a huge amount of work to bring together the funding and clubhouse project. Chris Paterson, Scotland's most capped player was in attendance, also doing some new coaching sessions. The building of our new clubhouse began in August and was in use by the end of January. It was opened by SRU vice president Ian Rankin on the weekend 9/11 May.



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Last season was successful with our first team winning the Regional Shield, beating Dunfermline 28-6 after extra time at Millbank on February 15. They then won a national semi-final beating Berwick 22-17 in front of a record crowd of approximately 700. We took 300 supporters to Cumbernauld (550 mile round trip) for the National Shield Final but lost 27-6 to Preston Lodge. We have a number of talented players here and Stevie Campbell our captain/openside flanker has just been voted Caledonia Div. 1 Player of the year. Caitlin Harvey (17) has played for the Scotland under 20 girls team whilst Katie Mackay (U18) was picked out by national selectors as one to watch at a sevens tournament at Kinross last weekend. In the past Rowan Shepherd won 20 caps for Scotland between 1995-98 whilst Kris Hamilton had 5 caps for Scotland U20's in 2010. Lucy Millard also has 57 caps for Scotland women

Youth rugby is vital to the club. The nearest clubs are 100 miles away or across water (Orkney). All bar one of our first team squad are Caithness born, bred and coached and very few players move into the area. We have a full time development officer and modern apprentice to bring rugby to the community and to primary and secondary schools.

We are very much a community club, being well supported by fans and sponsored by local businesses. Our clubhouse is being used for community events and activities e.g. boxercise and highland dancing. As well as this, girls' rugby is growing quickly here. The Clubhouse is equipped with 4 changing rooms to be able to host girls' rugby as well as boys." Rugby Club Magazine would like to wish the club all the best for the future.





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