

LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

ANNUAL REPORT

2014-15

THE SECRETARY'S OPENING REMARKS

As always in these opening remarks my first job is to thank our President, David Matthews. David has done a great job this season and has represented the office of President and the County extremely well. An International referee, David brings an air of authoritative calm with him.

The office of President is not an easy ride of club dinners and hospitality, it involves a lot of time consuming hard work and those privileged to hold the post need to have dedication. This is what David has shown he has heaps of. He has attended as many finals days as he has been able from Minis and Schools all the way through to seniors, always making time to speak to participants and supporters alike. He has watched rugby at all levels, at clubs all around the County and at Board Meetings enthuses about the welcome he has received at all of them. This season he has been the eyes and ears of the Management Team as he has been closest to grassroots rugby and has been able to feedback questions and concerns about the direction of rugby.

His determination and bravery through his illness should be an inspiration to us all. Those who have been lucky enough to hear David speak at club dinners and awards evenings will have heard many unique and humorous tales of his days as a referee. I am sure he has many more and I for one look forward to hearing them in the future. I would also like to thank Davids wife Helen whose support has been incredible, always buoyant and happy. David, Helen, I thank you both.

To Rugby matters, Our Senior XV again made the trip to Twickenham to play Cornwall in the final for the Bill Beaumont Cup. Unfortunately it was not to be our season as Cornwall won a very hard fought victory 13-18. Whilst the last two seasons have seen Cornishmen magnanimous in defeat they really let us know this season that they had won. My thanks players and team management for their time and effort to represent the county.

Our Under 20s did not fare so well this season, but thanks go to the players, coaches, and backroom staff for their time and effort in providing a great rugby environment for the lads. We took the decision last season that the Under 20s would be an integral part of Club Lancashire and would work closer with the senior squad, sharing ideas and methods. With any new process there will be teething problems and I am sure the outcome of this integration will come to prove successful in the future.

This season has been turbulent at times and has not been the easiest as far as County management is concerned. Unfortunately both our Treasurer and Director of Marketing resigned from the Board. Many know Keith Mellalieu, not only our Treasurer but also massively involved in Mini & Junior rugby through what we know as the Blacksticks Competitions, these were his brainchild. He was also master of the international ticket process which took up a great deal of time in organising. For many years he kept us on the straight and narrow financially and was a key part of the Board. I would like to thank Keith for the years of hard work and dedication he gave the County. The ball has had to be

picked up, this has been done, and done very well, with a combination of Mel Whittle and Stephen Briers who have ensured a smooth transition and I cannot thank them enough for their efforts.

Our Director of Marketing, Mike Crookes also resigned at the start of the season. As well as this post, Mike was also Chairman of Mini & Junior Rugby, the 7-16 Group. Mike did a great job running player registrations, arranging district rugby and finals day where he was a very hands on bloke. His work for the County should be applauded, Thanks Mike.

Again someone step up, or in this case several someones ! A team under the leadership of Ian Spivey along with Steve Blackburn and Kate Bennetta have ensured they have recruited a team of volunteers to take forward the 7-16s Group. Competition structures already in place have continued with great success this season in an area where rugby really matters, we must ensure the seniors of tomorrow are given every opportunity today. I for one appreciate what a great job Ian and his team are doing.

Marketing has temporarily been placed under the remit of the Club and Community Committee under the Chairmanship of Malcolm Worsley. Again this committee has been busy, along with advising clubs on finance matters, player recruitment and retention and volunteers, they have also been looking at an overhaul of the County website. Feedback we have had is that improvements need to be made and our communications in the digital age need a new focus. Watch this space it will be with us soon. Malcolm has also done an excellent job of recruiting new volunteers to this committee in the form of Mike Baker, Peter Saunders and Andrew Carney. All those who have stepped up I thank heartily.

Again we are represented well at the top table. Our representatives at the RFU are extremely busy holding positions on several committees of influence. Rob Briers continues to hold a post on the RFU Board of Directors, and we must not forget its Chairman, a true Lancastrian in the shape of Bill Beaumont. Lancashire is one of the few counties lucky enough to hold 2 representatives on Council and this season Ken Andrews has replaced Bob Grant in the role. He has jumped right in at the deep end and has been very helpful to me to provide the links from RFU to CB to Clubs. For past and present work I thank all 3.

The County Schools Union under the Chairmanship of John Morgan go from strength to strength as can be seen from the growing number of new schools taking up County membership and the success of the Emerging Schools competition, it's good to see rugby growing, which is thanks to this committee and to all teachers who give up their own time out of school to run these sides.

Womens and Girls Rugby is on the up in the County with the main growth area being at Under 13s and Under 15s, many clubs are seeing a call for rugby at these ages and if nurtured will turn in to the Ladies teams of the future, Thanks to all involved in these fledgling teams, their coaches and the Womens and Girls County squad players, managers and coaches lead by Helen Duggan.

In club rugby I congratulate all who have gained promotion and with equal measure commiserate with all those who have been relegated. In that I include the NOWIRUL leagues whose management committee are to be applauded for the amount of rugby they organise on a weekly basis. We live in interesting times with the Adult Competition Review having been delayed by a season and the possible restructuring by the North DOC of leagues below level 8.

Next season we will be the proud hosts of the rugby world cup, the greatest party in rugby. Our clubs have been preparing well under the guidance of Ken Andrews, his steering group and all our Rugby World Cup Champions in our clubs. Many clubs will be welcoming new members and organising

events around matches. As well as this there will be the Grand RWC Trophy tour with many events planned around this, see the County website for details.

Thanks go to our two referees societies for arranging officials on Saturdays, Sundays and through the week. As is often said without the man with the whistle we would not have a game.

The Disciplinary committee have been busy with many “customers” this season and whilst it helps the County coffers it is saddening to see a rise in ill-discipline. Thanks go to Nigel Yates the Chairman and Brian Stott the Secretary along with the other members for dealing with cases thoroughly and taking a common sense approach. Our Disciplinary team are the envy of many counties and an example of best practice to the game.

To me personally, my thanks to Brian Stott the Assistant Hon. Secretary and to Tom Fitzgerald our Operations Manager, they have helped and advised me throughout the season, without them the role would be a lot more difficult. I apologise if I have knocked on at all this season, I am told by friends that that was a major part of my game during my playing days !!

Mark Downs

Honorary Secretary

SENIOR RUGBY

Another exciting season of rugby in the top tier of County Championship. First game away at Chester against Cheshire and the final score did not reflect the game, finishing at 21-18 due to a last minute try from Cheshire. This gave Cheshire a losing bonus point and us the headache due to the possibility of it haunting us should other games not go our way.

Next up was the long away trip to play Durham at Blyden on what was a very blustery day, and dig out a win at 17-6 which was very close. The news of the day was that Cheshire had beaten Yorkshire which put the possibility of 3 teams in the mix going into the last round.

We entertained Yorkshire at Fylde, a Yorkshire side who brought great physicality to the game, Yorkshire were beaten 29-14. The match produced what must have been the best try of the Championship seeing Jordan Dorrington make a break from his own try line and after some interpassing receive the ball back to score. Many were following the game at Redruth between Hertfordshire and Cornwall where Cornwall came from behind to make it to the final.

A repeat of the last two finals was on the cards but unfortunately the rub of the green was against us finally going down 13-18. The players could not have done any more, they played great rugby but it was just not our day and Cornwall took the spoils. We ensured they knew they only had 12 months and that we would want it back home next season.

This season's team has been a good mix of experienced players and some young apprentices coming through, it is an exciting prospect for the future. I would like to thank the Captain, Evan Stewart and all the players who represented Lancashire this season, its great commitment after a long year of club rugby to don the red and white and I fully appreciate it. Thanks also go to coaches and backroom staff who give their time freely so that we can continue to be a strong force in County Rugby.

Mark Downs

Honorary Secretary

UNDER 20s

As has been stated our Under20s did not have the greatest of seasons. Whilst we were happy with our performance targets for players progressing through the North and above we did not perform well in the divisional matches, loosing all and finishing at the foot of the table. Along with last seasons results and the outcomes of the current County Championship review there is a possibility that we will be playing in the Shield next season.

New coaches and management have been put in place and are already preparing for the next campaign, player shave responded extremely positively and it would be our intention to win the shield and then the cup in successive seasons.

Mark Downs

Honorary Secretary

UNDER 18s / UNDER 18s Development (UNDER 17s)

After completing a successful season with the U17 at the end of last season, most of the squad made up the bulk of this seasons U18s. A series of 3 County fixtures played on a festival basis; this enables the North selectors to view players from several counties.

The results were as follows

Lancashire 19 v 10 Cumbria played at Darlington

Lancashire 19 v 26 Yorkshire played at West Park Leeds

Lancashire 29 v Cheshire played at Blackburn

Lancashire provided 10 players chosen to trial for the North

Jack Conteh - Myerscough College

Joe Duffy - Myerscough College

Matt Gerrod - Blackpool V1 & Fylde RUFC

Ben Gregory - Wigan RUFC

John McKenzie - Runshaw College & Preston Grass Hoppers

Ryan Williams - Kirkham Grammar School

Ethan Wringe - Myerscough College

Tom Forster - AKS & Fylde RUFC

James Washington - Liverpool College

James Robins - Merchant Taylor's

Of those 4, Matt Garrod of Sedgley Park RUFC was unfortunately injured during the divisional games but John McKenzie captained England Counties U18s against France and Ireland leading his team to two wins out of two. Jack Conteh and Joe Duffy also played for England Counties, with Duffy winning the man of the match award against France.

One Lancashire U17s player from last season Jake Pope, played well enough in his one county game at U17 to attract the attention of Sale Sharks and by October of 2014 had moved from the Aspirational Player Pathway to being a member of the Sale Sharks Academy and thereby no longer available for Lancashire.

Jake represented England at Elite U18 level in the U18s 6 Nations competition.

A successful U17s trial was held at Blackburn RUFC in February about 90 players attending
A squad of 26 players was selected from which teams played in three U17s County Games

Lancashire 13 v 27 Yorkshire played at
Lancashire 43 v 7 Cheshire played at Blackburn RUFC
Lancashire 53 v 17 Staffordshire played at Sedgley Park RUFC
This squad of players will be the U18s squad for next season

Tommy Hughes

Lancashire 18 Group Chairman

UNDER 16s / 16s GROUP

Congratulations to Lancashire U16 Captain and back rower Sam Moore who starred for England in a comprehensive 34-0 victory against Wales at Caerphilly on the 19th April. Sam was the only representative of the North in the starting line-up and he crowned a 'man of the match award' with a try. Lancashire had the largest representation in the North of England U16 Squad which included winger Sam Chinomona, No. 8 Sam Dugdale, full-back Calum Owen, centre Arron Reed, stand-off Kieran Wilkinson and prop Wade Williams. All these boys have tremendous ability, they have worked extremely hard and we wish them all the best in their developing rugby careers.

Training and preparation ahead of the intense three match Festival programme went extremely well in September and October and optimism was running high. The first match against Yorkshire, at Queen Ethelburga's School near York, was a huge disappointment especially since Lancashire had comfortably won the U15 fixture, in April, by a score line of 17-5. The White rose boys ran in four tries before Lancashire responded late on with a try by winger Anele Hlongwane after good work by back rowers Sam Moore and Jorge Lewtas. In the other match Cheshire had a narrow 36-26 win over Cumbria, Northumberland & Durham.

Lessons were learnt and the Red Rose boys produced a much better performance against a very strong Cheshire side at King's School, Macclesfield. The big Lancashire pack dominated their opponents in the first half and they were unlucky when an excellent try by Josh Rawlinson was disallowed for a forward pass. Their disappointment was compounded when, against the run of play, Cheshire opened the scoring with a break away try just before the break. The sides were level when centre Sam Stott crossed for a try in the right corner. The excellent Cheshire backs, working with scraps of possession, ran in two more tries before Lancashire scored the try of the match. Winger Henry Pearson joined the line, from the blind side, and switched inside to full-back Calum Owen who sped through a big hole in the home defence to touch down under the posts. The final whistle went leaving everyone connected with Lancashire scratching their heads and wondering how they had let victory slip through their hands. Yorkshire defeated CND in the other fixture.

Lancashire ended the county season on a high note with hard fought 15-10 victory over CND at Giggleswick School.

Man of the match Sam Dugdale scored one try and winger Sam Chinomona completed the scoring with a brace. In the final match Cheshire thrashed Yorkshire 72-22.

- **Yorkshire: lost 24-5** at Queen Ethelburga's School, Sunday 26th October 2014
- **Cheshire: lost 15-12** at King's School, Sunday 2nd November 2014
- **CND: Won 15-10** at Giggleswick School, Sunday 9th November 2014

Lancashire 16 Group gave a good account of itself in a gruelling 3 match programme over 15 days including a lot of travelling. The boys will be the first to acknowledge backroom team of Ian

McFarlane (Chair of selectors), Coaches Bill Nichol, Guy Lovgreen, and Mark Bailie who deserve great credit for preparing the team. Finally, many thanks to Liverpool St Helens RFC for the continuing use of their training facilities and the great support of the boys' families and friends.

John White

Lancashire 16 Group Manager

UNDER 15s / 15s GROUP

The Lancashire 15 Group endured a disappointing season with defeats for both A and B squads in their two fixtures against Cheshire and Yorkshire. However a great deal has been learnt in defeat and there is optimism that the gap with our near neighbours will be narrowed in the Autumn.

In the opening fixture, at Southport RFC, Lancashire made the perfect start when winger Josh Moreau touched down in the right corner. Cheshire then had a player yellow carded but this only served to kick start the opposition who ran in two tries to lead 12-5 at the break. After the re-start the boys in blue and white added two further tries before the home side could get back into the game. Fine work by the forwards put the red rose boys in good field position and centre Tom Walter crossed for an excellent try. Cheshire's response was swift and clinical and three more tries produced a 10-47 score line which only showed the gulf between the two teams. The B game was a much tighter affair. Cheshire playing with the elements raced into a 15-0 half-time lead. A tremendous fight back, after the break, by the Lancashire boys was spearheaded by hooker Keiran Brogan who used his speed and strength to score two tries. James Morris converted the second score and when full-back Sam Chadwick dived over in the corner the fight back was complete. A very late Cheshire try regained the lead 22-17 and stole the honours.

The disappointment of the opening match initiated a major re-think, by the coaching staff, which resulted in six boys from the B squad being promoted to the senior side. This had the desired effect of producing a much more competitive performance against Yorkshire but sadly did not change the outcome. Again, Lancashire started the scoring with a Chadwick try under the posts converted by Morris. Then Yorkshire, playing with the benefit of a strong wind and significant slope, scored three tries to lead 17-7 at the break. Lancashire turned around and enjoyed the best of the territory and possession but were unable to add to their earlier score. Instead Yorkshire sealed the victory with a try against the run of play. Yorkshire B, playing with elements in the first half, ran up a 17-0 interval lead. A valiant effort by the Lancashire boys in the second half, in which the Yorkshire line was under siege throughout, was only rewarded with one touch down by full-back Ben Moseley. For the record Cheshire beat Yorkshire 31-14 in the A game and they were 47-14 winners in the B game.

- **Lancashire A 10-47 Cheshire A** at Southport RUFC, Sunday 8th March 2015
Lancashire B 17-22 Cheshire B
- **Yorkshire 23-7 Lancashire A** at Sandal RUFC, Sunday 29th March 2015
Yorkshire B 17-5 Lancashire B

The A team, led by captain Sam Kyle-Ckay, are quick to acknowledge the hard work of coaches Iain Crossley, Rod Murray, Mark Murray and Brad Tuft. Similarly the B squad, under the leadership of Jacob McHugh, are grateful to coaches Bernie Bowers, Brad Jones, Damien Hamilton and Bill Nichol. Thanks also to chair of selectors Ian McFarlane. There is optimism that the group will learn valuable lessons from their experiences which they can take forward to the challenges that lie ahead in the Autumn. Our thanks go to Southport RFC and Liverpool St Helens RFC for allowing us to use

their excellent facilities again. Also, a special thank you to Andrew Carney and his team at Southport whose generosity enabled the Lancashire B team to happen in 2015.

John White

Lancashire 15 Group Manager

WOMENS & GIRLS RUGBY

This has been an exciting year for women and girls rugby. We started the season flying on the coat tails of the England Women's victory in France and finish in eager anticipation of England hosting the 2015 World Cup.

Our youth sides are growing from strength to strength with newly formed girl's sections in a number of clubs across the county including Burnley, Eccles, Leigh, Southport, Widnes, Littleborough and Vale of Lune.

This year England rugby held a national youth cup competition, which allowed the newly formed teams to cluster together and play some structured local fixtures before, of they were successful, progressing through to next stages.

Lancashire were well represented with an U18's cluster of Liverpool St Helen's, Burnley and Vale of Lune reaching the national final. They met an extremely strong side of Berkshire Ba Ba's and held their own, just been pipped 24-17 to the post by the southern county side.

It was a great display of rugby and I know the spectators were very impressed with the skill and physicality of the U18's game.

We also had the chance to celebrate a number of national call-ups with two girls playing for England U20's and two selected for last summer's U18's 7's tournament, which they won.

The Lancashire County U18s continues to be strong. Our U18s were undefeated this season with wins at the North Championship festival, beating Cheshire 45-7 and Yorkshire 26-5. They are a mature squad and will be losing a number of the players next year as they move to senior rugby we will miss them but know they will make a massive impact on whichever club they join.

The U15s are a new side with a number of girls playing their first year in the older grade rugby. They came fourth in the North Championship, beat Cheshire 40 v 24 but suffered a heavy loss to Yorkshire 57 nil. However, they are a young squad and will only develop over the years – a number of them were selected for the North of England squad, which demonstrates the team's potential.

We have also made great strides in the senior side of Lancashire. We have more clubs playing women's rugby that ever before and have a nice spread of the leagues. Although the premiership still eludes Firwood Waterloo they are, along with Eccles, producing a number of North of England players and once again we have a Lancashire lady in the England team with Harriett Millar-Mills who played in this year's Six Nations and scored against France. All of the members of North of England were able to act as role models for two West Park players turned 18, Rachael Woosey and Molly Morrissey and were called up.

The series of pitch up and plays has supported a number of the clubs grow and next year Garstang and Didscot will join the senior league structure. The growth of the senior game also meant that we have had the largest number of teams represented in the Lancashire squad – 7, with a number of the

girls also being university students. This shows the great work of our CRCs in helping clubs develop the links with the Universities is starting to pay off.

The Lancashire senior squad played three games this year and although we were not as successful as in previous years the off field victories of having 80 player register for trials and seven clubs being represented is a huge step forward. The girls lost to Cumbria 17-15 in the last play of the game, drew with Durham 31 all and lost to Yorkshire 27-21.

We have lots of plans for next year, we will be reinstating the senior Lancashire cup, holding lots more development days and also the senior squad trials a lot earlier to allow the team longer to bond.

None of this year would have been possible without the volunteers from coaches, managers, committee members and back room staff in all the clubs and for the county sides. A massive thank you for your continued support.

I will end on a congratulations. The whole of the Women and Girls section would like to congratulate two Lancastrian legends of the Women's game on their inauguration into the International Hall of Fame – Carol Isherwood and Gill Burns. They set up the first Lancashire team and Carol was also a long standing committee member. As the only two British women in the six inductees Lancashire can proudly state, for now, it is the only county to have both men and women members!

On to 2015-16 and another successful season.

RUGBY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (RDC)

The RDC has replaced the Rugby Development Partnership. There are four subcommittees: Team Lancashire (Representative Rugby); Player Development; Coaching & Refereeing; Competitions. The Chairmen and the members of the RDC and the four Sub-committees are appointed by the CB Management Board.

During the period under review the following points of interest merit reporting to the membership:

Coach & Referee Development:

The Lancashire Rugby Development Centre project aimed at Coaches in the open age game is unique; no other County in the United Kingdom provides a similar service. We deliver one or more conferences and approximately 30 workshops per annum featuring National Level Coaches. We currently reach out to over 370 coaches covering in excess of 40 clubs, 16 schools, six universities and six FE Colleges.

The Development Centre also provides up to ten hours of coach and player development free of charge to local clubs. At the time of writing a number of high profile retiring payers are being trained to add to our pool of club coach mentors. The service provided will be extended in season 2015-16

The Development Centre, working with the RFU Area Training Officer, offers keep your boots on coaching and refereeing development courses to players. This is slowly paying dividends

A series of summer workshops, a CB Coaching conference and a teacher/Rugby Coach specific conference will be held in July & August. As well as developing coaches, these will be used by the County U20s and U18s squads to bring together players for an introduction into the Lancashire style of play.

Referee recruitment, training and development are being undertaken in joint partnership with the RFU, Cheshire CB, the Federation and local societies.

An extensive programme of Coaching Accreditation and CPD courses was delivered by the RFU Area 5 Training Officer. Further details are obtainable from his Annual report.

County coaching scholarship and grants are available to assist coaches to obtain nationally recognised qualifications or to attend RFU organised conferences; a number of our representative squad coaches are currently being funded for Level 3 Coaching certification.

Helen Duggan

Women & Girls Chair

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT (PD)

16-24 Age Group PD

In 2015-16 there will be a Lancashire Academy for players not otherwise engaged in Sale and RFU academies

There will be a repeat of last season's very successful Town Teams tournament reaching out to schools in the rugby league corridor

The Chairman of Lancashire RFU convened steering group for club, school and Colts League to review and seek redress of the loss of players in the 16-24 age group. Actions from this are ongoing

The Development Centre Programme is forging strong links with the FE and the tertiary education sector. Student specific rugby clinics for coaches and players have been held with view to building links with clubs. Mark Nelson. Our Senior XV Coach will be our Student Rugby Liaison Officer in 2015-16 (in addition to his other roles); this is aimed at recruiting from the education sector players, coaches and referees for clubs and County teams.

RFU staff continue to deliver a wide range of programmes in the secondary, FE and Tertiary education sector; further details of which can be obtained from the reports of the RFU staff.

13 - 16 Age Group PD

There will Summer camps for this age group staffed by Lancashire Senior XV coaches and players and featuring National Level and Premiership coaches

Lancashire's District programme and the Schools of Rugby have been replaced by a National District based programme which is delivered in Lancashire & Cheshire in partnership with the RFU and Sale Sharks. From next season the programme will be branded as the Sale Developing Player Programme; Lancashire will support but, will not own the programme that will be delivered. Subject to demand, Lancashire will provide a limited (independent) programme for those players not already involved in the Sale Developing Player Programme

RFU staff continue to deliver a wide range of programmes in junior club rugby and primary and the secondary education sector; further details of which can be obtained from the reports of the RFU staff.

Age Grade Representative Rugby (AGRR)

The Managers and selectors for the various CB Age Grade squads have submitted reports on performance which can be found later in the CB Annual Report. Other matters for attention are:

15 -18 AGRR

The Development Centre and the Lancashire Senior Rugby Group (Senior XV & U20s) provide a team of professional coaches to mentor our CB Representative Squad coaches. This is a move to introduce continuity and a Lancashire style of play that players can take with them as they progress through the age grades. Fitness programmes are in place. Trials, assessment and selection protocols have been introduced. This programme might not be continued next season due to uncertainty regarding funding; if this is the case, players and coaches will be developed by joining them in the Lancashire Rugby Development Centre programme of workshops and camps.

U20 National Championship

Numbers coming forward for selection were low. The squad finished the season bottom of the group and now faces relegation. There have been changes to the coaching and management set up. A development programme for eligible players has been put in place which will run over summer and be linked to the Lancashire Rugby Development Centre project.

Sevens Representative Rugby

Funding has been applied for to set up a CB sevens squad to compete in a suitable tournament in the 2015-16 Sevens season.

Lancashire is being considered as a candidate to become the licensee of a RFU sponsored Sevens Academy based in a local university. This is at a very early stage and further details are not available at this time

Representative Rugby for Players in Lower Leagues

Funding is available for an invitational side to play a game against another County. This is to provide an opportunity, early in the season, for players in leagues who might not otherwise have an opportunity to represent their county. This will be organised by the senior rugby group and players involved will be seen by the CB Selectors and considered for development to the Senior XV later in the season

Recruitment & Retention of Players

RFU RDOs & CRCs organised games for town teams, U24 returning players and go play style events for clubs. These were primarily targeted in the rugby league corridor with a view to the recruitment and retention of players post 16 years of age. The work of the RFU staff in respect of player recruitment, development and retention in schools, FE colleges and universities is commended and it forms an integral part of the CB Annual Plan and the work of the RDC.

The CB has allocated innovation funding for clubs with schemes to recruit and retain players. At the time of writing several club applications are being considered and a number of grants have already been awarded

Tom Fitzgerald

RDC Hon. Secretary

RUGBY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Only one major change within the team, the Area Training Officer position has become redundant and will be covered by new National/Divisional positions within the Game department. Phil Kearns the last incumbent has gained one of the 2 National Coach Development Officer posts, congratulations and well deserved.

Mark Sutcliffe resigned as an RDO and gained the position of CRC in north Lancs, Mark wanted to get back into his tracksuit and is doing a great job in his old role. George Glenn was appointed to Greater Manchester RDO after Andrew Soutar felt the call of his Merseyside roots and took up Marks role.

The support for Lancashire within the team comprises of myself the Area manager, supported by RDOs Stuart Urquhart, Phil Clarke, George Glenn, Andrew Soutar and Dave Westhead together with their highly dedicated teams of CRCs who work within Lancashire and in some cases Cheshire to a greater or lesser extent. The team are Supported by specialists who cover Lancs along with the rest of Area 5, including Women and Girls Development Officer Claire Antcliffe, University RDO John Livesey we are also supported by a Funding and Facilities Officer Tom Bartram, a Player Development officer Ian Bletcher, Area Training Manager Dave Livesey.

The key elements of our role remain

Core purpose:

“Strengthening our Member Clubs and Growing the Game in Communities around them”

Key drivers:

Retaining & Developing Current

Players

Recruiting New

Players

Retaining & Recruiting high quality Coaches, Volunteers & Referees

Integration with the Local Community

Effective & Efficient

Management & Governance

Effective & Efficient Facilities

While not all activities of the team must support the above they are certainly the filter through which all potential activities must be viewed.

A further 5 schools in Lancashire will receive direct investment through “All schools” the programme targeting non-rugby playing schools, with the aim of making them self-sustaining rugby schools through investment of up to £10000 and substantial staff hours.

Targeted workstrands also sees each RDO identifying Education establishments or clubs based on need and potential to focus on to retain and recruit players, over 20 more schools in Lancashire will

benefit this season. Once again the majority of the targeted work are on target, to sustain or grow the game in the county.

Rugby World Cup is now just over 100 days away and as we are all aware will present the greatest challenge and opportunities our game has ever seen within this country. The Area 5 Legacy board led by Fran Cotton has done some great work adding real value to work at the RFU and locally. We have a very exciting Social Media support package being launched for clubs over the next couple of weeks.

Ken Andrews and his group working alongside the RDOs have done a great job of ensuring the clubs in Lancashire are in the best place possible to maximise the opportunities of the RWC, with a series of 3 workshops bringing clubs together to plan their individual campaigns.

As ever the Clubs have been well served by the North West Facilities Group, Lancashire are represented by Rob Briers, RDO Stuart Urquhart and Dave Herriman. The group did their usual first rate job in helping clubs drive forward achieve their ambitions. I would emphasise it is important that clubs get in touch early in the planning process to avoid mistakes, duplication etc

As ever a big thank you to the CB and club volunteers who have helped with Development in the County, I must mention Rob Briers, Dave Herriman, Ken Andrews, Tom Fitzgerald, Malcom Worsley, Carol and Mike Baker, the newcomer Peter Saunders and the President Dave Matthews who have again worked closely with team and who I know all my colleagues in the Area Delivery Team have the utmost respect for.

Our monthly review meetings have helped streamline an increasingly complex process and help us to work more as closely as ever.

Dave Southern

Area 5 RFU Manager

CLUB & COMMUNITY RUGBY

The work of the Committee has again this season been referenced to the RFU Key Drivers specifically around volunteer positions in clubs and club management exploiting the opportunities for Lancashire Clubs prior, during and after the Rugby World Cup 2015.

The committee recognises the vital contribution that volunteers make to our game, our clubs and the County therefore it was important that the committee organised initiatives that reward and recognise volunteers at both county and club level. This programme provided volunteers with tickets for the QBE International Tickets at Twickenham, hospitality at Twickenham, hospitality with the RFU President, and recognition and presentation of Lancashire CB Valued Volunteer Ties at two County Dinners at Blackburn and Leigh Rugby Clubs. These initiatives recognised and rewarded thirty six valued volunteers from Lancashire Clubs this season.

Efficient and effective club management remains a priority for the committee. During this work it has lead, provided mentors and supported the RFU Leadership Academy, which has again been held in Lancashire following its success last season. Once again fifteen Lancashire club leaders have successfully completed the programme of over a dozen club development workshops ranging from Maximising Commercial Revenue, Personal Leadership to Club Health & Safety Assessments. The committee applauds the RFU in continuing to run this programme, recognising the value in investing in the club volunteers who will lead clubs and the CB in the years to come.

The committee also identifies and supports Lancashire Clubs considered at risk, working with the RFU RDO staff at supporting these clubs in their development.

In addition the committee supports the area Facilities Committee promoting facility development across the Lancashire. The County consistently achieves a disproportionate higher number of Lancashire clubs securing facility-funding grants. The recent Nat-West Rugby Force applications saw over twenty Lancashire clubs being successful, developing facilities in preparation for the Rugby World Cup.

The Lancashire Rugby World Cup 2015 Steering Group is a programme of work that the Committee oversees and supports. This involved over 30 Lancashire clubs identifying 48 RWC Champions this season, who were supported by workshops that promote the opportunities for Lancashire clubs prior, during and after the RWC 2015. Lancashire has been successful in securing four locations for the RWC Webb Ellis Tour- Blackpool, Crosby Beach, Bury and Liverpool St Helens will be hosting the tour in July this year prior to the RWC commencement in September.

In addition the committee has secured funds to provide packs of resources for clubs to help promote and advertise their clubs as 'Fanzones' during the RWC tournament. These include Flags , bunting , vinyl signs and banners. These resources have been carefully branded to ensure they are a valuable asset to the clubs post RWC.

The committee has again this season recognised the need to support clubs in recruiting and developing club referees. This work has involved supporting the Referee Association in providing funding for ELRA courses to train club referees.

This year saw the committee take over responsibility for marketing and communications across the CB. This work involved overseeing the development of plans for a new Lancashire Web-site and development of a social media presence. Following consultation with clubs and members it was recognised that the current site was not engaging clubs or members so plans are advanced to re-design the site to become a valuable asset and 'go-to' place for rugby clubs and anyone interested in rugby across Lancashire.

I would like to thank all the hard working volunteers who enthusiastically commit their free time and expertise to the work of the committee and the promotion of rugby across the county.

The priorities for the committee in 201/15 remain in support of Club Management, the recruitment and development of volunteers and building the legacy of the Rugby World Cup 2015, looking forward to the U20's RWC to be held in Manchester in 2016.

Malcolm Worsley

Club & Community Rugby Chairman

CUP & COMPETITIONS

A higher than usual dropout rate than usual. The table below shows the rate for each competition.

	Matches	Walkovers	Percentage
Brian Leigh Lancashire Trophy	14	4	28.57%
Lancashire Plate	11	1	9.09%
Alan Stone Lancashire Bowl	9	0	0.00%

Brian Leigh Lancashire Trophy

This competition remains undecided at the end of the current season. The Competition was thrown in to disarray by a club, who having asked for several postponements, deciding to withdraw three days before they were due to play.

The Competitions Committee will be meeting to decide what action to take to resolve this.

Lancashire Plate

The Competition was played in accordance with timetable set out. Liverpool Collegiate and Trafford MV contested the Final. This was played on Saturday 2 May 2015 and it was a thrilling match. It was won by Liverpool Collegiate to complete a League and Cup double.

Alan Stone Lancashire Bowl

This was a very evenly matched competition and again played in accordance with the timetable. Last season's winners Ashton-Under-Lyne played North Manchester in a closely fought match. Having won promotion to a higher league in a play-off match Ashton proved too strong for North Manchester.

The Committee would like to thank all those who took part not only in the Finals but also in all the rounds. We would also like to thank Tyldesley RUFC for their organisation and hospitality on the Finals Day.

Brian Stott

Competitions Secretary

COUNTY SAFEGUARDING

National high profile 'safeguarding – child protection' cases have continued to dominate the nation and highlight even more attention on the incidence of child exploitation offences. All-be-it some being historical cases.

Fortunately none have involved Rugby Union or sport in general. These cases reinforce the continuing need to have robust safeguarding training & measures in place to protect vulnerable & young people within our rugby environment.

Lancashire CB have committed and dedicated Club Safeguarding Officers (CSO) in place at all our clubs with Mini & Junior sections (44 clubs).

CSO's have been appointed at some clubs who do not have Mini & Junior sections but do in fact have children visiting. This is good practice should be replicated.

The dedicated CSO's, CBSM and deputy CBSM's continue to improve and develop safeguarding practices, training, monitoring and reporting, within the County to ensure we maintain a safe environment for our young people and vulnerable people to enjoy rugby union across Lancashire. The work by these officers also ensures that coaches, managers and those involved with children in rugby union are safeguarded also. This work is in collaboration as always with the RFU Safeguarding and Legal Team at Twickenham. In some cases Local Social and police services also.

It is to be highlighted that the number of coaches and managers continues to grow and so to their attendances at the requisite Play it Safe training courses across the county. Safeguarding training is now acknowledged as CPD for many coaches.

Not all safeguarding in rugby is concerned with serious, major or high profile abuse cases. Or incidents of a 'serious' nature. The Play it Safe course identifies 'good practice' in protecting young people and supports a 'common sense' approach to safeguarding.

During 2014/15

- The Lancashire CB Safeguarding Team delivered eleven 'Play it Safe' Courses specifically designed for Team Managers and Coaches; at assorted clubs within the county. Approximately 220+ people. One club having no less than 47 participants in the audience.
- 12 Club Safeguarding Audits were completed; including personal visits to clubs by CBSM's
- 12 new CSO's were appointed and replaced existing CSO's who were standing down or moving on.
- Contacts were established with other officers in clubs who were points of secondary contact should the need arise. They were used so information was disseminated to members traditionally not involved with safeguarding.
- 14 Age Grade Dispensations were granted to young people for the 2014-2015 season (regulation 15). The Lancashire Governance committee now manages this process.
- In November 2014 a popular and successful Lancashire CSO Conference was held at Preston Grasshoppers with over 45 people in attendance. This allowed CSO's to meet face-to-face, share experiences and good practice. There was also training and learning built into the day. 'Kids First' RFU initiative was also demonstrated. The conference was a happy and beneficial day for all attendees. One, which will be repeated.

The year saw the experience and knowledge of the Club safeguarding officers throughout the county continue to grow. Many CSO's have professional knowledge of Safeguarding and Child Protection. Therefore Lancashire continues to be a very safe county to play rugby in.

Lancashire CB continues to excel, lead and develop safeguarding on behalf of the RFU;

- In Spring 2015, 6 Club Safeguarding Officers were recognised by Lancashire CB as a 'Valued Volunteers' for their hard work and commitment to Safeguarding. Collette Stevens & Shelley Wharmby from Sedgley Park. Emma Woodward from Warrington. Catherine Carr & Janet Bower from Ashton under Lyne and Heather Thorpe from Eccles.
- Heather Thorpe was also recognised nationally for her consistent and continuing work in regards to safeguarding.
- Lancashire CB continued relationships across Discipline and Safeguarding to ensure a complimentary approach and support to young persons appearing before 3 Disciplinary Panels;
- Lancashire CB conducted 24% Club Safeguarding Audits against the RFU Target of 10%.
- Enhanced liaison with the RDOs and integrating Safeguarding with Club Accreditations continues.

The electronic Disclosure and Barring Service; (DBS system) continues to provide a swift and easy access for the Disclosure and Barring requirement's to support rugby club Safeguarding. On average the certificates are returned within two weeks. Club Safeguarding Officers have worked hard to ensure this new process is effective and used appropriately.

Safeguarding continues to be robust and effective across the Lancashire.

Safeguarding continues to focus on good practice and common sense approaches.

A Safeguarding Development Plan has been created for the 2015 -2016 season It will be implemented by professional dedicated volunteers to ensure vulnerable & young people are protected and continue to enjoy rugby in a safe environment.

Carol Baker

Lancashire CB County Safeguarding Manager

MANCHESTER & DISTRICT REFEREES

This year marks the end of Geoff Elliott's term of office, a role in which he has performed admirably in his usual calm and unflappable manner. As the principal representative of the Society he has combined his club visits between those to which he been appointed to assess referees and those to which he has not previously had the pleasure.

It is with regret we marked the passing of Alan Scott, always a stalwart member of the Wigan club.

After the usual excellent start to the new season the weather stepped in to cause havoc with postponements often late in the week. The initial hard work of the three Appointment Secretaries being rendered all for nought and the extra load placed upon the Re-Appointments teams was tremendous.

This season we have appointed to 3513 matches (200 less than last year). We were unable to appoint to 19 matches due to a shortage of referees. Those thinking about taking up the challenge of refereeing would be advised to do so now, as the prospects of rapid promotion and rising to higher level matches are better than in living memory.

This season we have lost, mainly due to injury/age 32% (net) of previously very active guys. Several have cut back on their availability, whilst some have quit due to the demise of the Game: a significant number because of abuse and a small number because of the quality of matches at the lower levels (e.g.: sides not turning up; less than 15 players; uncontested scrums from the start). It is difficult to envisage being able to service the same number of sides next Season and it has been recommended to the Executive Committee that we take fewer sides into subscription.

The "feast 'n' famine" created by the Structured Season continues to frustrate: this season the non-league Saturdays invariably leave us with 50 referees spare heels and cats go into hiding. On the league weeks, especially before Christmas when the schools are active, we are short, albeit we have scrapped through most of the time, mainly thanks to the hard work of the reappointments teams and the flexibility of a weighty number of the membership (especially those who have doubled up from time-to-time). The difficulty has arisen mainly due to having no 'spare' refs to form a cohort of standbys. The organizing personnel continue to ignore our requests for tweaks to alleviate the pressures.

The Sunday situation is similar in terms of just getting by... an increasing number are declining to make themselves available. Midweek appointments are also under pressure with the decline in numbers, the increase in matches and the changing demands of the workplace. The work mid-week is made more difficult by some of the education establishments' poor administration.

However! To end on a positive note, thanks must be given to the overwhelming majority of referees who give reliable, selfless service on a regular basis. A similar plaudit and thanks should be extended

to virtually all the Club Contacts: their conscientious work, administration and excellent communication makes the life of the Appointments Team a whole lot easier.

On a brighter note our congratulations go out to Matt Turvey on his promotion to the RFU National Panel of Referees and we await the decision on that of Callum Sharp and Matt Riley for promotion to the North Group. This is in no small measure due to the admirable work done by Nigel Yates with the NW Federation Development Squad and the Development Forum.

It also a pleasure to offer congratulations to Graham Hughes on his inclusion onto the RWC panel of TMOs', the only one selected from the Northern Hemisphere.

Andy McMillan has continued to improve upon the level of Match Observer reporting following on from the successful training courses held during the season.

Nigel Longley has enabled referees to measure and improve upon their fitness levels via the sessions he has organised at venues in both the north and south of our area.

Thanks are again due to those Club Contacts who continue to assist by inputting their fixtures on time, especially in the case of re-arranged fixtures and also accepting the inevitable referee cry-offs without complaint. Just a polite reminder to ensure that they receive a reply from the referee should they need to leave a message. We just now need to bring the recalcitrant few up to their excellent standard.

We should like to express our sincere thanks to the clubs for the hospitality shown to members on their visits, long may it continue.

In addition to those mentioned, many more have contributed significantly to ensure the successful running of the Society, to all of them our sincere thanks are offered. And finally, my personal thank you goes out to those who have assisted me throughout the season. Summer well.

Geoff Gill

Hon. Secretary, Manchester & District Referees Society

LIVERPOOL & DISTRICT REFEREES

We come to the end of another season one in which England once again finished runners up in the six nations but hopefully we will see them winning the World Cup later this year. In this respect the RFU are holding workshops round the country visiting both Lancashire and Cheshire. The last World Cup held in the UK attracted many new comers to the game as players, coaches and referees, however their retention, according to the data was short lived. Let's hope it is different this time and that the competition provides an opportunity for the Society to attract new referees.

With the above in mind it gives me the opportunity to thank Kevin Toole for all the hard work he has put in during the season presenting Level 1 and Level 2 referee courses which have seen a number of new recruits to the society. It is also worth noting that Kevin continues to work with the North West Federation in attracting and training young referees who officiate at junior as well as senior games. This will ultimately bring rewards for the Liverpool Society. The other initiative started by Conal Scholes last season mentoring and developing club referees on Sunday mornings has stalled a little this season although it is still an important part of our programme for developing referees at all levels. As part of this programme Paul Snellgrove who works and lives in the Isle of Man is to coach/mentor the referees on the island. Paul was a Level 5 referee and as such is well qualified to undertake this position. Hopefully it will bear fruit in the not too distant future.

Under the guidance of Ben Davis supported by Kevin Toole the mid-monthly meetings, for those who attended, have proved very successful. A full programme of events ensured that the meetings were positive, instructive and full of honest repartee and debate. At this juncture it would be right and proper to thank the Liverpool Collegiate Club for hosting the Society throughout the season and providing the curry which everyone enjoyed. Next season I hope to see more referees attending as this is good for their development and potential for upgrading.

This years Annual Dinner was once again a very successful event enjoyed by Society and Club members who met at the Athenaeum Club in central Liverpool. The guest speaker Phil Bennett was excellent giving us a most refreshing insight into international rugby especially his account of his Lions tours. At this point I must thank Colin Kershaw for the time and effort he put in in order to make the occasion worthy of the Liverpool Society. One disappointing aspect on the night was the lack of support from Society members. Maybe this can be rectified next year.

Once again this season there are many positives to report regarding on the field matters. The Society is very pleased and proud to note that Ian Tempest is now a fully-fledged Premiership and International referee. He represents the Society with distinction and we hope to see him fulfil his potential and achieve Six Nation status. At this point congratulations must go to Ben Davis on his elevation to the National Panel of Referees. We wish him well for next season. We also have to congratulate James Brown on being selected for the National Panel of Assistant Referees. Well done to both of them! Other individuals Brenden McGaffney and Colin Burrell have had good seasons as RFU referee and assistant referee respectively. Our young referees are beginning to show their potential as part of the North West Federation and we can look forward to their elevation in the near future. Geraint Davies and Bob Wilkinson still maintain their positions within the RFU as coach and watcher. At North Group Paul Warrington and Ron Johnson retain their position as coaches as does Bryan Davies as a watcher.

As last season it is pleasing to note that the Liverpool Referees Society continues to deliver an excellent service to our clubs, schools, universities and colleges, not to mention our Sunday Colts leagues. During the season our referees have been available to ensure that we honour our commitments in a professional manner which has brought praise from many quarters of the game. Hence, I can inform the meeting that several promotions to referees, coaches and watchers have taken place at the lower levels and whilst too numerous to mention individuals the message that is being displayed is that the Society structure would appear sound and is fostering the development of refereeing in all circles, again thanks to all involved.

The Committees of the Society continue to work on your behalf to ensure that Society Business is dealt with in a mature and diligent manner. Any member who would like to take hands on approach and help as a committee member should put their name forward for office.

Finally, I read in an article recently presented by the British Psychological Society that referees suffer from 'illusory superiority'. It stated that referees go into the game with a great deal of confidence, they expect to do well and they really do love what they do. The article suggests that they are not bothered about people's perception of them and when they finish a game they recognise that they may have made mistakes but feel they have done a good job. Yes you've guessed, the article was referring to Soccer referees who see themselves as superior. When asked how good they were 100% thought they were in the top 20%. Rugby referees, you will not be surprised to learn, are a different breed altogether. The research found rugby referees are usually required to make quick responses and have the ability to take in dynamic, evolving information, come up with an instant reaction and stick to it. Confirmation of this superiority lies in the situation that presents us with greatest challenge – the

tackle. This is because there are so many things happening at the same time it makes the incident the most difficult to referee in ALL of sport. There is no illusory superiority syndrome with rugby referees – they know they are the best!!

I wish you all a good rest during the summer, thank you for your efforts during the long season and hope to see you fit and well at the beginning of next season.

Anthony Rossall

Hon. Secretary, Liverpool Referees Society

DISCIPLINARY REPORT

There have been twenty four Disciplinary hearings so far this season with one more in the pipeline. This is once again an increase in meetings due to the IRB Regulations meaning that players are suspended from the sending off until their hearing. The number of cases heard has also increased to one hundred and seventy up three on last season.

There are three things of concern to the Disciplinary Committee.

Replacements

We have had a couple of cases of replacements coming on to the field of play and involving themselves in brawls. They always do it in the role of peacemaker and/or defender.

Parents and/or Coaches

The abuse and/or advice coming from parents and/or coaches are increasing in volume and abusive in nature.

We have suspended a parent for 12 months from the touchline for entering the field of play and pushing the referee because he did not like the way his daughter was tackled.

All clubs have been written to on both these points and it will be monitored.

There is one club now in excess of five orderings off and/or proved charges of misconduct.

Referee Abuse

This becoming something of a perennial issue but we are seeing an increase in the questioning and disputing of referee decisions. In some cases this becoming abusive. The power to sort this out is in the hands of clubs.

Clubs must address these three issues as a matter of urgency.

Season 2014/2015 Statistics

Total Cases Heard	170
Proved	159
Dismissed	11
Sent Off	166
Charged (5.12)	4
Number of Clubs	52

Striking	71	41.71%
Butting	4	2.35%
Kicking	9	5.29%
Stamping	6	3.53%
Dangerous Tackle	13	7.65%
Biting	1	0.59%
Contact With The Eye Area	0	0%
2 Yellow Cards	26	15.29%
Dissent / Abuse	14	8.24%
Other	8	4.71%
Misconduct	5	2.94%
Dismissed	11	6.47%
Pending	2	1.18%
Total	170	

Conclusion

In closing I would like to thank all clubs for their prompt and accurate responses to requests for information. The referees for sending in their reports accurately and on time. The members of the Disciplinary Committee for all their hard work during the season.

Brian Stott

Disciplinary Committee Secretary

RFU NORTHERN COMPETITION COMMITTEE (RFUNCC)

All discussions in Rugby circles in the past twelve months have been concentrated on the Adult Competition Review. The argument over the differing numbers of games proposed to be played boils down to this.

If we take a two year period:

14 team leagues would play $26 \times 2 = 52$ games (13 Home games per season, with no National Cup Competition)

12 team leagues would play $22 \times 2 = 44$ league games (11 home games per season) plus a minimum of 6 cup games = 50 games.

In year 1 in addition to the 11 home games there would be a minimum of 1 home/1 away pool cup game, with a further knockout game, venue dependent on the draw.

In the second year the knockout draw if away in year 1 would be reversed giving 11 home league games 1 home, 1 away pool cup games plus 1 home knockout game

In effect one lost home game over a two year period.

Clubs would also get two tranches of funding for Cup participation, the amount dependent upon the league level.

A survey is now going to be conducted to ascertain the clubs desires. When making your choice please consider the Lancs/Cumbria situation. The structure we have just agreed is that from Level 6 down Lancs will play with Cheshire. Cumbria will play in their own Leagues. This cannot be guaranteed if the Adult Competition Review is not implemented and clubs may be transferred to compete in North Lancs/Cumbria.

Promotions:

Promoted		
Blackburn	Winners NLC	Into NIW
Leigh	Play off winners NLC/SLC	Into NIW
Oldham	Winners NL1	Into NLC
Ashton U Lyne	Play off winners NL1/Cumbria	Into NLC
Pendle	Winners NL2	Into NL1
Eagle	Runners up NL2	Into NL1
Liverpool Collegiate	Winners SLC2	Into SLC1
Tyldesley	Runners up SLC2	Into NLC Level Transfer
Congratulations to all of the above.		

RFU Cup Nominations

Intermediate Cup	Liverpool St Helens
Senior Vase	Littleborough
Junior Vase	Bury

Dave Clarke

Northern League Rep, Divisional Organising Committee

COUNTY SCHOOLS UNION

2014 / 2015 has been another busy and successful year for Lancashire Schools. The calendar has again been full of inter schools matches at every level, varying from the elite with several schools playing on the top circuits in the country, to schools entering emerging competitions for the first time.

The County Schools development plan is constantly evolving, and in cooperation with the other areas of Lancashire rugby continues to strive to improve the quality of rugby within the county. In World Cup Year the county has looked at many ways not only to celebrate the global game, but through its World Cup Champions led by the indefatigable Ken Andrews, has initiated a number of ideas which will embrace not only the enthusiasm generated by the event, but ensure that it leaves a positive legacy in terms of rugby development in the county.

Membership continues to remain reasonably healthy, with the majority of schools renewing promptly. New schools have joined the county; and through the All Schools and Emerging Schools agenda, we seem to be encouraging more schools to play. Girl's rugby continues to be popular, and the schools section will continue to support any initiatives which will increase the number of girls playing rugby.

Cup Competitions.

This season, the county schools programmes culminated in Finals Days at Liverpool St. Helens RFC and Blackburn RUFC. These competitions form an integral part of the County Schools calendar, and the opportunity for players to test their skills in this competitive environment cannot be underestimated. Through representative rugby, other avenues are available for the more able players to develop their skills, but the county competitions continue to provide great opportunities for the vast majority of enthusiastic youngsters playing rugby at schools in the county to capture a feeling of tangible success and achievement with their school mates.

The annual cup, plate and emerging schools competitions' successfully took place towards the end of the season. The finals days were superbly hosted by Liverpool St Helens and Blackburn; we were

blessed with good weather, which encouraged many people to attend both events. The car parks at Blackburn were especially full, and thanks to the dry weather the club were able to utilise the training pitch as a makeshift car park. This event came the day after the last 6 Nations England International at Twickenham, and I would like to thank all those members of the committee who left London early on the Sunday morning to support our event, even though one or two didn't quite make it home on time due to problems on the M6!

Once again there was a strong entry in all competitions. Despite the problems with the weather and different half terms, all the main cup and plate competitions ran relatively smoothly. I would like to thank Paul Fernside for his terrific organisation and enthusiasm, and to all the Masters in Charge for their cooperation.

My thanks must go to both LSH and Blackburn Rugby clubs for the use of their superb facilities. I would also like to thank everyone else who contributed to the events and throughout the season. I would like to personally thank Ken Andrews and Paul Fernside for their continued support of myself as chairman and of County rugby in general.

Finally, thanks to Dave Herriman, Tom Fitzgerald and Peter Elliott for their help with the logistics, programmes etc, etc, and to everyone for all their hard work on the finals days.

SCHOOLS CUP AND PLATE FINALS 2015 RESULTS

Wednesday 11th March 2015 at Liverpool St. Helens RFC

Under 18s

John Fletcher Cup	Stonyhurst College	12-10	Lancaster RGS
Plate	Myerscough College	27 - 6	Liverpool College

Sunday 22nd March at Blackburn RUFC

Under 13s

Brian Cauwood Cup	Lancaster RGS	20-5	Audenshaw School
Plate	The Manchester GS	17 - 5	Hutton GS

Under 14s

Peter Hughes Cup	Kirkham GS	38-26	The Manchester GS
Plate	Birkdale HS	19 - 17	Hutton GS

Under 15s

Ian Sinclair Cup	Kirkham GS	52-7	The Manchester GS
Plate	AKS Lytham	15-10	Bolton School

Under 16s

John Dewhurst Cup	The Manchester GS	43-10	Lancaster RGS
Plate	Bolton School	20-10	Morecambe HS

Emerging Schools Competition

The Emerging schools competition is still working towards an ideal format, especially in the early stages of the competition. As rugby is not the primary sport in a number of the schools that participate, it is sometimes difficult for teachers to play on the regular basis needed to complete Pool matches. However, that format does provide the opportunity for teams to play more competitive matches than a knockout system may allow. There have unfortunately this year been a few issues also relating to players not from a rugby background occasionally questioning the referee, and not adhering to the standards of sportsmanship we would expect. Next season a letter will go out to all participating schools to remind them of the Core Values and expectations. Ken Andrews has been a staunch supporter of this competition since its inception, and once again this season his efforts have been invaluable.

The Emerging Schools finals were again held at Liverpool St Helens on March 18th. Many thanks must go to all at LSH for enabling the matches to be played. Fortunately there was no snow this year, and we were thrilled blessed with a dry, sunny day. The players responded accordingly, and once again we were fortunate to witness some terrific rugby, which was a credit to both players and their teachers. This year 10 out of the 12 finalists were from different schools, with five coming from the All Schools programme, emphasising again the popularity of the competition

Under 13s

Trophy	Range HS	15-12	Haydock HS
Plate	Standish HS	35-7	Ormskirk School

Under 14s

Trophy	Haydock HS	22-17	St Margarets Acad.
Plate	Garstang Academy	17-15	St Augustines HS

Under 15s

Trophy	West Hill HS	7-5	St Wilfrids Acad.
Plate	St Augustines HS	15-15	Cardinal Heenan (Shared)

REPRESENTATIVE RUGBY

Once again, a range of schools provided players who represented the County at U'15, 16, 17 and 18, with a number of players achieving success with the North, and England.

Running a county team at these age groups involves a great deal of commitment and enthusiasm, and I would like to thanks to everyone involved in this crucial area.

Further information on these age group squads will be given by the relevant reports.

REFEREES

Several people including Peter Hughes have worked hard to provide weekend and midweek officials throughout the season. It must have seemed like a logistical nightmare at times for him this season, with the number of cancellations and re scheduling as a result of the harsh winter, but Peter in his

inimitable way managed to ensure that matches were refereed by the right people. Further dialogue has taken place to look at ways of gaining more referees for our matches. It is crucial that we as schools endeavour to encourage our staff and pupils to take up refereeing. Our thanks go to Peter and all the referees and officials of both Manchester and Liverpool Societies for supporting our schools during a very busy season. The Manchester Society provided referees for both the schools finals at Blackburn and for the U18s finals at LSH, and the Liverpool Society for the Emerging Schools Finals at LSH – many thanks to everyone concerned.

Finally, a big thank you to the officials of our own schools section, who sit on the many different sections of this and other committees. Simon Newton who has been our secretary for very many years, has decided to take more a back seat after this season, and I would especially like to thank him for his support, guidance and commitment over his time with us. The fact that Simon is not a school teacher, but prepared to put in the time and effort he has for us, says so much about him.

This year we have looked to a more executive style of leadership within the Schools section. An executive committee was formed with two sub- committees who had a remit for Rugby Development and Competitions respectively. It is hoped that by forming these committees the leadership of schools rugby in Lancashire will be more streamlined and effective. Also to the RDOS, the Senior County Committee, for their continued support and all the many individuals who support schools and youth rugby. The number of people involved is too large to mention everyone personally, thank you all for your efforts.

John Morgan

Chairman, Lancashire County Schools Union

COLTS RUGBY

Colts Rugby in the North West, including our County, went through a difficult period at the start of this season, highlighted by the collapse of the standalone under 19's league, run by the North West Colts League. This experiment confirmed that most young players at this age group are playing Senior Rugby for their Clubs. *A decision has already been taken to exclude under 19's from next year's Competitions/Leagues.*

Following the demise of the under 19's league several meetings were convened, chaired by David Herriman, to discuss the decline of Clubs running Colts sides and the fall in player numbers. Recruitment and Retention remain key issues faced by everyone, my thanks to all attendees and David.

Following a slight restructure, the League programme turned out to be “competitive” as ever. With sides from Lancashire just being pipped at the post:-

Conference A	Winners Runners up	Lymm Vale of Lune	Conference B	Winners Runners up	Chester Fylde
Intermediate B	Winners Runners up	Anselmians Newcastle	Intermediate C	Winners Runners up	Aldwinians Rochdale
Junior A	Winners Runners up	Caldy Bowden	Junior B	Winners Runners up	Sale FC Chester
Junior C	Winners Runners up	Penrith Oswestry	Junior D	Winners Runners up	Hawcoat Pk Bolton

Our sides fared better in the League Cups:-

Senior Cup	Vale of Lune	0 - 17	Lymm
Senior Plate	Anselmians	17 - 10	Stockport
Senior Bowl	Fylde	17 - 28	Penrith
Senior Shield	Fleetwood	17 - 8	Crewe & Nantwich

Junior Cup	Glossop	5 - 43	Lymm
Junior Plate	Wigan	36 - 7	Leigh
Junior Bowl	Preston Grasshoppers	24 - 17	Chester
Junior Shield	Sedgley Park	46 - 3	New Brighton

Our County's representatives in the National U17's competitions were Tyldesley, Heaton Moor both knocked out in the group stages.

This seasons County Cup Finals (for me) were tremendous, the atmosphere at Wigan generated by the crowd, proved to many, just how important these finals are to the lads (young men). Every player competed to the best of their abilities, none more so than Adam Kazmi from Bolton whose mother sadly passed away three days before the final.

The Rugby "Family" was the winner on the day however for the record:-

Frank Morgan Snr Cup	Widnes	19 - 8	Fylde	
Joe McDonough Snr Trophy	Preston	26 - 12	Rochdale	
Rob Briers Jnr Cup	Preston	27 - 27	Glossop	Preston Winners
Alan James Jnr Trophy	Bolton	12 - 43	Manchester	

My thanks to all the volunteers at Wigan Rugby Club whose friendliness added to the occasion.

To both our referee's society's *thank you* for your continued support throughout the season especially Jon Jeskins and John Munn.

To the lads who represented the County with the 18gp congratulations.

To all the players, managers coaches and parents your efforts are appreciated keep up the good work!

As Colts Competitions Chairman I repeat my message from the finals programme, a simple request, would all Lancashire Clubs entering teams into the North West Colts League(s) at either Under 17's or 18's for the season 15/16 enter that team into the Lancashire Cups. We will only achieve 100% uptake with your co-operation and support to keep our COUNTY'S TRADITIONS alive.

Alan James

Colts Competitions Chairman

MINI JUNIOR (7 – 16 AGE GRADE) COMMITTEE

This has been a hard but successful season for different reasons.

After a rocky start with all the changes I was thrown in at the deep end, but with a lot of help from David Herriman, Tom Fitzgerald, Ken Andrews and Mark Downs we wouldn't be where we are today. In the beginning there was a very poor response from clubs to attend meetings. After arranging numerous open meetings across Lancashire we finally got a committee together from clubs that have not been involved before, so we could now look to move forward. Steve Blackburn took up the role of secretary and was just getting to grips with things when ill health has forced him to step down. We wish Steve a speedy recovery. A new secretary was found in Kate.

As far as I am aware there have been no major issues reported to us this season.

We are working on building a new data list that will have at least two contacts per club. This will give us a better chance of communicating between each other and working towards improving the standards of county and club relationships.

Allen Bower took on the role of competitions organiser for the U12's festival and the Blacksticks Blue Junior Challenge, and what a great job he has done. It is hard to pick up the reins of anything half way through a season.

Finals days were held at Vale of Lune for the U12's festival, Leigh for the plate and vase and Southport held the cup and bowl finals

A grateful thanks goes to the above clubs and their band of volunteers for hosting great finals day.

U12's festival results are as follows

24 teams entered at U12s only. 8 teams in the finals day Sefton beat Leigh

Blacksticks Blue Challenge Results are as follows.

116 team took part in this season's Blacksticks Blue Junior Challenge

U13s 34 teams entered 5 withdrew.

Cup Waterloo beat Heaton Moor, Plate Sedgley beat Sefton, Vase Southport beat Fylde, Bowl Ormskirk beat Rossendale.

U14s 26 teams entered 3 withdrew,

Cup Manchester beat Fylde, Plate Southport beat Rochdale, Vase Bolton beat Eccles.

U15s 34 teams entered 4 withdrew,

Cup PGH beat Eccles, Plate Blackburn beat Widnes, Vase Collegiate beat Fleetwood, Bowl, Aldwinians beat TMV.

U16s 22 teams entered 1 withdrew,

Cup, Manchester beat Warrington, Plate Blackburn beat Ashton under Lyne, Vase Bolton beat Widnes.

We now look forward to the starts of next season with new vigour.

Ian Spivey

Chairman, 7 – 16 Age Grade Committee

COUNTY SQUADS RESULTS & SCORES – 2014/15

Senior XV – County Championship (Bill Beaumont Cup – Division One)

09-May	v	Cheshire	Chester RFC	W	21 - 18
16-May	v	Durham	Blaydon RFC	W	17 - 6
23-May	v	Yorkshire	Fylde RFC	W	29 - 14
31-May	v	Cornwall	Twickenham	L	13-18

Under 20s – County Championship

30-Nov	v	Northumberland	Northern RFC	L	19 - 38
4-Jan	v	Yorkshire	Liverpool St Helens RFC	L	13 – 47
25 Jan	v	Cheshire	Crewe & Nantwich RUFC	L	0 – 20

Womens XV

09-May	v	Cumbria	Southport RUFC	L	15 – 17
16-May	v	Durham	Blaydon RFC	D	31 – 31
23-May	v	Yorkshire	Burnley RUFC	L	21 – 27

18 Group County Squad

26-Oct	v	Cumbria	Darlington MP RFC	W	19 – 10
2-Nov	v	Yorkshire	West Park Leeds RUFC	L	19 – 26
16-Nov	v	Cheshire	Blackburn RUFC	W	29 - 22

Under 18s Development (Under 17s) Squad

15-Mar	v	Yorkshire	Sedgley Park RUFC	L	13 – 27
19-Apr	v	Cheshire	Blackburn RUFC	W	43 – 7
26-Apr	v	Staffordshire	Sedgley Park RUFC	W	53 - 13

16 Group County Squad

26-Oct	v	Yorkshire	Queen Ethelburgas School	L	5 - 24
16-May	v	Cheshire	Kings School	L	12 - 15
23-May	v	Cumb/Nthum/Durham	Giggleswick School	W	15 - 10

15 Group County A Squad

08-Mar	v	Cheshire A	Southport RUFC	L	10 - 47
29 Mar	v	Yorkshire A	Sandal RUFC	L	23 - 7

15 Group County B Squad

08-Mar	v	Cheshire B	Southport RUFC	L	17 - 22
29-Mar	v	Yorkshire B	Sandal RUFC	L	17 - 5

Girls Under 18s Squad

12-Oct		North Championship	Vale of Lune RUFC		
9-Nov		Cheshire	Southport RUFC	W	40 – 24
30-Nov		Yorkshire	Old Brodleians RUFC	W	26 - 5

Girls Under 15s Squad

12-Oct		North Championship	Vale of Lune RUFC		
9-Nov		Cheshire	Southport RUFC	W	47 - 7
30-Nov		Yorkshire	Old Brodleians RUFC	L	0 - 57

COUNTY OFFICERS & OTHER OFFICIALS 2014 - 2015

County President David Matthews
Vice Presidents:
Tim Stirk (Senior Vice President)
Tom Fitzgerald
Keith Mellalieu
Robert Grant
Mark Nelson

Members of the Management Board
Chairman: David Herriman
Hon. Secretary: Mark Downs
Hon. Treasurer: Keith Mellalieu
(resigned Dec 2014)
Hon. Treasurer: Stephen Briers

RFU Chairman of Management Board
Bill Beaumont CBE DL

RFU Council & RFU Management Board
Rob Briers

RFU Council Members
Ken Andrews

Hon. Meeting Secretary
Peter Elloitt

Hon. Membership Secretary
Anne-Marie Briers

Hon. County Press Officer
Peter Elliott

Safeguarding Manager
Carol Baker

Senior Deputy: Jane Lyth

County Committees:

Rugby Development Committee
Director/Chairman: Rob Briers
Secretary: Tom Fitzgerald

Club & Community Rugby Committee
Incl Marketing
Director/Chairman: Malcolm Worsley

Finance & Funding Committee
Chairman: Mel Whittle
Asst. Treasurer: Stephen Briers

Cup & Competitions Committee
Chairman: Mike Cornelia
Secretary: Brian Stott

Disciplinary Committee
Chairman: Nigel Yates
Secretary: Brian Stott

Governance Committee
Director/Chairman: Tim Stirk

Coaching Committee

Chairman: Mark Nelson
Secretary: Tom Fitzgerald

Womens Rugby Development Group

Chair: Helen Duggan
17-18 (Colts Rugby) Committee
Chairman: Tommy Hughes

7-16 (Junior Rugby) Committee
Chairman: Ian Spivey
Secretary: Steve Blackburn

County Schools Union

Chairman: John Morgan
Secretary: Simon Newton

Colts Competitions Committee
Chairman: Alan James
Secretary: Jon Kitchen

Assistant Hon. Secretary
Brian Stott

Operations Manager
Tom Fitzgerald

Match Programme Editor
Peter Elliott

Hon. Solicitor
John Bullough

Hon. Doctor
Dr John Morgan

Chairman of Selectors for
Senior XV & U20s John Greenwood
Womens XV
18 Group Stuart Kohler

The RFU's Rugby Development Team

Area 5 Manager Dave Southern
North Lancashire Stuart Urquhart
Merseyside Andrew Soutar
Gtr. Manchester George Glenn
City of Manchester Phil Clarke

Area 5 Responsibilities:

Training Phil Kearns
Players Ian Bletcher
Women & Girls Claire Antcliffe
Facilities & Funding Tom Bartram

*Contact details can be found on the
Lancashire County website:*

www.lancshirerugby.com

Note to Annual Members:
Individual Subscriptions (£20.00) are due on 1st July 2015
Royal Bank of Scotland: 16-29-34 10251318
(not the former NatWest Account)

The Lancashire County Rugby Football Union was established in 1881

**Lancashire County Rugby Football Union
is a company limited by guarantee**

Registered Office:

Hanover Buildings, 11-13 Hanover Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L1 3DN
Registered in England & Wales – 06959820

Directors: DN Herriman (Chairman), M Downs (Company Secretary),
K Andrews, RTJ Briers, SM Briers, JRS Greenwood,
JT Hughes, DW Matthews, TD Stirk, MJ Worsley.
(KG Mellalieu, Hon. Treasurer, resigned Dec 2014)

The Lancashire Rugby Union Youth Trust

Referred to in the Annual Report,
Is a Charity Registered with the Charity Commissioners – 1014271

**Contact details and other information can be found on the
Lancashire County
website: www.lancashirerugby.com**