

LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

ANNUAL REPORT

2016-17

THE SECRETARY'S OPENING REMARKS

As ever my first task in my report is to thank the outgoing president, Tom Fitzgerald. I have worked closely with Tom for many years and have only the highest respect for him and the professionalism he conducts County business with.

Tom has been the cornerstone of the day to day running of rugby in this County and has been instrumental in the formulation of new initiatives that have put us in a position where a lot of our work is seen as best practice. These include our Academy, Coach mentoring schemes and training conferences. With his close contacts and networks he has managed to secure some great players and leaders to deliver these schemes.

Having spoken to Tom I know how much over and above his regular volunteering work the office of President involves, with over 150 club visits and official engagements with many thousands of miles covered.

Tom is greatly supported by his wife Angela, both of whom I consider tireless supporters of this County and I am extremely pleased to class them as the closest of personal friends.

To Rugby matters, Our Senior XV have reached the final and other reports in this booklet will cover how they got there, at the time of printing we are in the run up to the final at Twickenham against Cornwall whom we expect to be strong with very vocal support.

Thanks to Mark Nelson, Steve Rigby, John Greenwood and all the backroom team, along with players who give up their time at the end of very busy seasons to support senior Rugby in Lancashire.

One achievement we should be rightly proud of is the formation of the Lancashire Royals, a County representative side that gives players from Level 5 and below a chance of rugby at a step above their normal club side. Its been the chance for players to make new teammates and grow friendships. The players are rightly proud to have been part of this. Its in its infancy but we hope our initiative will grow throughout the Union and attract other Counties to form similar teams.

Financially we are on a sound footing with guidance from our Chairman of Finance, Chris Smail and our Honorary Treasurer Paul Deakin. We have highlighted three investment streams to focus on as we move forward over the next three seasons, this type of planning will ensure we are at the fore of whole game development. The team of Stephen Briers, Catherine Ryan and Mike Bailey are thanked for their continued work for the County.

Our Mini & Junior Committee have spent a great amount of time and effort ensuring that the tournaments and festivals have been planned, arranged and run. Along with putting together a

complex structured season and dealing with new age grade regulations they have my respects. The consequence of all this hard work was that Ian & Christine Spivey along with Allan Bower received a County Volunteers Award which had been proposed by the RFU professional staff.

Our Club & Community committee is our vital link between ourselves and our clubs. They are responsible for ensuring our volunteers are rewarded, our information is disseminated via Facebook, Twitter and Website and our source of information on the health of our individual clubs. I pass on my thanks to Malcolm Worsley and his team for the worthy job they have done his season.

Our two RFU Council representatives continue to serve us and the RFU with distinction, being part of several key committees and spending a lot of time travelling all around the Country in their role. Ken Andrews serves on the Club Development sub committee and will next season join the Education sub committee, and after an extended period of service on the Board, Rob Briers has been chosen as the Chairman of the Community Game Board. I feel that committee to be the most important within the structure of the RFU as it's the one that is responsible for grassroots rugby throughout the Union.

The County Schools Union under the Chairmanship of Robbie Jones is in great form with established rugby playing schools competing with great energy within their respective competitions and the emerging schools competition going from strength to strength. This is thanks to this committee and to all teachers who give up their own time out of school to run these sides. In addition to the County Schools Union, the addition of Rugby in the "All Schools" initiative is now providing success with many schools now taking up Rugby and feeding children in to our club structures.

As I reported last year the Womens and Girls game continues to grow at a cracking pace and a read of the report from Helen Duggan in this booklet highlights its expansion. We have this season a senior development squad the "Lancashire Roses" to help us focus on this aspect of the game. This aspect of the game provides us with one of our three core investment projects and we are already seeing the results. Our U15s and U18s play some great running rugby, our Roses are starting to "grow" and our Senior XV have again reached the final of the Gill Burns MBE County Championship final. They are to play Surrey at Richmond on the same day as the men's final at Twickenham. Now wouldn't a double celebration be grand.

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.

"Without the referees there is no game", a very true statement. I thank all who pull on the kit or administrate for the Manchester & District, Liverpool District and Federation Referees Societies.

The Disciplinary committee have been busy again this season providing one income stream that we would be happier without, however, I'm not sure our treasurer would agree. After the retirement of Nigel Yates, who I thank for his common sense and humour we have a new Witch Finder General. John Greenwood has Chaired the committee for this season and I am grateful as I know that there are a high frequency of meetings which eat in to both his and his committees personal time.

My personal gratitude's go firstly to Brian Stott the assistant secretary for covering for me when I have been unable to attend meetings and being a sounding board for decisions. Secondly, the gentleman I have the most respect for in Rugby, our Chairman, David Herriman, our daily conversations help me keep abreast of what is happening in the County. Anne Clarke for her help

with communications and the website which continues to grow and lastly Anne-Marie Briers, our Membership Secretary, the work done to produce the annual members book is a mammoth task.

To club administrators at all levels, to my County colleagues, players and members, summer well.

Mark Downs

Honorary Secretary

SENIOR RUGBY

We are there, back at the final after a season away, we thank Cheshire for representing the North in last seasons final, but we are back.....

Our opening game saw us prevail against a young Northumberland side 48-26 at Fylde, both sides had a fair sprinkling of debutants and this bodes well for the future of County rugby to see players buying into it.

The long trip down to the icon Cambridge University sports grounds to take on an Eastern Counties side who have developed well since their trip to Fylde a year ago, victory coming at 38-15.

And then it went to the wire with a repeat of last seasons final game against Cheshire. A loss would have seen Yorkshire go through. During the game word was coming through that Yorkshire were winning against Eastern Counties handsomely with a bonus point. We would have to win with a better points difference or with a bonus point. Bonus point it was and we are at Twickenham again to face Cornwall.

Mark Downs

Honorary Secretary

Lancashire Royals

The County's newest Representative side "The Royals" was launched this season aiming to bridge the gap between the County Age Grade Representative sides and the Senior XV. A lot of hard work by the County Rugby Development Committee came to fruition with myself, Martin Scott and Adrian Moffat forming the first Coaching/Management Team. We requested all Lancashire Clubs from Level 5 down nominate players to attend our Trial & Assessment session at Preston Grasshoppers on a cold late November night. In total 48 different players from 16 different Clubs ranging from Rossendale in National 3 North to Tarleton in North Lancashire 1 got involved at the Trial.

Our inaugural fixture was against the iconic Anti-Assassins at Preston Grasshoppers RFC on the 27th December, a large festive crowd were entertained by some good rugby from both sides with the Royals running out 20-12 winners.

We then took the Royals to play the last ever game at Kendal's Mint Bridge Ground at the end of April to face the full Cumbria County side. A close fought 1st half had the Royals trailing 12-7 at the break and our usual decisions to get everyone off the bench (9 changes) caused us to lose our shape for the first 20 minutes of 2nd half giving the home side the chance to rack up 26 points unanswered points. The last 20 saw us find our feet and although well beaten at the end the 51-14 score line doesn't show the true effort from the lads involved.

In total 39 players made their Royals debut from 15 different clubs, all seemed to welcome the experience and we hope to continue next season in the same vain.

Howard Hughes

U20s Team Manager

UNDER 20s

Once again the County U20 programme made steady progress and indeed could be seen to have been very successful, however the U20 Management Group felt we could have maybe done a little more, although that said a Semi-Final appearance in the Jason Leonard Shield and three players in the England Counties U20 squad is a decent return.

We held our Trial day at Wigan RUFC in September which finished with an enjoyable conditioned runout against the County U18s, interestingly both Squads would go on to have record numbers of players make the national team at their respective levels.

Once the Squad was picked we looked to our first game which was against Notts, Lincs. & Derby (NLD) away at Chesterfield Panthers RUFC. Our game tempo and vastly superior skills showed as we put the home side under the pump from the first whistle running out 57-5 winners.

Our only home game of the season was against Staffordshire who again could not handle the intensity we brought to the match and we ran out 43-0 winners on the day hosted by Wigan RUFC.

Next up Cheshire and local bragging rights, we found the squad stretched to maximum as injury and unavailability's took their toll. To be honest we never got going and occasional flashes of our usual high levels could not save us as we went down 31-7.

This meant we had to take the hard route if we wanted to get to the final. The Quarter Final saw us take to the road to meet Warwickshire at Broadstreet RFC. Once again we hit them with a solid defence and a quick-fire attack. Everyone played their part but standouts were Connor Wilkinson and his Fylde colleague Tom Carleton who ran in 4 tries in our 53-7 win.

The Semi-Final meant another trip to Cheshire at Birkenhead Park, we struggled in the scrum as the impressive Cheshire Front Row made things difficult however when we had possession we always looked like we could score and in the end the home side hung on for a 22-17 win and we ended our season losing to the eventually winners.

The North U20 Trial had 8 Lancashire players invited and after a tough day we got four players Connor Wilkinson, Tom Carleton, Toby Harrison and Nick Ashcroft in the final 23 man North U20 Squad. The following weekend the four Lancashire lads went down to Nottingham for the National selection festival and all four had excellent games. In the end Connor, Tom and Nick got the call with only Toby just missing out. We wish all three lads a successful tour of Holland with England Counties U20s in June.

Lots of people to thank including Coaches Martin Scott and Neil Ryan, Physio Jason Thomas and Kit Manager Richard "Dickie" Buckley, not to forget Wigan RUFC who hosted most of our training and our only home game, plus we had great support from President Tom Fitzgerald and Senior VP Dave Clarke.

We look now to go one better next season.

Howard Hughes

U20s Team Manager

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

6 November 2016 – Yorkshire 27 v 0 Lancashire, Harrogate RUFC

30 October 2016 – Cheshire 28 v 7 Lancashire, Lymm RUFC

23 October 2016 – Lancashire 40 v 41 Durham, Aspatria RUFC

Following a trial at U17 level in February 2016, followed by three County development games in the Spring, the U18 squad played three North Division selection games against Northumberland Cheshire and Yorkshire in October and November, at which 8 – 12 North Division selectors were in attendance at each game.

Despite Lancashire U18s losing all three games, this comprehensive process enabled 9 Lancashire players to demonstrate their capabilities and register among the elite 45 or so players from across the 6 counties that comprise North Division who then attended a further North Division skills assessment and trial, at the end December, at Woodhouse Grove School.

A North Squad of 23 was then selected to play against Midlands Division in February 2017 at Dudley Kingswindsford, and Lancashire was represented by six players. The England Counties U18s selectors were in attendance at this game, and the game between London and South East and the South West who played on the previous day. Reward for the successful players from both games was selection for England Counties U18s, who played a two-test series against Ireland Clubs and Schools at Easter in Dublin.

The following players were selected for England Counties U18s

Sam Stott, *Lancaster Royal Grammar School & Vale of Lune RUFC*, who was also made Captain for both games

Jack Granby, *Runshaw College & Tarleton RUFC*

Connor Johnson, *Myerscough College & Blackburn RUFC*

Henry Pearson, *Kirkham Grammar School & Fylde RUFC*

Wade Williams, *Sedbergh School & Waterloo RUFC*

In the past four years Lancashire have been represented at England Counties U18 level by at least three players, and it is a testament to the coaching team of Dan Orwin and John Young that Lancashire were able to boast the largest contingent from one County in this England Counties 2017 squad.

Stuart Kohler

Lancashire 18 Manager

UNDER 16s / 16s GROUP

Following the pathway change to Regional Academies implemented last season the process to assess and select players for the Lancashire squads required a new approach. During September & October initial trials excluded all SDG players, a final trial including SDG players was held in November with “A” & “B” squads selected.

Fixtures for the U16’s programme was disappointing with Yorkshire opting for one “A” squad game and both Newcastle Falcons & Leicester Tigers Academies not allowing fixtures to be arranged within the structured season. Therefore, the U16’s fixtures were as follows:

- Sunday 22nd Jan 2017 – Yorkshire v Lancashire “A” at Silcoates School
- Sunday 22nd Jan 2017 – Cheshire “B” v Lancashire “B” at New Brighton RFC
- Sunday 5th Feb 2017 – Lancashire v Cheshire “A” & “B” at Aldwinians RUFC

Training and preparation ahead of the opening fixture went very well and optimism was running high. The first match against Yorkshire, at Silcoates School, Wakefield, was a huge disappointment as the home side ran out convincing 42-0 winners. With the advantages of a one county Academy programme and having already played and convincingly beating Cheshire, Yorkshire started well and within 15 minutes were 3 converted tries up. To Lancashire's credit they competed with the home side for 20 minutes either side of half time, keeping out a well organised Yorkshire side. But with little opportunity to score and changes by both sides from the bench a stronger home side finished the game with 3 more converted tries in the last 15 minutes of the game.

With Yorkshire not having a "B" squad both Cheshire and Lancashire arranged a home & away fixture for the "B" squads and whilst Lancashire "A" was away in Yorkshire, the "B" squad travelled to New Brighton to play Cheshire "B". Despite a strong start by the Lancashire forwards, the domination at the set-piece could not convert into any score and Cheshire soon had the upper hand in the backs who scored 3 tries before the half time break. A better performance in the 2nd half with Lancashire's back row being consistently strong throughout the game started to peg back the Cheshire lead with 2 well taken tries but the home side run out eventual winners 29 v 12.

On 5th Feb at Aldwinians RUFC Lancashire hosted Cheshire "A" & "B". The "B" game was a disappointing game for Lancashire, who started well similar to the away game at New Brighton but once again could not convert possession into points and although a couple of good individual performances, collectively as a squad heads gradually went down and Cheshire "B" run out convincing winners 0 v 38. Too many changes to the team, muddy and cold conditions saw a team lose focus as the game went on.

The "A" fixture was an excellent game with some outstanding rugby being played by both teams and although Lancashire scored 5 tries to Cheshire's 4 a very fortunate bounce well into the 2nd half and the excellent boot of the Cheshire fly half (converting all 4 tries) made all the difference with Cheshire holding on to a 29 v 31 win.

Sale Sharks SDG:

Lancashire had 8 players in the SDG, these being James Harper, Louis Harper, Daniel Kelly, Evan Powell, Rafael Quirke, Joe Simpson, Charlie Warren and Cameron Wilkinson. Sale also added Josh Jones to the group following his performances in the county games.

Rafael Quirke went on to represent England U16's vrs Wales, had an outstanding game scoring 2 tries and making one other.

Bill Nichol

Lancashire U16 Head Coach

UNDER 15s / 15s GROUP

Entering October I found out my new role for the season in the County and so picked up a lot of straws and entered into new ground as the manager rather than coach.

Selection in October of the DPP groups at Myerscough College gave a good day for all DPP regions to see the standards of each area. A hectic day finally settled out leaving groups of players as follows.

23 Merseyside, 24 Manchester, 28 North Lincs with eight others to be looked at later due to injury or unavailability. This brought a final group of 83 players to final trial at AKS School on Sunday 30th

October. Still a very large group to thin down and a process not helped by some regions sending players back who had been deselected at the previous round.

This group would be further trimmed to aim at the core of 45/50 players.

We had a trial game arranged against Staffordshire and Firwood Waterloo played hosts for us. The game was a continuous substitution game to give a large squad some serious opposition. Lancashire ran out convincing winners in all of the three segments played. The rugby was good and the squad was showing good signs heading towards the first serious fixture against Cheshire.

The weather would then play its part in training, with sessions being moved at short notice or cancelled altogether. This will have had its effect on players with venues being as far apart as Aldwinians and Vale of Lune.

However confidence in the group was high heading into the Cheshire game on 3rd Jan at Burnage RUFC.

In these fixtures the B team playing first won a tight game 24-17.

The A team then came out and played strongly to win comfortably 29-5.

Some good individual performances adding to a good team effort put smiles on the players and coaches faces.

Training and preparation was disrupted for the main game of the year the away game with Yorkshire. In fact the game itself at Barnsley was touch and go up to the day before due to bad weather. When arriving at Barnsley we were moved around from the first team pitch due to other fixtures. These resulted in the referee asking for a new pitch due to the degradation the two earlier fixtures had caused to the surface.

The match day preparation was disrupted with all of this which did not bode well.

The B game started well and was very close with Lancashire looking at a win however a couple of mistakes let the hosts in and we found ourselves chasing the score, a good effort by the players was not quite enough to bring home what would have been a deserved win.

For the A game we were more confident as the squad had looked sharp the training had a noticeable effect on the players with confidence in each other showing. The team started well but a telegraphed pass allowed the hosts to run in a soft try, this was sadly to happen again and the heads dropped at that stage and Yorkshire pulled away. Some rather different interpretation of the high tackle law saw a penalty try awarded against us, which in some ways summed up the day.

If we hold this squad together and manage to get all the training sessions completed our confidence is high for next year.

The introduction of the new coaching team at U15 showed good team knowledge, very good tactical knowledge and skill levels sharpened noticeable towards the end of the county year.

Coaching team consisted of Alex Loney who was an excellent organiser and put together good meaningful sessions, assisted by Kevin Brookman in the forwards with Mark Murray and Mark Turner getting the backs working well.

The coaching team ensured that sessions were well organised with clear purpose and always with the correct spirit and discipline

Rod Murray

Lancashire U15 Manager

WOMENS & GIRLS RUGBY

Each year we say what an amazing year for women's and girls' rugby and each year it keeps improving and only getting better.

Growth within Lancashire women's and girls' remains strong.

In 2016/17 we have seen the creation of seven new women's teams, three new u18s, six new u15s and 6 new u13s. Most importantly, we are seeing the development of women and girls rugby in clubs that have only previously offered male teams, such as Burnley, Broughton Park, Mossley Hill, Dunkinfield as well as Wythenshawe.

It is anticipated we will have an additional four open age teams enter the league next year and with the county and RFU staff offering focused support to a number of other clubs who have been identified as wanting to enter the league the following season.

All in all 347 new women and girls have been registered to play club rugby within Lancashire this season, bring the total number to 966 a massive increase on the 207 registered by the end of the 2012/13 season.

The rise in senior women's figures has been added by the expanse within the universities and closer connections and networks ensuring the players transition from university during the week to clubs at the weekend.

It is great to see clubs like Liverpool Collegiate come back from a few years out of the leagues, they now have more than 30 women registered and we hope they will re-join league rugby soon. We have also seen great girls development for girls rugby at Orrell, Rochdale, Tyldesley and Oldham.

Littleborough are now classed as a full club, sustaining an u13s, 15s and 18s with a women's team looking to join the league next season. It was a great day at Southport earlier in the early season when for the first time in Lancashire we had a club fixture between three girls' team at 13, 15s and 18s. Littleborough v a cluster between West Park and Southport. This was again improved on when Littleborough and Southport both hosted girl's end of season tournaments.

Lancashire has also benefitted from taking part in the newly created RFU campaign Inner Warrior, which is targeting women to take up rugby for fun and fitness. There has been a number of events across the county, especially at Bury who saw 50 women attend an event in January and 35 had never played rugby before. There format of rugby, prosecco and cake has been replicated across the country!

It is fair to say Widnes' U15s season was rounded off as they travelled and played at Twickenham before the England v Scotland game this month, as well as acting as the guard of honour as the England team took to the field to win the Calcutta Cup.

The hard work between the clubs' volunteer Chris, local teachers and the RFU staff through the All Schools programme was richly rewarded and a demonstration of how we can work together to bring players through to our clubs.

Congratulations needs to go to Leigh U15s, they have worked hard over the years and have a strong youth set-up. The development was rewarded with winning the Area 5 regional plate competition.

We also have seen a shift within the Women's league structure. Firwood Waterloo Ladies application to the new women's rugby competition was accepted. Their involvement in the league enables Lancashire and the North west to have a focus for elite players and a full pathway to international representative rugby. Firwood Waterloo have passed on their thanks to Lancashire for their active support and I know they looking forward to working closely with the County over the coming years to ensure having a premiership side in Lancashire is a positive driver for rugby growth in the region.

With the large influx of open age teams from the area into the leagues there have been some changes. These are still all being finalised but we know two teams have rightly benefitted and have been promoted – Didsbury and Southport. Southport has been rewarded for a number of years of consistent growth and performance and will play two leagues higher next year, a challenge they will relish.

Representative rugby

The Youth county programme may not have had the success I terms of results this year but they did have success in terms of numbers. The number of girls coming through the system is increasing year on year and will only improve further with the number of clubs in Lancashire now offering girls rugby.

At time of writing the report the women's team was in full swing of preparing to take part in the newly named Gill Burns County Championship Competition final against Surrey, whatever the outcome this year it has been outstanding programme for the squad. With the creation of a development team, who has already played twice it demonstrates the strength and depth that is being created across the County for women's rugby.

We have also had success at National level. Charlie Wilcock was selected and represented England U20s at their recent game against France. She joined Sally Stott and Molly Morrissey who were called up to England u20s last year.

Holly Aichinson and Racheal Woosey have also been awarded central contracts from England and have both participated in this year's World 7s series.

It is also with pride Lancashire can recognise the success of Harriet Millar-Mills who played for Manchester and most recently Firwood Waterloo. She was recently named Six Nations player of the tournament and the Premiership player of the year.

Again thank you to all the volunteers and RFU staff who are helping grow Women's and Girls' rugby across the county, whether it's finding their #innerwarrior or the future #redrose there are more females playing across Lancashire on a weekly basis and we are well on our way to achieving our aim of 30 by 30 – No player has to travel more than 30 miles to play competitive rugby within Lancashire by the time Women's County rugby turns 30 in 2020.

Helen Duggan

Women & Girls Chair

RUGBY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (RDC)

The Rugby Development Committee has responsibility for all aspects of the development and delivery of rugby in the CB. There are four RDC sub-committees: Team Lancashire (Representative Rugby all age groups male and female), Player Development, Coaching & Refereeing, Competitions. The Chairmen of the RDC and each of the four Sub-committees are appointed by the CB Management Board.

Each of the constituent parts of the RDC have space in the CB Annual Report to detail their own developments during the past year: Senior Rugby; The Royals; U20s; U17-18; 7-16, Women & Girls etc. Please see the relevant section of the Annual report for specific details. There are however, one or two major developments put in place through the RDC that merit mention as part of this report.

Coach Development:

The Lancashire Rugby Development Centre Project aimed at developing coaches in open age grade rugby is acknowledged as being the leader in the field. A number of well attended workshops have been delivered. There will be an Annual coaching conference held in August with nationally recognised personalities delivering a programme alongside well known Lancashire coaches.

Links have been opened between the Lancashire Rugby Development Centre and three local universities. Player and coach development programmes will start in September these will take place at university and local club grounds. The aim of these programmes is to introduce clubs to university players and coaches and develop the pool of talented coaches and players available to Lancashire rugby.

The Club Coach mentor scheme, which delivers up to ten hours of free coach and player development to local clubs continues to be popular. More club coach mentors are being recruited and trained, growth of the programme will continue at the best possible pace. Club coaches participating in the scheme tend to remain in contact with their appointed mentors for many seasons after the initial introduction.

Player Development:

Lancashire RFU launched an exciting new County Senior side... The Lancashire Royals. The Royals are a team for players from National North (Level 5) and below. The aim is to present as many players as possible with the opportunity to represent their County at open age level. The Senior County XV has enjoyed tremendous success nationally over the past decade, but has generally comprised of players from the top end of the game. In founding the Royals Lancashire is recognising, and making a statement to the game, that there is a great wealth of talent playing in Divisional and Local leagues. Full details of the Royals season can be found at the appropriate section report but, it is worth noting that since the launch of the Royals at Christmas 41 players have been capped – competition for places has been strong and interest from clubs and players is very high. We have a wealth of talent in Lancashire, who deserve an opportunity to play representative Rugby. The Royals will continue to provide for this large block of aspirational players who play at clubs operating at Level 5 and below.

Lancashire RFU Academy was launched at the start of the season. The Academy provides young and talented players who are not part of the RFU/Sale Academy, with a mentor to advise the player from the player's entry into the academy onwards to the highest achievable levels of open age rugby. The Academy is not a team or a pathway to a team, but is an initiative to develop individual skills. Very positive reports continue to be received from players and parents. Mentoring is on a one to one basis with the player. Mentors open communication pathways with the player's club coaches and representative rugby age grade coaches. All Academy players have a personal fitness and skill development programme in place which has been created by academy professionals.

A strategic study is planned to ascertain ways of engaging with players in the 19 – 23 age group to identify specific development needs, the aim is to make a significant contribution to the performance of key players in the County at club level. This is especially important for all young players as they progress into the adult club game.

Future Plans:

The Rugby Development Committee, the Player Development Committee, the Coaching, Committee and Team Lancashire will:

- Review the terms of reference and Standard operating procedures for each of the committees
- Review progress towards achieving objectives
- Set priorities and identify new objectives
- Make preparations to implement Annual & Strategic planning

Tom Fitzgerald

RDC Hon. Secretary

RUGBY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Rugby year in England and in particular got off to a fantastic start with the World Rugby U20s Championships hosted in Manchester.

The local rugby community did a fantastic job of hosting the event and welcoming the teams Officials and spectators. Particular thanks to all who helped on the Legacy group (especially Ken Andrews and Greg Hawkins) and with the substantial programme of events run during the period.

No major change within the team this year. Chris Lowden in his role as a University RDO has really established himself within the team and continues to do some great work in particular transitioning students into the club game.

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, 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 the 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 key target this year for the RDOs has been in providing an offer “Casual and Vets” rugby to cater to those players wanting to play less frequently and in a more relaxed informal programme. We have continued to work with clubs to create new and restored teams and are delighted with 15 “new” Adult male teams playing at least 7 games this year.

A great year for Women and Girls rugby in the county with new Women’s teams at Littleborough, Broughton Park, Liverpool Collegiate, Bury, Mossley Hill and second XV’s at Didsbury Toc H and Waterloo and a similar number of fledgling teams for Girls.

The Clubs have been well served by the North West Facilities Group, Lancashire are represented by 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, great to see the President Tom Fitzgerald out and about, I must mention Rob Briers, Dave Herriman, Ken Andrews, Malcom Worsley, Carol Baker, Mark Downs and Paul Deakin and I must single out Stephen Briers for his work with the PFR plan and funding, all have again worked closely with the 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 club & Community Committee have had some very good and varied meetings this season.

One of the main focuses has been on better communication between Club and County, we have explored the better use of the County website with Anne Clarke giving us all some very good advice and also more use of social media needed.

Stuart Kohler presented the committee with an in depth report on how to improve communications with our clubs, some of the recommendations are being implemented.

We also ran three Presidents meetings in the County to find out if our game is in trouble. The reason for this is because some of our well established clubs are finding difficulties in fielding two senior teams some weekends. The RFU staff came up with some statistics saying more people than ever before are playing rugby. This does not help clubs that are finding it difficult fielding teams on Saturdays where there is no income from the bar to keep the club viable.

Helen Duggan has formed a small sub committee to run a survey to find out what players and County members think Lancashire should be doing to improve relations and communications between players and members of the County.

I would like to thank Jayne Dolloway for her great work in producing the “Mums Blog” for the Counties website, a great success.

The volunteer awards evenings have again been very successful in the County, I must thank Andy Kerboas for his hard work in organizing these events. May I take this opportunity to thank all the

members of the committee for attending and making the meetings interesting, very varied and successful.

A special vote of thanks to Steve Blackburn for operating as secretary to the Club & Community Rugby Committee.

Malcolm Worsley

Club & Community Rugby Chairman

CUP & COMPETITIONS

All competitions were well run by the three secretaries Brian Hurst, Brian Minor and Tommy Hughes. As a result we proceeded to the Finals Day on time.

Brian Leigh Lancashire Trophy

The competition proceeded on time and as a result the Final was played between Broughton Park and Burnage. After a competitive match the Final was won by Burnage 13-43.

Lancashire Plate

The Competition was played in accordance with the timetable set out and the Final was played between Burnley and Tyldesley. After a match that was a lot closer than the score suggested Tyldesley won 24-50.

Alan Stone Lancashire Bowl

The Bowl Secretary had to remove a team due to the high number of league matches they had to play. After this the competition proceeded as planned. The Final was played between Didsbury Toc H and Ormskirk and was won by Didsbury Toc H 60-19.

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 Leigh RUFC for their organisation and hospitality on the Finals Day.

Brian Stott

Competitions Secretary

COUNTY SAFEGUARDING

Firstly I wish to express my thanks to Christine Spivey, the Deputy CBSM for Lancashire. For her support, help and hard work through this past season.

The season has been a particularly successful one in regards to Safeguarding. We have had no major issues with which to deal.

In light of the revelations of historical Child Abuse within the Football Association I am pleased to report that no issues were reported within our county, both current or historical.

A number of clubs through the work of the Club Safeguarding Officers (CSO's), M&J and executive committees, were extremely proactive in their actions after the FA revelations. Officers in clubs making themselves know to all visitors and parents, proactively advertising that safeguarding was of paramount importance, within the game of Rugby Union. This public advertisement of good child protection was a credit to all. I am confident that parents, players and young people were assured that Safeguarding had been and continues to be at the heart of Rugby Union, both nationally and within our county of Lancashire.

Six Safeguarding audits have been undertaken at clubs throughout the county and confirm that practices are working well. This is in excess of the 10% required under regulations from RFU. These

audits support Club Accreditations and re-accreditations. The RDO's liaising with Christine Spivey and myself in most cases prior to signing off club's accreditations.

There were as ever an increasing number of Play it Safe courses delivered within the county with over 300 coaches, managers and volunteers taking part in the Initial RFU safeguarding course. The increase in participants does bear witness to the importance and recognition of not only keeping young people free from harm but also strengthening the protection and training of our volunteers.

There have been two In Touch courses (specific to CSO's) within the season and more planned for September and December 2017. These along with a number of safeguarding audits and visits to clubs by CBSM and deputy are to be undertaken at those clubs not yet visited nor audited this season.

I am happy to report that work, with Sale Sharks and the Sale Academy and DPP's programmes; has been completed this year. In the past Sale have worked in isolation and to a certain extent the safeguarding was undertaken in house with an overseeing role by the Safeguarding team from Twickenham. This year I have worked with Sale Sharks, delivering training to all their professional staff, as well as re-writing their safeguarding policy. This work ensuring that Safeguarding is consistent and equitable for all persons.

A similar project has begun in the latter part of this season with the referee's societies from Manchester and Merseyside.

The new AGE GRADE rules and regulations for all players under 18 years of age is embedding well and most clubs are now fully understanding of the new regulations.

Dispensation requests for players to play out of their 'age group' are on the whole fully understood and abided by. Some further explanations may still be required for some clubs to fully understand the rules. I stress that if clubs have concerns or queries PLEASE contact safeguarding@lancshirerugby.com for help and do not believe all you hear from "other" sources.

Work next season will also concentrate on ensuring ALL players will be recorded correctly on GMS and I.D. Cards made and produced for examination

The women and girls sections go from strength to strength and I work closely with the volunteers and RFU staff supporting Safeguarding this exciting and developing group.

In September 2016 a most successful Lancashire CSO conference was arranged and held at Rochdale RUCF.

Overall there were 65 people in attendance. Speakers, CSO's, Visitors and various guests. My thanks go out to Mr Tom Fitzgerald Lancashire President and Mr Ken Andrews RFU and National Counsel member as well as members of the Lancashire CB Executive committee who attended and supported the day. Lending gravitas and endorsement as to the importance of child protection and safeguarding within Lancashire CB.

Speakers included

Brian Stott who spoke about holding an Under18's discipline panel and fielded some questions with regards to AGE GRADE rugby and dispensations.

Tony Stevens gave an update and training session on GMS a font of knowledge and great insight for officers on the importance and help that GMS can provide.

Miss Sedge Beswick, speaking so fast and informatively on all things "social media" a modern world insight.

Dan Appleby presented an enlightening presentation of Child Sexual Exploitation using his experiences as serving detective sergeant within GMP dealing with CSE. As well as a quiz to test our understanding.

Mike Pearce on Health & Safety and the impact on Rugby clubs along with responsibilities.

Phil Cooper and colleagues from STATE OF MIND Charitywhat can be said about these amazing personal stories? I urge anyone to seek them out and listen to their heroic struggles against mental health issues. I defy many of you to come away dry-eyed. Work will be undertaken to advertise the new RFU initiative on mental health "LIFT THE WEIGHT". With Lancashire clubs this coming season.

Ms Laura Huntenburg RFU Youth Council Member spoke about the value both personally and for the game about young persons being involved with volunteering
The conference for 2017-2018 seasons is in the planning stages with some speakers already booked to attend and give enlightening presentations. If any person wishes to attend or present please make contact.

As the season draws to a close I wish to again publicly thank ALL the CSO's who work tirelessly in all our clubs maintaining and continuing to provide robust and effective safeguarding for Young Persons involved within this game. They are sometimes unsung heroes and sometimes the 'thorn in the side' of some, however without their continued commitment to the role and professionalism the game would not be as safe as it is today. Thank you.

To those CSO's who are standing down this year I salute and thank you for all your hard work and commitment. To those newly appointed CSO's welcome, its great to have you on board. Christine Spivey and myself welcome you to the role, its an exciting challenging but oh so worthwhile role.

Finally Thank you to Lancashire CB who continue to be supportive of and acknowledge the importance of Safeguarding Children, Young People and all who are involved with Rugby Union in this our glorious "red" Rose county.

Carol Baker

Lancashire CB County Safeguarding Manager

MANCHESTER & DISTRICT REFEREES

It is with regret that we have to report the loss of Colin Durkin or CD as he was known fondly, he was an invaluable member of Society for many years.

We have more current referees on the RFU panel this season, with James and Tim Brown joining from the Liverpool Society to add to Chris Bennett and Matt Turvey, Andy Taylorson has stepped from the panel down and is now back for the Society. Matt Riley is our sole representative on the North Group. David Guerin continues in his expanding role on the RFRU. Allan Townsend is attending training sessions for the RFU newly instigated office of Safeguarding Officer. Nigel Yates continues to work as referee coach and match reviewer for the Elite panel. David Hudson and Tony Turner continue as Time Keepers, Trevor Fisher and Graham Hughes as TMOs and Mike Hamlin on the Disciplinary panel for the professional arm.

This season we have appointed to almost 4000 matches of which 265 were Exchange Officials and 232 referees in (including RFU and NW Fed matches). The numbers are slightly down due to better weather and fewer postponements. Of this nearly 20% were watched - real credit is due to the Level 9+ Match Observers who, under the careful eye of Clive Ennis, do untold good.

Fortunately we have maintained a good number of MO's thanks to the sterling efforts of both Bill Taylor and Clive Ennis. We had some new ones coming in against a loss of 5.

We have been able to provide a referee virtually all the matches because of the superb reciprocal

support and collaborative effort of the Liverpool Society and the NW Association administrators and referees. (Thank goodness for the enlightened!) Additionally, especially before Christmas, when most of the schools' matches are played, several stalwarts have turned out twice in the day. We have recruited 28 new referees against a loss of 17 slightly down on last season's figures.

Of great concern is the frequency of sides cancelling very late or, even worse, just not turning-up. This, along with the number of matches which start with many players short and/or with uncontested scrums, is so frequent as to be a major, continuing reason for the loss of referees. The increasing level of abuse encountered by referees especially in junior games has also not assisted with the retention of referees.

The Appointments Team is very grateful to the support we get from the Club Contacts, the overwhelming majority of whom provide us with excellent support and make the job manageable.

The NW Federation has had 9 Thursday evening meetings this season with a very good attendance rate at each meeting. We are grateful to The University of Chester (Padgate Campus) for allowing us to use their facilities to accommodate both our meetings and fitness testing sessions.

The Federation boasts 21 referee members from Liverpool and Manchester Societies and 14 advisors / coaches.

The referees in the NW Federation group have taken on board information, instruction and coaching techniques discussed at the meetings and have also worked very hard with their coaches in improving their performance as referees. Every referee in the group has been promoted at least one level during the season. Many of the referees in the NW Federation represented us at the North of England Sevens at Birkenhead Park, the Stonyhurst Sevens at Stonyhurst College and at the Rosslyn Park Sevens in London.

We are also hopeful that a number of our group will be promoted or considered for promotion into North Group.

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 thanks goes out to those who have assisted me throughout this season and the preceding 14 as I have finally decided it is time to hand over the reins.

Geoff Gill

Hon. Secretary, Manchester & District Referees Society

LIVERPOOL & DISTRICT REFEREES

It would be wrong not to start this note without reference to John Munn who passed away last year. John was known to many in the rugby family. His encyclopaedic knowledge of the Laws of the game and his understanding of the different league and Colts regulations has, over many years, been second to none. He has been and will continue to be sorely missed.

This last season has provided, as always, challenges for the Society organisers. A combination of, a reluctance of former players to pick up a whistle and some retirements has reduced the pool of referees. We are aware that we are not alone in this regard (!) and we have on occasion, when the situation allowed, allocated some of our referees to your goodselves. It is hoped that these cordial arrangements can continue as we are sure at some stage the tables will be turned.

We have however had an excellent recruitment and retention Secretary, in Kevin Toole, who has overseen a series of ELRA courses resulting in 8 new recruits. The most encouraging aspect of this is that 4 of them are 17 years old or younger.

Our monthly Society meetings have seen a growth in attendance under the tutelage of Ben Davis and the introduction of videoing selected referees has proven to be a much welcome and effective development tool.

Development has also been to the fore with 22 advisors and referees attending a Rugby Education Workforce Training event at New Brighton RUFC with a follow up (level 2) event due late this year. We are aiming to provide a similar programme for our referee coaches.

On the field Ian Tempest is now one of the 12 senior premierships referees and it is hoped that he will achieve full international honours in the near future. Ben Davis is level 4 and recently was appointed for a Club final game at Twickenham. James O'Brien under the guiding eye of Fred Howard is currently level 5 but has real prospects of achieving Panel.

After a busy season we are looking forward to not only a rest but also opportunities to renew acquaintances next season.

Malcolm Irving

Hon. Secretary, Liverpool Referees Society

DISCIPLINARY REPORT

There have been several changes during the season.

- John Greenwood replaced Nigel Yates as Chairman.
- Philip Holden and Tom Baker presented cases on behalf of the County.
- World Rugby mandated changes to entry point for offences where contact is made to the head.

There have been twenty two disciplinary hearings so far this season, with two more in the pipeline to conclude the season.

Referee Abuse

For the first time as Secretary I can finally inform you that referee abuse has decreased from twenty four cases in 2015/2016 to twelve cases (with two pending) in 2016/2017. The main abuse is coming after players are yellow or red carded. I would request that clubs impress on their players that abusing the referee after being sent off will only increase the sanction.

Websites

A club has appeared twice before a panel this season for articles which have appeared on their website. The first time was for offensive comments about other clubs and the second was for several items casting doubt on a referee's integrity. The sanctions were £200.00 payable to the Lancashire Youth Trust and £500.00 payable to the Injured Players Foundation. I should point out that it is irrelevant who writes the article if it appears on your club website it is the club's responsibility.

Striking

World Rugby has indicated that they will be continuing with the following.

1. Striking with a hand, arm or fist to the head mid-range entry point.
2. Kicking to the head top end entry point.
3. Tackling round the head is to be enforced by referees and disciplinary panels.

Season 2016/2017 Statistics

Pending	14
Proved	102
Dismissed	6
Charged 5.12	9
Total Cases	131
Sent Off	122
Number of Clubs	47

<u>Offence</u>	<u>2015-2016</u>	<u>2016-2017</u>		
Striking	73	50	-23	-31%
Kicking	9	3	-6	-67%
Stamping	7	4	-3	-43%
Dangerouse Tackle	9	7	-2	-22%
Biting	0	0	0	0%
Contact with the Eye area	0	0	0	0%
2 Yellow Cards	8	8	0	0%
Dissent/Abuse	24	12	-12	-50%
Other	8	18	10	125%
Misconduct	16	9	-7	-44%
Dismissed	10	6	-4	-40%
Pending	2	4	12	600%
Total	166	131	-35	-21%

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 and the members of the Disciplinary Committee for all their hard work during the season.

Brian Stott

Disciplinary Committee Secretary

RFU NORTHERN COMPETITION COMMITTEE (RFUNCC)

This season has been one which has seen limited disruption to the leagues through inclement weather, in fact until after Christmas the number of games postponed was in single figures, in the months of January and February the weather did take a turn for the worse but all games were put back on track and all games and play offs were completed by the first Saturday in May.

Match Cards:

Next season it is the intention of the RFU to 'roll out' Electronic Match Cards at level 5 and 6 and training will be put in place to ensure that clubs using them are able to understand how the scheme works.

Player Numbers:

West of the Pennines we are experiencing difficulties with club numbers in Lower Leagues, particularly Lancs North. We are trying to address this and trying to keep clubs informed along the way.

Clubs Promoted:

SLC 1 Manchester into NIW

SLC 2	Tyldesley	into	SLC1
SLC3	Aspull	into	SLC2
Lancs North	Tarleton	into	NLC
Play off Winner	Cumbria v Lancs North	Burnley	NLC

Nominations for National Cups:

Intermediate Cup	De La Salle
Senior Vase	Liverpool Collegiate
Junior Vase	Old Bedians

I would also like to take this opportunity to comment on the Rugby Landscape in our County. We have seen more and more clubs struggling to put our Senior Male Adult teams on Saturdays, bearing out the content of the Adult Competition Review which a lot of people disagreed with at the time of writing. However people may wish to reconsider their opinions when they look around their club and ask why their players are not turning out every week.

With regards to National Cups at Level 7, 8 and 9 we have been warned by Competitions that if we cannot find a solution in the North whereby all clubs can be involved instead of one nomination per County per Level because we do not have enough Saturdays to play a knock out competition then the RFU may discontinue these competitions.

Dave Clarke

Northern League Rep, Divisional Organising Committee

COUNTY SCHOOLS UNION

2016 / 2017 has certainly been an interesting season for schools and youth rugby with the implementation of the New Rules of Play – the impact of which has seen contrasting opinions of success at all levels. It is something that nonetheless we must all embrace and work with over the coming years.

The season has again been an extremely busy one and one in which Lancashire Schools and Lancashire CB have had a leading role – not least hosting the very successful U20 World Cup in Manchester last June. This was a superb event that brought the international stage to our doorstep and was warmly embraced. Sincere thanks go to all those that made it possible in providing such a spectacle for our young players. Whilst in some CSUs, inter-school matches appear to be dwindling, they are continuing to thrive in Lancashire, with schools at all levels embracing the game. It was also pleasing to note that Bolton School reached the U18 Bowl semi-final of the newly structured Nat West Competitions, played at Allianz Park. Nonetheless, there is still work to be done to increase the numbers moving into the senior game with the retention of school leavers, and the CSU recognises that the development of the girls’ game still very much needs our support.

Although the number of schools in membership has dropped slightly, it appears that not all schools are aware of the benefits of membership, not least the welfare of pupils. There is also the concern that some schools don’t feel the need to protect themselves by adhering to the necessary regulations regarding rules of play and the new competitions framework. With schools and players within the CSU having had serious injuries to contend with this year, this point cannot be over emphasised.

As a CSU I think it vital that schools and teachers continue their involvement where possible within the DPP process and the county program as much as possible and that not all responsibility of player development lies exclusively within the club game, amateur or professional.

CUP COMPETITIONS

This season the RFU competitions framework saw a need for change to the regulations of our CSU cup competitions. The U13 Waterfall festivals, both Plate and Cup, held at AKS Lytham were extremely well received events and it was great to see such close and competitive matches, with all schools benefiting from the number of games played. The main Schools Finals Days were this year held at Preston Grasshoppers RFC and Fylde RFC, both of which were outstanding events for the county.

The decision to use the new AWP at PGH created a superb atmosphere under the floodlights, with a huge crowd gathered to watch two excellent matches in the U18 Plate and Cup finals in early March. All four competing schools gave a terrific account of themselves, a credit to the coaches and players alike, as Merchant Taylor's Crosby beat St Edward's College 29-22 to win the Plate and Stonyhurst College narrowly defeating Lancaster RGS 17-13 to win the Cup.

The U14, U15 & U16 Plate and Cup finals were this year held at Fylde RFC. The support and effort to ensure that the day ran smoothly was a testament to the volunteers from Fylde, not to mention the medical support from UCLAN, who I'm pleased to say were not called into service. I would like to thank Jeff Gould and his team for the preparation and diligence on the day in helping me with my first Finals Day. So to the support from John Morgan, Chris Rose and Jim Mckeown from this committee, whose contribution to the cup competitions has again been invaluable. The games were all played in terrific spirit and very competitive throughout, none more so than the 5-5 draw in the U16 cup final. Having Tim Stirk, David Herriman and Peter Hughes' wife, Sue, to present the respective trophies highlight the significance of the schools Finals Day in the county calendar and it is easy to see that it also means a great deal to the players to be involved in such an occasion.

SCHOOLS CUP AND PLATE FINALS 2017 RESULTS

Wednesday 8th February 2017 at AKS, Lytham

BRIAN CAUWOOD U13 Waterfall Festival
Final Placings:

RGS Lancaster
Kirkham GS
Manchester GS
Hutton
St Mary's Hall
St Mary's Crosby
Cowley
Bolton School

U13 PLATE Waterfall Festival
Final Placings:

St Edward's College
Standish HS
Merchant Taylor's Crosby
Ripley St Thomas
Audenshaw School
AKS Lytham
Liverpool College

Sunday 19th March at Fylde RFC

PETER HUGHES U14 CUP
Manchester Grammar School

19

Liverpool College

12

U14 PLATE			
Standish High School	31	Bolton School	10

IAN SINCLAIR U15 CUP			
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	35	St Edward's College	17

U15 PLATE			
Kirkham Grammar School	17	Merchant Taylor's School	31

JOHN DEWHURST U16 CUP			
Manchester Grammar School	5	Kirkham Grammar School	5

U16 PLATE			
Birkdale High School	42	Hutton Grammar School	5

Wednesday 1st March 2017 at Preston Grasshoppers RFC

U18 PLATE			
St Edward's College	23	Merchant Taylor's School	27

JOHN FLETCHER CUP			
Lancaster RGS	13	Stonyhurst College	17

EMERGING SCHOOLS COMPETITION

My thanks again to John Morgan for running the Emerging Schools competition, which again encountered issues due to the weather postponing the scheduled finals for the second year running. Nonetheless, with 10 schools entering the U15 competition and 18 entering the U14 competition the value of the event speaks for itself, particularly with so many schools from non-traditional rugby playing areas guaranteed a minimum number of games in the pool format.

Our thanks again to Liverpool St Helens RFC for hosting the respective finals so well.

**EMERGING SCHOOLS CUP AND PLATE FINALS 2017
RESULTS**

Under 14 CUP

Rainford High School	12	Priestnall School	14
----------------------	----	--------------------------	-----------

Under 14 PLATE

Ormskirk School	14	Millfield High School	10
------------------------	-----------	-----------------------	----

Under 15 CUP

Standish High School	0	Priestnall School	0
	Cup Shared		

Under 15 PLATE

Bury Grammar School	41	Carr Hill High School	10
----------------------------	-----------	-----------------------	----

Many thanks to all the teacher's in the respective schools for their continued support of the competitions.

REPRESENTATIVE RUGBY

The DPP programme, whilst not having been without its issues, is certainly moving in the right direction. The staff at Sale Sharks are certainly working with us as a CSU and are clearly ahead of many of their academy rivals in this department. Once again, a range of schools provided players who represented Lancashire at U15, U16, U17 and U18 age groups, with a commendable number of players achieving success with the North and at International level.

To those involved in running a county team, many thanks for your time and dedication, commitment and enthusiasm; the reward for all involved is seeing those players fulfil their potential. Further information on these age group squads will be given by the relevant reports.

REFEREES

Once again our thanks to the officials and referees of both Manchester and Liverpool Societies for supporting our schools during the season. The MADREFS provided referees for both U18s finals and the Schools Finals Day at Fylde and for the boys to be officiated by a team of three certainly adds to the sense of occasion. It is also welcoming that the societies are open to discussion with the CSU to try and establish the best possible methods of appointment, for which we are continually grateful.

I would like to thank those colleagues that have supported the CSU throughout the year whether on committees, assisting with the cup competitions and finals days or contributing to the selection and coaching of the county programme that Lancashire offers so well. Also to the RDOS, the Senior County Committee, for their continued support and all the many individuals who support schools and youth rugby.

Finally, there are a number of people that have helped me through this first year of being Chairman, too many to thank individually. Nonetheless, I would like to take this opportunity to thank in particular Ken Andrews who despite retiring from the Schools Committee last year, has fulfilled the role of Secretary this year and once again offered invaluable support in all aspects of the Schools' game.

Robbie Jones

Chairman, Lancashire County Schools Union

Colts Rugby

Recent history tells us, Colts Rugby remains one of the biggest challenges our game faces!!! Each season, Clubs and their Managers are finding it harder to recruit and retain players, despite my optimism at the end of last season and the start of this; during the season our County alone lost 7 sides at under 18's and 3 sides at under 17's, which included such Clubs as Preston Grasshoppers and Waterloo.

Again these harsh realities have been highlighted to the R.F.U. who share our concerns and thanks to the efforts of Mark Sutcliffe and his team, clubs who have not had a tradition in running colts rugby, Clitheroe and Garstang to name a few, will be entering the fray next season.

In the words of Frank Morgan President of the North West Colts League "Peaks & Troughs lad Peaks & Troughs"

Despite these challenges our Clubs provided stern opposition in the N. W. Colts League and Cup(s)

Our successes being:-

	Senior U18s Winners	Junior U17s Winners
League A	Lymm	Lymm
League B	Penrith	Wirral

League C	Birkenhead Park	Blackburn
League D	Sedgley Park	Tarleton
League E	Liverpool St Helens	

League Cups

Senior Cup	Lymm	16 - 12	Chester
Senior Plate	Wilmslow	40 - 8	Rochdale
Senior Bowl	Sale FC	16 - 10	Kirkby Lonsdale
Senior Shield	Bolton	18 - 15	Tarleton
Junior Cup	Warrington	55 - 7	Littleborough
Junior Plate	Aldwinians	24 - 24	Kirkby Lonsdale*
Junior Bowl	Caldy	31 - 26	Winnington Park
Junior Shield	Blackburn	31 - 23	Bolton

*Kirkby Lonsdale declared winners on try count.

The Counties Representatives in the National U17's Cup(s) were Liverpool Collegiate and Southport and I am pleased to report Southport became the Northern Shield Champions by beating Percy Park 26 – 14 in a thrilling encounter. Unfortunately two weeks later they lost to Bromsgrove in the National Semi's at Stourbridge. (Sadly this season 2016/17 was the last time this particular Competition was to be played for).

This years County Cups did not disappoint, Fleetwood won the bid to host the finals and thanks must go to Andy Thompson and his team of Volunteers, including the young ladies who served the post-match meals after each final, all the “young gentlemen” thought it was great to be waited upon.

County Cup Winners

Frank Morgan Snr Cup	Manchester	19 - 17	Widnes
Joe McDonough Snr Trophy	Trafford MV	68 - 7	Rossendale
Rob Briers Jnr Cup	Warrington	24 - 13	Liverpool Collegiate
Alan James Jnr Trophy	West Park	30 - 17	Aldwinians

My thanks to both our referee societies who do a sterling job providing all the officials who willingly give up their time to officiate on a Sunday.

To the players who represented the County, The North & England via the 18group, well done. Congratulations to Sam James on his call up to the Full England Squad, Sam who plays for Sale Sharks started his Rugby at Manchester and played for their successful Colts side(s) as well as representing Lancashire Colts in the National U19's 7 aside Tournament.

My final thank you as ever goes to all the players, managers, coaches, physio's and parents who make Colts Rugby on a Sunday what it is “**a vital part of our game for the future survival of our Clubs**”. Keep up the great work you do, week in and week out.

Alan James
Chairman

MINI JUNIOR (7 – 16 AGE GRADE) COMMITTEE

This has been another successful season for the mini & juniors of the county. The Lancashire Junior Rugby Challenge has yet again seen two fantastic finals days, at Aldwinians RUFC AND Fylde RUFC. Thank you to both clubs for hosting these events. Both days saw some good contested games of rugby on the day, which were a credit to all teams involved. This season we have trialled developments games for those teams who miss out in the later stages of the JRC, so that there are more opportunities for teams to progress and develop. We are awaiting feedback on this.

The under 12's festival has seen an increase in teams participating this season, so much so we now have two venues for the festival finals these are Heaton Moor and Tarleton.

With the use of facebook communication between clubs and county is growing and information is hopefully getting out there more quickly than before.

Special mention must go to Allen Bower for his continuous hard work in putting the Lancashire Junior Rugby Challenge together along with the waterfall festivals. Allen is the main driving force behind the development cups etc. Not everyone appreciates the amount of time and effort it takes to put everything in place.

Thank you to all those clubs that have taken part this season, look forward to next season.

We now look forward to next season with hopefully more teams, more clubs and more volunteers within this great game of rugby.

Ian Spivey

Chairman, 7 – 16 Age Grade Committee

WEBSITE

This season has seen the re launch of the Lancashire website, www.lancshirerugby.co.uk, and the appointment of a 'Webmaster'. The whole season has been work in progress and the website was re organised with new features added – the search option for one!

After discussions with various members of the board it was decided that the website should be a 'library' for people to access information about the County and consequently time has been spent building up a network of people that that can contribute to that and many thanks to the people who have.

A meeting was held at Eccles Rugby club for the County's webmasters where a useful discussion took place and this may be developed in the future.

Recent analysis shows that the website is being used consistently with an average of over 4000 views weekly, with the past two weeks showing over 5000 views with a growing number of users and I am sure it cannot just be me checking it! People have accessed it from the French Alps and Durban so we are obviously worldwide, with the most popular 'hits' being information about Fixtures/Results of County Squads and groups and the Disciplinary section where information is added weekly.

It is hoped that next year we will be able to build on the success we have had so far and add to the features of the website, such as e mail alerts and possible newsletters etc.

Many thanks to everyone for their contributions this season, especially the long suffering Secretary who I may have driven mad by my questions and look forward to developing the website further next season.

Anne Clarke

County Webmaster

COUNTY SQUADS RESULTS & SCORES – 2016/17

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

06-May	v	Northumberland	Fylde RFC	W	48-26
13-May	v	Eastern Counties	Cambridge University RFC	W	15-38
20-May	v	Cheshire	Sale FC	W	5-29
28-May	v	Cornwall	Twickenham		

Senior Ladies XV – County Championship (Gill Burns MBE Cup)

29-Apr	v	Cumbria	Millom RUFC	W	0-112
06-May	v	Northumberland	Fylde RFC	W	51-10
14-May	v	Durham	Darlington RFC	W	5-40
21-May	v	Yorkshire	Broughton Park	W	25-14
28-May	v	Surrey	Richmond		

Lancashire Royals XV

27-Dec	v	Anti Assassins	Preston Grasshoppers RFC	W	20-12
26-Apr	v	Cumbria	Kendal RUFC	L	51-14

Lancashire Roses XV

14-May	v	Durham	Darlington RFC	W	0-69
--------	---	--------	----------------	---	------

Under 20s XV – County Championship (Jason Leonard Shield)

15-Jan	v	Notts, Lincs & Derby	Chesterfield Panthers RUFC	W	5-57
05-Feb	v	Staffordshire	Wigan RUFC	W	43-0
19-Mar	v	Cheshire	Lymm RFC	L	31-7
02-Apr	v	Warwickshire	Broadstreet RFC	W	7-53
16-Apr	v	Cheshire	Birkenhead Park FC	L	22-17

18 Group County Squad

23-Oct	v	Durham	Aspatia RFC	L	41-40
30-Oct	v	Cheshire	Lymm RUFC	L	28-7
01-Nov	v	Yorkshire	Harrogate RFC	L	27-0

Under 18s Development (Under 17s) Squad

18-Dec	v	Yorkshire	Sedgley Park RUFC	W	19-10
24-Apr	v	Cheshire	Fylde RFC	W	13-12

16 Group County Squad A

22-Jan	v	Yorkshire A	Silcoates School	L	42-0
05-Feb	v	Cheshire A	Aldwinians RUFC	L	29-31

16 Group County Squad B

22-Jan	v	Cheshire B	New Brighton RFC	L	29-12
05-Feb	v	Cheshire B	Aldwinians RUFC	L	0-38

15 Group County Squad A

03-Jan	v	Cheshire A	Burnage RUFC	W	24-17
15-Jan	v	Yorkshire B	Barnsley RUFC		

15 Group County Squad B

03-Jan	v	Cheshire B	Burnage RUFC	W	29-5
15-Jan	v	Yorkshire B	Barnsley RUFC		

Under 18s Girls County Squad

30-Oct	v	Yorkshire	Doncaster RFC	L	45-17
20-Nov	v	Durham	Tynedale RFC	W	0-62
04-Dec	v	Yorkshire	Vale of Lune RUFC	L	19-34

Under 15s Girls County Squad

30-Oct	v	Yorkshire	Doncaster RFC	L	42-5
20-Nov	v	Durham	Tynedale RFC	W	5-51
04-Dec	v	Yorkshire	Vale of Lune RUFC	L	0-69

COUNTY OFFICERS & OTHER OFFICIALS 2016 - 2017

County President Tom Fitzgerald
Vice Presidents:
Steve Blackburn (Senior Vice President)
Mark Nelson
Gill Burns MBE
Dave Clarke
Brian Stott

Members of the Management Board

Chairman: David Herriman
Hon. Secretary: Mark Downs
Hon. Treasurer: Paul Deakin

World Rugby Chairman

Bill Beaumont CBE DL

RFU Council & RFU Management Board

Rob Briers

RFU Council Member

Ken Andrews

Hon. Membership Secretary

Anne-Marie Briers

Hon. County Press Officer

Peter Elliott

Safeguarding Manager

Carol Baker

Senior Deputy: Christine Spivey

County Committees:

Rugby Development Committee

Director/Chairman: Rob Briers

Secretary: Tom Fitzgerald

Club & Community Rugby Committee

Director/Chairman: Malcolm Worsley

Finance & Funding Committee

Chairman: Chris Smail

Asst. Treasurer: Stephen Briers

Cup & Competitions Committee

Chairman: Mike Cornelia

Secretary: Brian Stott

Disciplinary Committee

Chairman: John Greenwood

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: Kate Bonetta (*resigned*)

County Schools Union

Chairman: John Morgan

Secretary: Ken Andrews

Colts Competitions Committee

Chairman: Alan James

Secretary: Jon Kitchen

Assistant Hon. Secretary

Brian Stott

Assistant Hon. Treasurer

Stephen Briers

Match Programme Editor

Peter Elliott

Hon. Solicitor

John Bullough

Chairman of Selectors for

Senior XV & U20s John Greenwood

The RFU's Rugby Development Team

Area 5 Manager Dave Southern

North Lancashire Stuart Urquhart

Merseyside Andrew Soutar

Gr. 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.lancashirerugby.com

Note to Annual Members:
Individual Subscriptions (£20.00) are due on 1st July 2017
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, CA Baker, RTJ Briers, P Deakin, JRS Greenwood,
JT Hughes, TD Stirk, MJ Worsley.

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**