

# LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

## ANNUAL REPORT

**2017-18**

### **THE SECRETARY'S OPENING REMARKS**

Firstly I have to thank the President, Steve Blackburn. Steve has done tremendous work over the year in travelling around clubs and representing the County. A truly approachable gentleman who has brought his own distinct sense of humour to the office. A lot of my Monday mornings have included a phone call from Steve starting with the phrase "I think I may have got away with it but.....". Needless to say the tales have me in stitches.

As well as his Presidential duties he is an active member of the Disciplinary and Club & Community Committees which means he's constantly on the go with his County missionary work.

Steve has the huge support of his wife Val, who is also involved on the Mini & Junior committee. A couple entrenched in rugby and its administration, thank you both.

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 Hertfordshire whom we were runners up to in the final of the 2011-2012 season.

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. Its an absolute joy to be involved in this side of County rugby and one which I look forward to each season.

Again I am very proud to eulogise about the Lancashire Royals initiative and thank all involved in continuing its success. Success that is measured in the fact that other counties are showing interest in joining the club.

As highlighted at the Financial AGM in November we remain the steady ship. Excesses can always be reined in and these savings directed to more worthy projects, this we will do by constant scrutiny which the finance team do well. The team of Chris Smail, Paul Deakin, Stephen Briers, Catherine Ryan and Mike Bailey are thanked for their continued work for the County.

Our Mini & Junior Committee have been a real presence this season and have had a lot of work in organising competitions and fending parents questions and comments via social media. Generally supportive, every now and then not so, in which case I would say, don't rant, volunteer. Ian & Christine Spivey along with Mike Murphy and the team should be applauded for their hardwork, patience and understanding.

Our Club & Community committee is our vital link between ourselves and our clubs. They are responsible for ensuring our volunteers are rewarded and our clubs engaged and encouraged.

Communications with clubs this season has seen surveys and conferences facilitated by the C & CR committee. 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. Ken Andrews and Rob Briers, who under new RFU regulations, will now serve a further 3 & 2 years respectively. They always report with clarity what is happening within the Union and have a fantastic grasp of its day to day running. They have this knowledge due to the sheer amount of time spent, this is far from being just a few Council meetings over the year, this is living and breathing the Union everyday. I for one am grateful for the work they do.

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. As a County working from our strategic plan we have identified schools rugby as a key development area from which we can recruit children into our clubs.

The Womens & Girls game continues to develop with initiatives such as the Inner Warrior campaign driving recruitment. This has led to a number of new clubs growing teams who will hopefully take the next steps and progress to league rugby. Our girls growth will start to feed into the senior womens teams at clubs and further expand the game. I for one never expected my little princess taking the rugby field on the same team as her darling mother but that is what I have to look forward to this season. Thanks to Helen Duggan and all who support this area of rugby from County & Club coaches, players and parents.

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. Within this section I also remember the men in the middle. I thank all the whistlers of the Manchester & District, Liverpool District and Federation Referees Societies.

The Disciplinary committee have been busier than ever this season providing one income stream that we would be happier without, referee abuse is on the increase and this is unacceptable, end of. John Greenwood has Chaired the committee ably advised by Brian Stott this season. Along with the other members of the panel they give up lot of time to what is generally one moment of hot headedness, thank you.

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, our Chairman, David Herriman, a great mentor. Anne Clarke for her help with minute taking, 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, as ever, summer well.

**Mark Downs**

*Honorary Secretary*

## **SENIOR RUGBY**

Our opening game saw us up in Newcastle at a very sunny Percy Park to take on Northumberland. We were a little shell shocked when they opened the batting in the first 2 minutes by scoring, not on the script. For the other 78 minutes it was a showcase of open running rugby with Lancashire coming away victorious at 20-64.

Our first home game at Sedgley Park saw us entertain a young Eastern Counties side. I think that they also left their legs on the bus as by half time Lancashire were leading 35-0. We coasted the second half eventually coming away with the win 52-31

Again going into the final game with Cheshire we were neck and neck with Yorkshire, each having 2 bonus point wins under the belt but Lancashire having the greater points difference. Yorkshire kicked off early and we were eagerly following their results, they got a bonus point win but with a tight score of 24-21. It was all down to the lads on another glorious day at Fylde.

They did not disappoint, overturning Cheshire 64-23. I am sure Yorkshire will feel hard done by but Lancashire have been winning and winning big which has set up apart.

As of writing we are in the run up to the final and play Hertfordshire as the wheels well and truly fell off Trelawny Armies bus.

### **Mark Downs**

*Honorary Secretary*

## **LANCASHIRE ROYALS**

So after our inaugural season "The Royals" carried on where we left off with another 32 players making their debuts this a season adding to the 48 players from last season.

Our first game was against the Cheshire Harvesters, the Wheatsheaf County's snappy name for their version of the Royals. Despite being one score in it at half-time the opposition ran away with it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half on a cold night at Sedgley Park. Cheshire kind of let the side down by picking several Full County Capped players and used it as more of a Senior County Trial. Not really what we intended for the Royals but they may revert to our way of thinking next season.....or not.

Our now Annual fixture against the Anti-Assassins at Blackburn RUFC on the 30<sup>th</sup> December was again a feast of fast flowing Rugby with the AAs just edging it this time. Once more a large festive crowd were entertained by both sides and the hospitality from Blackburn was 1<sup>st</sup> class.

Again the ethos behind the Royals is designed for those players from our clubs who may not get an opportunity to experience Representative Rugby and we will continue next season to focus on our Clubs from Level 5 down in the RFU Leagues and those Clubs in the new Lancashire County League.

### **Howard Hughes**

*Lancashire Royals Team Manager*

## **UNDER 20s**

My past two U20 Annual Reports touched on the edge of what might have been, this season we delivered on the promise of the past two seasons with what can only be described as a "Dream Season".

A good strong Trial was held at Wigan RUFC in early October, from that our Training Squad was selected under the tutelage of Martin Scott and Neil Ryan. Some good sessions in sometimes trying but typical Lancashire weather led to our first warm-up fixture against Notts. Lincs. & Derby (NLD).

Except it didn't as they cried off with a couple of weeks to go and we needed to find an alternative opponent. Thankfully Liverpool University came to our aid and we played a game at Tyldesley RUFC which had all four seasons rolled in to one day including two inches of snow before kick off which soon became 80 minutes of torrential rain, no kidding it was wetter than a ducks backside!

We gave most of the Squad a run out resting a few players we already had good knowledge of but still recorded a 36-15 victory. We then upped the pace at our monthly training sessions in readiness of our opening Group game down at Stafford RUFC against Staffordshire. Our Forwards controlled the set-piece and our Backs ran everything at a pace the Home side could not live with. The final score of 69-0 was to be frank about right, the comment isn't meant to be arrogant it's what the Staffordshire management thought afterwards were they claimed they thought we had a squad that would go all the way to Final. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Group game was postponed because of Storm "Whatever it was named" and so we took on Northumberland at Wigan RUFC two weeks later than planned. This time the opposition was tougher but the result was the same with the Forwards doing a solid job and the Backs looking impressive once again in a 53-11 win. That meant a Home Quarter Final with Buckinghamshire again at Wigan. We knew little of the opposition other than they had only lost one game in their Group against NLD. The Lancashire Pack was dominant and an endless supply of ball gave our Backs numerous try scoring opportunities, 11 Tries helped us on to a 72-7 win. We got another Home draw in the Semi-final and the Players decided they would like to play at Wigan again (maybe it was the after match Pie, the immaculate playing surface or whatever) the lads felt at "Home" at Douglas Valley.

It's a mark of a good side that when you have a bad patch you recover from it and kick on to the next level, with 16 minutes left on the clock our opponents Berkshire were sitting pretty and ahead 32-19, and our bad patch could not have come at a worst possible time. However, Coaches Scott & Ryan had empowered the Squad to "play" and in the final 16 minutes the Lancashire lads played some outstanding and downright fast flowing rugby to blow Berkshire away 45-32 at no-side.

So our focus moved to the Jason Leonard U20 County Shield Final at Birmingham Moseley RFC. Our opponents turned out to be our planned first opponents NLD. We scored within 70 seconds and had 21 points on the board after 8 minutes. NLD to be fair kept in touch scoring tries the "unfashionable" way from Rolling Mauls which was their strength to be fair. Lancs on the other hand could strike from anywhere and despite never quite killing NLD off we ran out National Shield Winners with a 54-38 score line which gives the impression of a close game, it wasn't really.

In-between the Semi-Final and Final the North U20 Trial was held up at North Shields RFC and we had a record 12 players invited to Trial. The North Trial was not for the faint hearted but the Lancashire boys shone with 7 of them making the final 23 man squad. The second weekend in May all eyes were on Derby RFC for the England Counties U20 Selection Festival. Again the Lancashire lads did themselves proud with six of them, Nick Ashcroft, Tom Carleton, Ben Gregory (all Fylde) Hallam Chapman (Sedgley Park), John Blanchard (Sale FC) and Jack Granby (Preston Grasshoppers) all on the plane to play two Tests in Georgia.

So in summary one hell of a season, thanks must go to our hosting Clubs Tyldesley and Wigan and our Clubs & Universities who have supported us with the use of your prized assets, your players.

I must thank both Scotty and Neil who are quite literally Rugby's "Odd Couple", one is a smartly dressed, fine wine connoisseur with a sharp coaching brain and the other is Neil Ryan.....boom, sometimes you have to coach the technical aspects of our game you need to get the belief and spirit instilled and they both did that brilliantly with this very gifted squad. Richard "Dicky" Buckley has been our Kit Man or Logistics Manager if you prefer and Physio Jason Thomas has ensured players

are looked after medically along with Dr John Morgan who was our Team Doctor throughout. The support of the County officials in the form of Secretary Mark Downs, President Steve Blackburn, Past President Tom Fitzgerald has been first class but I must thank David Clarke (Senior VP) who has been a constant help and support for the U20s along with his better half Anne who kept the supply of Pies coming at the post match Dinners.

We have a Roses Game next season, should be a humdinger!

For the Record our County Championship Points Scorers are as follows:-

<b>Player</b>	<b>Tries</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Pens</b>	<b>DGs</b>	<b>Total</b>
James Torkington (Fylde)	8				40
Harry Finan (Vale of Lune)	1	16			37
Will Hunt (Vale of Lune)	3	11			37
Ben Gregory (Fylde)	5				25
Tom Carleton (Fylde)	5				25
Hallam Chapman (Sedgley Park/MMU)	4				20
Jack Dugdale (Wigan)	4				20
Sam Stott (Preston Grasshoppers)	4				20
Matt Gallagher (Sedgley Park)	2				10
Elliot Horner (Kirkby Lonsdale)	2				10
Matthew Bargh (Kirkby Lonsdale)	2				10
Matt Woodward (Sedgley Park)	1				5
Jack Granby (Preston Grasshoppers)	1				5
Alex Tenev (Firwood Waterloo)	1				5
Toby Harrison (Fylde)	1				5
Sam Fisher (Fylde)	1				5
Connor Cosh (Sale FC)	1				5
Jacob Browne (Preston Grasshoppers)	1				5
James Ratcliffe (Firwood Waterloo)		2			4
	47	29			293

## Results

Warm up – **Lancashire U20** 36 Liverpool University 15 @ Tyldesley RUFC

Jason Leonard U20 Shield Group A North

Staffordshire 0 **Lancashire U20** 69 @ Stafford RUFC

**Lancashire U20** 53 Northumberland U20 11 @ Wigan RUFC

Jason Leonard U20 Shield Quarter Final

**Lancashire U20** 72 Buckinghamshire U20 7 @ Wigan RUFC

Jason Leonard U20 Shield Semi Final

**Lancashire U20** 45 Berkshire U20 32 @ Wigan RUFC

Jason Leonard U20 Shield Final

**Lancashire U20** 54 NLD U20 38 @ Birmingham Moseley RFC

### **Howard Hughes**

*U20s Team Manager*

#### **UNDER 18s**

29<sup>th</sup> Oct 2017           Durham 10 v 41 Lancashire at Darlington Mowden Park RUFC

3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2017           Yorkshire 5 v Lancashire 15 at Bishop Burton College

17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2017           Cheshire 32 v Lancashire 31 at Preston Grasshoppers RFC

The same coaching Team continued at this age group from previous Year at U17 Level so due to the fact the selection process was so detailed at U17 level we were aware we had the nucleus of the U18 Squad.

However we carried out a similar trial process to ensure no players had slipped through the net.

After an Open evening of trials our Squad was assembled.

All Three Games were watched by North England Selectors & one by England Counties Selectors.

The North Squad was assembled from the North Trial and the Lancashire squad had 15 Trialist which was in total a third of the trialists.

10 Lancashire Players ended up getting selected for North U18 Squad.

Unfortunately, we did not get any selections For England Counties, however we did get a through to Ireland Clubs and schools.

### **Ian Jones**

*Lancashire 18 Manager*

#### **UNDER 18s DEVELOPMENT (UNDER 17s)**

It has been a successful season for the U17 side this season. A 45-15 victory in Yorkshire, coupled with a 45-22 victory in Cheshire demonstrate the success of the group. While the match results have been impressive it is important to note that the U17 have involved over fifty players. Thirty five in full match day squads against Cheshire and Yorkshire with a further group being involved in an inter-squad friendly to finish the season.

The trial process was difficult and while I believe that the coaches got the key selections right, it is fair to say that the limited amount of time provided by the structured season made giving each player a fair shot almost impossible. The guidance on training sessions per match and the amount of matches all seemed suitable to the coaching and management group however the limited amount of time offered for trial was extremely frustrating.

The new 4G facility at Preston proved to be a crucial part of the season, allowing us to train regularly on the dates intended. The coaching of Alex Loney and Ryan De La Harpe was first class and it meant that all of the players involved in the squad went away feeling as though they had gained from the

experience. It was clear from the attitude of both parents and players that the U17 programme provided a great deal of development for the boys involved.

The quality of coaching was certainly demonstrated in the performances the squad put together. The rugby on show was of an excellent quality, with a very fluid, enterprising style evident in each game. I believe this style benefitted the players, engaging them in a challenging environment while also allowing them to showcase their talents to the academy selectors. While I am no great fan of the academy system or Sale Sharks academy programme in particular, it was pleasing to see so many boys gain trials for or places in the academy.

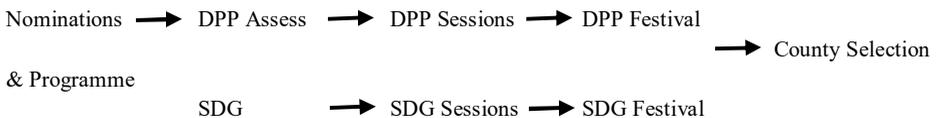
The U17 programme is very much a two year system and we all believe that the first year of this has gone as well as we could have ever expected. The challenge the group now face is that many boys could be taken away by involvement in academy rugby. Replacing these boys, while also providing a competitive platform to perform will be a challenge for the management and coaching staff.

**James Walker**

*Lancashire 17s Manager*

### **UNDER 16s / 16s GROUP**

The past 3 years has seen transition from “District” managed rugby to “Regional Academy” managed through to County representation. This season implemented the extension of the “Development Player Programme” (DPP) to include the U16’s age group. The table below illustrates the pathways to County representation with the DPP being delivered by the “County” coaches:



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 with the likes of Cumbria & Staffordshire. Therefore, the U16’s fixtures & results were as follows:

- Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2018 - Cheshire (B) 0 v 21 Lancashire (B) @ Burnage RUFC  
Lancashire controlled this game from start to finish scoring 3 converted tries. Once again, a score reflective of this being the first game of the programme with many opportunities to score not being taken. Several players played themselves into contention for selection to the “A” squad for the Yorkshire game.
- Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2018 - Cheshire (A) 25 v 23 Lancashire (A) @ Burnage RUFC  
Although Lancashire dominated the set-piece and general possession a lack of cohesion and game control kept Cheshire in the game. This was Lancashire’s first game of the programme and following Cheshire’s game with Yorkshire a week earlier. Lancashire scored 3 tries but a last minute disputed penalty awarded to Cheshire sealed victory.
- Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2018 - Lancashire (B) 28 v 5 Cheshire (B) @ Burnage RUFC  
The return fixture with Cheshire due to Yorkshire not fielding a “B” squad. The game was much the same as the first game with Lancashire being much the stronger side. Cheshire did however score the first try but from that point on it was all Lancashire, scoring 4 converted tries.
- Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2018 - Lancashire (A) 21 v 22 Yorkshire (A) @ Burnage RUFC

Lancashire made 7 changes to the starting line up from the Cheshire game. This was a marked step up from the Cheshire game, with greater intensity and quality from two committed teams. Once again Lancashire dominated the set-piece and possession, but it was Yorkshire who scored first. Lancashire's domination built what looked like a healthy score at 21 v 8 with 10mins remaining but Yorkshire's defence was outstanding all game and thwarted wave after wave of Lancashire attack. With less than 3 minutes left on the clock and Yorkshire defending their line it looked as if Lancashire had finally made the pressure count with a 2 on 1 opportunity but credit to the Yorkshire defender who anticipated the pass with an interception and raced up the pitch and with good support made the pass to score under the posts. This fired up Yorkshire from the restart who could sniff an unlikely victory and sure enough with the last play of the game Yorkshire scored a good try that left an outstanding conversion to secure victory. Heart-breaking for a very talented Lancashire team, although as players will be better for the experience.

### Sale Sharks SDG:

Lancashire had a record 19 players in the SDG, these being Sufyan Amjad, Conor Bailey, Ollie Barnett, Joe Bedlow, Patrick Bishop, Will Bowker, Ethan Cain, Jacob Collins, Matt Cooney, Dan Cooper, Ollie Fleetwood, Kier Gordon, Fraser Jones, Eddie Melhuish, Alex Minozzi, Dallas Nelson, Lincoln Pope, Zac Sebouai & Nye Thomas,

Player demographics:

CLUBS				SCHOOLS		
Nth Lancs	Manchester	Merseyside	No Club	State	Grammar	Independent
11	10	24	2	26	9	12

### Bill Nichol

*Lancashire U16 Head Coach*

### UNDER 15s / 15s GROUP

The continued transition from "District" managed rugby to "Regional Academy" managed through to County representation saw this season county trials replaced by a DPP festival that followed the Developing Player Programme (DPP), a one-off event held at Myerscough. Whilst this should and will remain going forward the change has nevertheless been problematic. The festival is the first and only time the county coaches and selectors get to view the players and from this "A" & "B" squads containing c50 players are selected for the county. Many lessons learnt, and improved ideas have been shared with Sale Sharks Academy and improvements for next season have been agreed.

Fixtures for the U15's programme was hampered by poor weather with training sessions moved last minute and the Staffordshire game cancelled. The U15's fixtures & results were as follows:

- Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018 - Staffordshire v Lancashire @ Newcastle (Staffs) RUFC – Cancelled.
- Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2018 - Lancashire (B) 5 v 17 Yorkshire (B) @ Aldwinians RUFC  
Lancashire struggled to get any foothold in the game being second best in the set-piece and never got on the front foot. Some good defensive performances by some Lancashire players coupled with the opposition blowing some good try scoring opportunities kept the score close but at no time did the result ever look in danger for Yorkshire.

- Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2018 - Lancashire (A) 21 v 50 Yorkshire (A) @ Aldwinians RUFC  
This was always going to be a difficult fixture against a well organised and game hardened Yorkshire side benefitting from being together since the start of their Carnegie DPP. In addition, this was also the biggest set of U15 players to cross the Pennines for several years! Yorkshire scoring 3 tries in the first 15minutes of the game and again 3 tries in the last 15 minutes were always in control of the game. However, Lancashire did hold there own either side of half time and running in 3 tries gave the coaching team something to work in preparation for the Cheshire fixture.
- Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2018 - Cheshire (B) 10 v 15 Lancashire (B) @ Bowdon RUFC  
A more improved and competitive performance by the Lancashire players. Two evenly matched teams played in a good spirit with both defences keeping little opportunity to score. Lancashire finished the stronger and the bench changes proved to be the difference between the teams.
- Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2018 - Cheshire (A) 17 v 5 Lancashire (A) @ Bowdon RUFC  
Building on the experience and the few positives from the Yorkshire game, Lancashire started the game well and with two evenly matched teams there was little in it at half time with Cheshire leading 7-5. It was always likely that whoever scored first in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half would go on to win and with both teams having opportunities to score it was eventually Cheshire that made the breakaway midway through the half and went on to win 17 v 5. However, a much improved performance and plenty of positives to work on for next season.

Player demographics:

CLUBS				SCHOOLS		
Nth Lancs	Manchester	Merseyside	No Club	State	Grammar	Independent
25	20	9	1	38	4	13

### **Bill Nichol**

*Lancashire U15 Head Coach*

### **WOMENS & GIRLS RUGBY**

This is an exciting time for women's and girls' rugby across the country and Lancashire.

In 2017/18 we saw the consolidation of a lot of hard work as the new teams created began to grow and develop.

League rugby is flourishing with Firwood Waterloo Ladies demonstrating that they can compete with the larger more established Tyrells Premier15s clubs. As well as winning a few games holding the league champions Saracens to a 13-22 loss means they have laid down their marker for the next season.

Eccles Women fought a hard battle to avoid relegation from the Championship North 1 ensuring that Lancashire women have a team representing within every level of the current league structure, key to how we can develop rugby going forward.

I would also like to send congratulations to Broughton Park and Didsbury Toc H who have both secured promotion from their relative leagues this year. Broughton Park were new to competitive league rugby and to secure promotion in their first year is a great achievement.

More clubs have applied to set up Women's and Girls' teams and the goal of having no player need to drive more than 30 minutes or 30 miles to play rugby, by the time Lancashire Women's is 30 in 2020, is getting close to being a reality. It may even need updated to 20,20 by 2020! I say it every year but it really is down to the hard work of the volunteers at the clubs.

Lancashire has supported the development of the clubs through our regional forums as well as helping fund some of the activities to attract the new players through the RFU campaign Inner Warrior. This continues to successfully target women to take up rugby for fun and fitness. The prosecco and cake still seems to be popular but this year we have seen clubs like Bury develop further and play in ball gowns for charity, assault courses and fun events as well as rugby fitness programmes. The idea is to introduce women and girls to rugby clubs in fun engaging ways that keeps them interested in being part of the club and the sport.

There will be changes in the league over the summer to accommodate the expansion of the number of teams within the North West and Lancashire. We will be working with the clubs to ensure that they are not negatively affected and those that have worked hard for promotion achieve their goals.

The biggest change this year was losing our Area 5 dedicated support in Claire Antcliffe, although the RDO's are taking on the responsibility for the women and girls game, she is being missed. Pre-season will give us the opportunity to adapt to the new RFU structure and start the process of fully integrated Women's and Girls' within the new arrangements.

### **Representative rugby**

The Youth county programme had a successful campaign and the number of girls who were nominated for trials demonstrates how the growth of the game is also helping develop the talent and skills of the players.

Again, there have been changes and there are more to come. The structure of the youth county programme is moving to after Christmas, something nearly everyone I have spoken to agrees is a positive step. It allows those girls new to either the sport or playing with some girls significantly older to them, because of the age bracket, a chance to settle before the trials.

The format will also be different where girls will be selected to play 15s and 7s as well as Xrugby and must have the opportunity during the three County festival days to play a set amount of rugby. Three counties will be present at each festival and Lancashire has been partnered with Yorkshire and Cheshire. There will be a lot of work over the summer to fully understand the new format and its impact on the girls but initial indications are it's a positive move to help develop the players.

At time of writing the report the last year we knew the Ladies were heading to the final at Twickenham. It was great to say they had won. At the point of this report I know we are in the semifinal against Yorkshire both fighting for a chance to play on the haloed turf at Twickenham itself – the final will be the first ever women's community game of rugby played at the ground.

The restrictions on eligibility has greatly impacted Lancashire but the performance in the league stages by the squad shows the strength and depth of players that is developing across the county. The have gelled well and secured maximum points in the league. Yorkshire will be a challenge but one they will face and if they play at their fully potential they will succeed.

We continue to have success at a national level with more players coming through the youth and county system to gain national honors.

Anya Richmond and Tysh Harper were selected for the England U19s development squad game against Wales.

Lancashire Youth player Charlie Wilcock became vice-Captain of England U20s and was joined in the squad by Sarah Beckett. Racheal Woosey was named in the Elite Training Squad for England and Charlotte Pearce who played for Lancashire Senior Ladies but now plays at Loughborough Lightening was selected for the full England senior side in the six nations.

Holly Aichinson England 7s was nominated for player of the year, although she was pipped to the post it is an amazing achievement that deserves to be recognised.

Again, thank you to all the volunteers and RFU staff who are helping grow Women's and Girls' rugby across the county, there are some big changes coming in the next couple of years and it is an exciting time to be part of this great sport.

**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 five RDC sub-committees: Team Lancashire (Representative Rugby all age groups male and female); Player Development; Coaching & Refereeing; Competition; and Medical Steering Group. The Chairmen of the RDC and each of the five 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 local universities. Player and coach development programmes for students have started and 10s and 7s competitions have been sponsored by the Development Centre; 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 – clubs where events have been held have reported them to have been a success. The Club Coach mentor scheme, which delivers up to ten hours of free coach and player development to local clubs continues to be popular in the down season but, take up during the season has been limited. 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. This scheme is unique to Lancashire and is recognised by other Counties as leading the way in coach development. A coaching group has been formed for coaches of 1<sup>st</sup> XV sides working in the community game in Lancashire. This is to provide them with an open forum to exchange ideas, air opinions and share problems. The group has a strong following on social media and there is an average attendance of 25-30 coaches at meetings so far. This scheme is unique to Lancashire and is recognised by other Counties as leading the way in coach development.

### **Player Development:**

Now in the second season, 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. 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. Again Lancashire leads the way with this initiative and other Counties are hurrying to catch up

Lancashire RFU Academy was launched last 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 age grade representative coaches. All Academy players have a personal fitness and skill development programme in place which has been created by academy professionals. This scheme is unique to Lancashire and is recognised by other Counties as leading the way in developing young players in players in the community game

We are trying to engage with players in the 19 – 23 age group to identify specific development needs, the aim is to make a significant contribution 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; the development Centre contacts with student rugby will be a useful tool in this task

### **Medical Development:**

A Medical Steering Group is has been. The recently appointed County Hon. Medical Advisor is pulling together a team to advise the CB on medical cover for representative squads, Tournaments and festivals. The group will also be able to advise the CB and clubs on RFU policy and best practice on medical matters and player safety and related issues. Also under consideration is providing medics working with the County appropriate levels of kit and equipment.

### **Referee Development:**

The CB continues to work with the Joint referees Group comprising the Federation, local societies, RFU professional staff and Lancashire & Cheshire CBs. Referee recruitment, training and development is top priority. Lancashire has made funding and resources available throughout the season. Development Centre contacts with student rugby have opened up new contacts with, and opportunities for, students interested in refereeing – both the 10s and 7s festivals are student refereed events.

### **Scholarship Funding:**

Lancashire has funded coaches and medical support volunteers to obtain certification, re-certification and higher qualifications. Funds have been made available to both County and club personnel. Additional funds are available for the coming season

### **Future Plans:**

The Rugby Development Committee, the Player Development Committee, the Coaching, Committee Team Lancashire and the Medical Steering Group 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**

For the first time in the last 4 years we have had some changes to the key team in and supporting rugby in Lancashire this year. Following an internal restructure Chris Lowden has decided to pursue a new career. The role of University RDO has changed and there will be a new role of University Cluster Officer covering the North. We are very fortunate to have Mike Hart who was previously URDO in Area 6 and previously covered Lancs as Volunteer Officer in the post. The new role will work more with clusters of Universities where the RFU will put partnership funding to support internal posts designed to help grow the game internally within the Universities, where we will have a particular emphasis on continuing transitioning students into the club game.

The role of Womens RDO has also gone with Women and Girls activity no longer needing as much specialist attention but more falling into the mainstream of Local Delivery Team and club activity.

2 more Match Official Development Officer roles been created so each Area will have a dedicated MODO, we are very fortunate that Claire Antcliffe our previous WRDO has transitioned across to become the MODO for our Area.

The role of Area Player Development Officer has gone and has been replaced by 4 Player Pathway Officers working with the Professional clubs (Sale Sharks) the Tyrells XV clubs and the County squads and Age group teams. We are very lucky to get Peter Taylor who was WRDO in Area 6 as the North Player Pathway Officer. The rest of the team remains the same comprising of myself the Area manager, supported by RDOs Stuart Urquhart, Phil Clarke, 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 other significant change is that George Glenn who has served Lancashire and Cheshire really well as RDO for Greater Manchester has moved on to the Player Pathway Officer role across the Midlands. The process is underway to find the successor for George who will be sorely missed. The team are Supported by specialists who cover Lancs along with the rest of Area 5, we are also supported by a Funding and Facilities Officer Tom Bartram and an 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.

The “Casual and Vets” rugby which caters to those players wanting to play less frequently and in a more relaxed informal programme continues to grow apace. 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.

Women and Girls rugby in the county with new Women’s teams at Oldham and Orrell and new fledgling teams for Girls including Manchester, Widnes, Sefton, Rochdale, Leigh, Wigan, Didsbury Broughton Park, Southport, Burnley and Ormskirk.

New Boys teams have grown at various clubs including: Liverpool Collegiate, West Park, Bedians, Widnes, Broughton Park, Wythenshawe, Oldham and Fleetwood.

In the highly important area of Under 17-19 Lancashire has seen a big surge with new teams at a great testament to the efforts of the RDOs, CRCs, the clubs themselves and a big thanks for the county support: Heaton Moor, Liverpool Collegiate, LSH/Waterloo, Widnes. North Lancs has done especially well Blackburn, Fylde, Clitheroe, Garstang Burnley and Vale of Lune.

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, I must mention Rob Briers, Dave Herriman, Ken Andrews, Tom Fitzgerald, 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**

Once again the committee has had a busy year, four members have been involved in running the Leadership Academy for Lancashire, Andy Kerboas as leader, Carol Baker, Anne Clarke & Gary Morgan as mentors . This has gone very well.

Stuart Kohler has helped to plan a Lancashire brochure to circulate throughout the County, we are hoping it will bring in more advertisement and sponsorship for Lancashire.

We have run two Cluster meetings this year at Liverpool St Helens & Preston Grasshoppers on three subjects. Lancashire presented by Mark Downs, Andy Kerboas & Paul Deakin. The DPP presentation organised by Kate Bennetta and Discipline presented by Brian Stott. I would to thank all the presenters for their time and effort.

Jayne Dollaway is producing very good articles for the Mums Blog.

Helen Duggan produced and collated the Lancashire Survey, then presented the findings to a Lancashire meeting.

I thank Stuart Urquhart for his help and support and a vote of thanks to Steve Blackburn for his work and help during his Presidential year. Lastly a big thank you to all the members for their contributions during the year.

**Malcolm Worsley**

*Club & Community Rugby Chairman*

### **CUP & COMPETITIONS**

In this my first year of competitions secretary I would like to thank the past Secretary, Brian Stott, for leaving things in apple pie order for me to pick also the help and advice during this first season.

This season all the competitions ran to plan and we arrived at finals day with six teams, this gave us three well contested games, and one of the teams doing a double winning both the Lancashire Plate and their league, well done De La Salle. Bolton were the plate runners up.

The Brian Leigh Lancashire Trophy was a tight game with Burnage, last years winners, taking the Trophy back with them but this was a close game and maybe Broughton Park can tip the scales next season.

For the Alan Stone Lancashire Bowl this year, with the level nine clubs lacking games, we split them into two groups and played a round robin, with the top two in each group playing in the semis, this seems to have worked for the club making up for the lack of league games. The winners this season were Ormskirk and beaten finalist Eagle, well done all teams.

Could I also thank Dave and Anne Clarke and the Wigan team for hosting the finals day, if we had ordered the weather we could not have done better. I am sorry I had to miss it due to illness because I know I missed a good day, could I also thank the committee and the secretary of each competition for their work this season

**Brian Hurst**

*Competitions Secretary*

### **COUNTY SAFEGUARDING**

My thanks again extended to Christine Spivey, Deputy CBSM for her support, help and hard work through this past season. I am also happy to report that an additional deputy CBSM has been identified, Sue Hopkinson a very experienced Safeguarding expert in her own professional field, a Club Safeguarding Officer at Rossendale RUFC and a Lancashire President's 2018 Valued Volunteer is join the Lancashire CB safeguarding team.

The season has continued to be a very proactive and well staffed with many Club Safeguarding Officers (CSO's) remaining in post; therefore continuity and experience remain in this vital role. New CSO's at clubs, (who have retiring officers), have been appointed and on the whole supported by the outgoing officer.

As reported within many media platforms Child Abuse and the reporting of incidents continues to make headlines. Albeit mostly historical reporting. The RFU still oversee the safeguarding of incidents and child protection for the whole Union and liaise with Lancashire County clubs. Excellent Child Protection and Safeguarding of the young people playing at a junior level in our Lancashire clubs still continues to be exemplified as best practice and highly praised throughout the country.

As in previous years Safeguarding audits have been undertaken at clubs 25% of clubs having been audited this year this is in excess of the 10% required under national regulations from RFU. The remaining clubs that have not been audited within the last three seasons will be audited in the 2018-2019 season.

Play it Safe and In Touch – RFU specific safeguarding courses, have been delivered within the county with over 400 coaches, managers and volunteers (Play it Safe) as well as CSO's (In Touch) taking part. The year on year increase in participants bears 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.

I am happy to report that my work, with Sale Sharks and the Sale Academy and DPP's programmes continues.

The AGE GRADE regulations for all players under 18 years of age (regulation 15) is embedded and most clubs are now fully understanding of the regulations. Clubs still need to seek advice and support and not retrospectively if unsure. Dispensation requests for players to play out of their 'age group' are on the whole fully understood and abided by.

I again stress that if clubs have queries PLEASE contact [safeguarding@lancshirerugby.com](mailto:safeguarding@lancshirerugby.com) and do not take the word of other clubs.

In the 2018-2018 season there will be a concentrated effort to ensure ALL players will be recorded correctly on GMS and I.D. Cards made and produced for examination.

In October 2017 the annual Lancashire CSO conference was held at West Park RUFC thanks again extended to the Lancashire Executive board for support and all those who attended. THINK YOU KNOW training was delivered at this conference for all attendees. The THINK YOU KNOW relates to Social media usage and protection for young people from on line exploitation, is a nationally run course written and designed by CEOPS. (Child Exploitation and Online Protection service). A conference for 2018-2019 seasons will be held in September 2018 most probably. This year's theme will be in relation to the Mental Health of players.

I again wish to thank the CSO's and officers at our Lancashire clubs who work tirelessly maintaining and continuing to provide robust and effective safeguarding for Young Persons involved within the game. CSO's are sometimes unsung heroes and the "thorn in the side" of some, however without their continued commitment to the role and professionalism, the game would not be as safe and as well protected as it is today.

To those CSO's who are standing down this year thank you for all your hard work and commitment. To those newly appointed CSO's welcome, its great to have you on board. Welcome you to the role, it is an exciting, challenging, so worthwhile but a necessary role.

Finally Thank you to Lancashire CB who continue to be supportive of and acknowledge the importance of Safeguarding Children, Young People in Lancashire Rugby Union.

**Carol Baker**

*Lancashire CB County Safeguarding Manager*

## **MANCHESTER & DISTRICT REFEREES**

It is with regret that we have to report the sad loss of Stewart Wilkin, a great character and supporter of the Society

### **RFU and North Group**

- Matt Turvey and Chris Bennett continue on the RFU panel of referees.
- Matt Riley has been joined by Elliott Lewis and Jack Le Feuvre on the North Group and Kieron Henry has just been appointed for 2018/19 season.
- David Guerin continues with the RFRU and has just been appointed as an RFU Assessor.
- 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.

### **Executive Committee**

There are a number of changes to the Executive Committee this year:-

- Mike Hamlin is standing down this season due to personal commitments on his time and Roger Bowden has agreed to take up the Chairmanship.
- Similarly, Graham Bancroft has had to stand down as OPC Chairman again due to personal commitments and Alan Woods has taken up the position.
- Matt Turvey has stood down as Referees' Representative and his replacement will be voted on at the AGM.

We should like to extend our thanks to Mike, Graham and Matt for their work for the Society and we appreciate all their efforts. Additionally, we are grateful to Roger and Alan for taking up these positions at short notice.

- Allan Townsend has been appointed as the Society's Safeguarding Officer after completing the Lancashire RFU course.

### **Appointments**

- This season we have appointed to 4292 matches of which 3836 (89%) were played, the weather having the most significant impact.
- Fortunately, we have maintained a good number of MO's thanks to the sterling efforts of both Bill Taylor and Clive Ennis with nearly 700 matches being watched this year. We have had reports from more than 20 MO's with 18 acting on a regular basis at level 9 and below this year – beware if you hang up your boots or are injured, Bill and Clive will come knocking.
- At the start of the season we were concerned at the lack of referees but we have successfully recruited 13 new referees which is positive with only losing 10.
- With the support of Liverpool Society and the NW Association, together with the support of referees who “doubled up” on a Saturday and/or Sunday, we have only had a few matches to which we have not been able to appoint. It is pleasing to note that we were able to reciprocate with Liverpool (even sending a referee to the Isle of Man) and the Association which has continued to strengthen our relationship with these organisations.
- We have lost a number of teams from the NW Leagues and with sides cancelling along with the number of matches which start with many players short and/or with uncontested scrums, is frustrating but we are grateful to referees who take this on board and continue to referee to give players a game.

- The Appointments Team is very grateful for the support we get from the Club Contacts, the overwhelming majority of whom provide us with excellent support and make the job manageable. Appointments have become more difficult with the shortage of referee numbers above level 9.
- It takes a minimum of 15 man days to appoint for a 6 week period. Careful consideration has to be given to the matches available and the ability of the referee. There is also a balance to be made on the levels given, mixing lower level with higher level games together with the number of standbys endeavouring to be fair to everyone, bearing in mind their availability. It is imperative that referees do complete their availability before each six week period to reduce the pressure and the Appointments Team recognise that the majority of referees do that and accept whatever appointment they are given.
- It is good to see that Kieron Henry has joined the team as Assistant Coordinator and Exchange Secretary.
- Thanks must go to Alan Farmer and his team for the work they do.

### **Abuse**

- We reported last season that referee abuse is on the increase and to all levels of referees but noticeably among junior games and from coaches. This has continued and we have set up a working group led by Mike Hamlin to devise a plan of action and to liaise with the RFU. Unfortunately, this is a nationwide problem and our discussions with other Societies confirm this disappointing development. We are grateful to the referees who do report instances of abuse and we shall continue to support them wholeheartedly.

### **Exchanges**

- International Exchanges - we have had hosted referees from Holland and Malta and sent referees and coaches to Malta and the Dairibord National Schools Tournament in Zimbabwe, where we forged links with other countries and hope to extend the Exchange network.
- Exchanges have already been arranged with Spain and Portugal for 2018/19 season

### **Federation**

- The NW Federation has had 8 Thursday evening meetings this season with approx 50% attendance rate. Again, 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 had a total of 17 referee members at some stages throughout the season from Liverpool and Manchester Societies and 12 advisors / coaches.
- The referees in the NW Federation group worked very hard with their coaches in improving their performance as referees and it is pleasing to report that, as last season, every referee in the group has been promoted at least one level during the season. A number of the referees in the NW Federation represented us at the Rosslyn Park Sevens in London but the North of England Sevens at Birkenhead Park and the Stonyhurst Sevens were cancelled due to bad weather.

### **Website and WTR (Who's The Ref)**

- This year has seen a great deal of activity on the IT front with a new website about to be launched as well as the introduction, Who's The Ref. and thanks go to Phil Cole and Paul Watkins.

I am pleased to congratulate Alan Farmer who has received the Lancashire President's Volunteer Award. Alan has also been proposed for the Mitsubishi Motors Volunteer of the Year Award and we

wish him well. Those members who work with Alan realise what a tremendous effort he puts in on behalf of the Society and our thanks go to him.

There are, of course, volunteers who have not been mentioned but without whom the Society would not function. I should like to express my thanks to them and all the Officers and Members of the Society for their help in my first year as Hon. Secretary.

**Paul Houston**

*Hon. Secretary, Manchester & District Referees Society*

## **LIVERPOOL & DISTRICT REFEREES**

As is tradition with this report it is my place to acknowledge those who have passed away during the course of the season. Sadly we lost Derrick Chamberlain, who passed away shortly after the sad passing of his own son. Derrick was a stalwart of the mid-week games and was a frequent referee at Edge Hill where he will be particularly missed. As many of you will know Margaret Warrington passed away recently, it was Margy's loyal support that allowed Paul to get to great office in many fields of his life and not just with the Rugby Family. They will be missed

By this time of year the season should have finished and sides should be playing 7's rugby, however the dreadful weather from the start of the year has meant that some meaningful competitive matches are still yet to be played with promotion to North One West still unresolved. (The play off for promotion will be this weekend at Malone Field v Aspatria.)

Sadly this season is going to see a number of local clubs relegated from their respective leagues but it does mean that Birkenhead Park return to seeking appointments from the Society.

The bad weather has had a number of impacts on the Society weekends when virtually no rugby is played - to weekends when there is a full programme meaning every able-bodied whistler has been called into action. I am aware that Manchester and Cumbria have experienced similar issues and I am delighted to say that when we have been able to – we have sent some of our referees over to assist them with their overload.

Gary Spengler and his team made appointments to 1,804 games of which just under 1/3 were undertaken by just 12 referees with 5 refs carrying out over 50 each.

These are in ascending order

With:-

50	Ben Moore
54	Neil Burdekin
57	Gary (one R!) Williams
58	Jim Bennett

and with a quite staggering

64	Brian Harris – bottle of whisky
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Whilst Gary has been appointing at weekends Ralph Savill has been appointing for the schools, colleges and universities on Wednesdays and Saturday mornings as well as assisting Gary with the afternoon fixtures when he was away. Also assisting Gary has been Mark Walsh who has on occasion had to make urgent phone-calls on Saturday mornings to sort out cry-offs.

Martin Calcutt has again put in sterling work dealing with the Sunday Colts appointments and in the latter part of the season he has been assisted by Ben Moore.

They have all been working behind the scenes making sure all appointments are fulfilled where-ever possible and they deserve not just our thanks but also the thanks of the clubs some of whom are less keen to follow the protocols than others – which does cause disruption.

However the outstanding statistic that has come out of the data derived from WTR is that of the 1804 appointments 952 were made by one person – Ralph Savill who therefore a worthy winner of the David Yorke Cup.

Last year I was able to report that since I had become Hon Sec England had only lost once I am afraid to say that is now not the case! Congratulations to the Irish they deserved their mantle. The England players looked disorganised and a spent force and perhaps the impasse between the administrators of the premiership game, the Players Union, and England Rugby need to get together and have the central contracts which allowed the Celtic Nations to rest players when appropriate.

15 a-side schools and colts rugby continues to thrive albeit again restricted by the weather. As far as I am aware every senior Northern schools 7's tournament which involved Liverpool Society referees was cancelled this year.

Ian Tempest is now frequently seen on television refereeing at Premiership games and we wish him well with his on-going development. Ben Davies continues with higher grade appointments and I am delighted to report that James O'Brien has been elevated to a Panel referee and only recently was at Twickenham refereeing the Intermediate Cup Final. He has achieved this by hard work and without doubt the excellent coaching of Fred Howard.

We still have 3 RFU AR's Colin Burrell, Tim Brown and Steve Woolley.

Geraint Davies and Ron Johnson continue as RFU coaches and Paul Warrington continues his association with North Group as does Bryan Davies.

Looking inwards:-

Bryan Davies having finished a successful year as Cheshire President has agreed to take over the development and coaching of the match officials. Previously this role was called the Senior Officials Development Officer which has the rather unfortunate acronym of SADO ! However the new title is Senior Match Official Development Officer which is hardly better – SMODO. I am sure Bryan will take this role on board and deliver.

Peter Barnett has been the recruitment and retention Secretary this year and has developed the Society's recruiting modus operandi efficiently and overseen new arrivals and bedded them in.

As you will have seen, the stewardship of the accounts is in good hands but funding will soon become the centre of attention depending on the results of the RFRU vote.

Ben Davies continues with his good work at the mid-monthly meetings and the feedback from the filmed games continues to give encouragement.

Both the Colins are stepping down from their primary roles but remaining on the Executive in differing roles. Colin Burrell relinquishes Chairmanship but remains Discipline Officer and becomes one of 2 Vice Chairmen. His role as Chairman is being taken by Colin Kershaw.

In anticipation of stepping down as secretary it was felt prudent to have for a one year handover an assistant secretary and I have been ably assisted by Conal Scholes who I am sure will be able to deal with those little crises that occur from time to time.

My thanks also go to all the Committee without whose effort the Society would crumble.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that the 2 awards given to the Club and School who have - by voting of the referees are chosen for their "administrative competence and hospitality".

So, in conclusion of my report.

For the Schools the Ian Robinson School of the Year award goes to Merchant Taylors' School who just beat St Edwards College to the post.

And in respect of the Club, - this year there were 2 contenders for the David Yorke Club of the Year award and despite being given a good run for their money by Prenton the award goes for the 4<sup>th</sup> year in succession to Anselmians.

### **Malcolm Irving**

*Hon. Secretary, Liverpool Referees Society*

### **DISCIPLINARY REPORT**

During the season World Rugby made changes to the Disciplinary regulations. The aim of these changes was to simplify the Laws of the Game. They also mandated that certain offences attracted a higher sanction. These all involved contact with the head.

The Committee felt that the top end sanction for licking to the head was warranted in most cases there were occasions where a mid-range sanction was more appropriate. Representations have been made by me and it is under review.

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

### **Referee Abuse**

It is with regret that I have to report that last season's decrease has been reversed. Also the level of abuse has also increased with referees being told to f\*\*\* off, called a bald c\*\*\*, you're ruining the game you fat t\*\*\* and you're f\*\*\*ing useless. As a response to this the Committee has decided to increase all sanctions for this offence by an additional two weeks.

Any abuse of a referee after a sending off will be charged as a separate offence. This will mean that an additional sanction will added. This will in all probability be treated as consecutive sanction rather than concurrent.

Another worrying trend is the abuse coming from the touchline by coaches and spectators. This is happening at both senior and junior levels. However, the trend on Sunday's is more worrying abuse by fewer than 18 players and parents is on the increase.

As a consequence both Manchester and Liverpool are finding it more and more difficult to find referees to cover Sunday matches. I urge all clubs to impress on players, coaches, spectators and parents to respect match officials.

## Racial Abuse

There has been an increase of racial abuse of players. This is mainly at under 18 level. This is a pattern of behaviour that will not be tolerated and heavy sanctions will be given to any case being found proved.

### Season 2017/2018 Statistics

Pending	14
Proved	155
Dismissed	6
Charged	21
Total Cases	175
Sent Off	154
Number of Clubs	50

<u>Offence</u>	<u>2016-2017</u>	<u>2017-2018</u>		
Striking	50	73	23	46%
Kicking	3	4	1	33%
Stamping	4	1	-3	-75%
Dangerouse Tackle	7	22	15	214%
Biting	0	0	0	0%
Contact with the Eye area	0	0	0	0%
2 Yellow Cards	8	15	7	88%
Dissent/Abuse	12	17	5	42%
Other	18	2	-16	-89%
Misconduct	9	21	12	133%
Dismissed	6	14	8	133%
Pending	4	6	-8	-57%
Total	131	175	44	34%

## 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)

Without doubt the season that has just finished has been the most difficult the North Competitions Committee have had to deal with for quite some time. A combination of bad weather and clubs not willing to or unable to play on the 'next available date', for whatever reason, resulted in more appeals arriving on my desk than I care to mention. If this does not prompt the RFU to re visit the Adult Competition Review then I do not know what will, some Leagues are still playing fixtures to determine runner up for a play off game at the time of writing and who knows when we will be in a position to formulate Leagues and Fixtures for next season.

Electronic Match Cards have been introduced at Level 5 and 6 this season, without particular success, a combination of clubs not engaging with the system, problems with the mobile App, connectivity problems and human error in completing these cards have led to changes to them for next season. It is also expected that these will be introduced to Level 7 and 8 for 2018/19.

A change to the RFU Cup structure was discussed but because agreement could not be reached the format will remain the same for the 2018/19 season, nominations for these cups cannot be made until the RFUNCC or the RFU have decided whether or not clubs not competing in the English Clubs Championship will be allowed to participate. This is due to the imminent formation of the Lancashire Leagues outside the ECC.

#### Promotions:

Winner North Premier Preston Grasshoppers RFC promoted to Level 4

Winner North One West Vale of Lune RUFC promoted to Level 5

Winner North Lancs Cumbria De La Salle RUFC promoted to Level 6

Winner SLC1 Broughton Park FC promoted to Level 6

Runner up of SLC2 Liverpool Collegiate promoted to Level 7

Winner SLC 3 Garstang RUFC Promoted to Level 8

Dave Clarke

*Northern League Rep, Divisional Organising Committee*

#### **COUNTY SCHOOLS UNION**

The 2017/18 season has again been an extremely busy one and one in which Lancashire Schools and Lancashire CB have had a leading role. Schools have adapted to the New Rules of Play and the age grade regulations well, although the structured season has caused some issues in certain areas. All members must ensure that regulations are adhered to all times, including the notification of cross border fixtures involving overnight stays.

The numbers of schools involved in competitive rugby continues to be healthy in Lancashire with the increasing number of schools embarking on the All Schools Programme as well as the traditional rugby playing schools providing rugby at numerous levels. That said, in many such schools assistance is required to ensure that this vital provision is not allowed to slip as both financial and time constraints in schools bite. Congratulations to Manchester GS on reaching the U15 Nat West Cup final at Twickenham.

Again the retention of school leavers in the game is an issue that requires constant attention, but is one that is not unique to Lancashire. So to the development of those in the All Schools Programme, as we support them still further in moving onto the next level, as well as the need to expand the development of the girls' game still requires our support.

The DPP structure and the close liaison with Sale Sharks in all areas of development is certainly progressing well, with regular and open dialogue. The number of teachers involved in this process is continuing to increase. I am confident to say that any concerns have been listened to and reacted upon to assist the development of players, and coaches, at all levels.

#### **CUP COMPETITIONS**

The inclement weather caused huge disruption to the various cup competitions organised by the CSU. The U13 Waterfall Plate festival was held at AKS Lytham and was extremely well received and it was great to see such close and competitive matches, with all schools benefiting from the number of

games played. Due to the earlier postponement, the Cup festival was held at Preston Grasshoppers RFC, with two matches played across the width of the pitch. Lancashire CSU also trialled an RFU initiative of the 'Half Game Rule' whereby all players in the U13 competitions and all emerging age groups must play at least half a game. This was well received, although the collation of player/parental feedback proved more difficult.

The superb Wednesday night rugby atmosphere under the floodlights in early February at PGH, another huge crowd gathered to watch two excellent matches in the U18 Plate and Cup finals. All four competing schools gave a terrific account of themselves, a credit to the coaches and players alike, as St Edward's College beat Liverpool College 25-18 to win the Plate and Stonyhurst College defeating Manchester GS 26-19 to retain the Cup. We were particularly grateful to the Sale Sharks DPP staff for changing their schedule to accommodate the event, but enabled them to witness Lancashire Schools' rugby at its best.

Unfortunately the prestigious Schools Finals Day was postponed due to a heavy frost at Fylde RFC. The U14 & U15 Plate and Cup finals were eventually played on consecutive nights at Fylde RFC at the start of May. The standard of play was terrific, not least the U15 Cup final, won by a last minute length of the field try and conversion. Unfortunately the U16 Plate and Cup Finals did not take place due to the conflict of club commitments and the proximity of GCSE exams. Both trophies were shared accordingly. The support and effort to ensure that the days ran smoothly was a testament to the volunteers from Fylde, I would like to thank Jeff Gould and his team for the preparation and diligence in helping to ensure the events went ahead. 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

## SCHOOLS CUP AND PLATE FINALS 2018 RESULTS

### Mon 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018 at AKS, Lytham (Plate) and Mon 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018 at Preston Grasshoppers RFC (Cup)

Brian Cauwood U13 Waterfall Festival

Final Placings:

- 1 Kirkham GS**
- 2 Bolton School
- 3 St Mary's Hall
- 4 St Edward's College
- 5 Hutton
- 6 Birkdale
- 7= RGS Lancaster
- 7= Standish HS
- 9 AKS Lytham
- 10 Ripley St Thomas

U13 Plate Waterfall Festival

Final Placings:

- 1= St Mary's Crosby**
- 1= Audenshaw**
- 3 Manchester GS
- 4 Priestnall
- 5 Merchant Taylor's Crosby
- 6 Liverpool College
- 7 Cowley HS
- 8 Bury GS



Under 16 Plate St. Wilfrid's	35	<b>QEGS Blackburn</b>	<b>45</b>
Under 16 Cup Carnforth	12	<b>Priestnal</b>	<b>17</b>

Many thanks to all the teacher's in the respective schools for their continued support of the competitions. The CSU are however reviewing the format of all of the cup competitions to assist in the transition from emerging school status into the main cup programme.

### **REPRESENTATIVE RUGBY**

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.

The staff at Sale Sharks are certainly working with us as a CSU and the CB representative sides, including the transition of players to the appropriate development pathway. Many thanks to those involved in running the county programmes at respective age groups; 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 respective finals days at Fylde and for the boys to be officiated by a team of three certainly adds to the sense of occasion.

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.

#### **Robbie Jones**

*Chairman, Lancashire County Schools Union*

### **COLTS RUGBY**

This season has been "a strange one" with many highs and firsts, thwarted, with too many lows e.g. postponed/cancelled games; adding to the disappointment/frustration from all quarters. (Sorry folks even we cannot control the weather!)

To this end, the Northwest Colts Committee, for the first time in their history; reluctantly cancelled the League Cup(s). In order to extend and play all outstanding league fixtures into the middle of May, only then will all the league winners be known.

Despite all the challenges, our clubs yet again, gave a good account of themselves in the battle to be crowned champions. (Please go to [www.colts-rugby.org](http://www.colts-rugby.org) to see final league tables).

Our successes being:-

	Senior U18s Winners	Junior U17s Winners
League A	Chester or Lymm	Lymm or Birkenhead Park
League B	Macclesfield	Altrincham Kersal or Bowden
League C	Wilmslow	<b>Ormskirk</b> or Wirral
League D	<b>Rochdale</b>	
League E	<b>Rossendale</b>	
League F	<b>Ashton under Lyne</b>	

Senior U18s Fairplay Award Penrith  
Junior U17s Fairplay Award **Clitheroe**

The Lancashire Colts Cup(s) as ever turned out to be a highly sort after prize, I witnessed some great games and I can tell everyone, cup rugby matters to these young men!

One of the “firsts” I mentioned was these astonishing results in Frank’s (Morgan) Cup. Both semi-finals were drawn Manchester 22 – 22 West Park & Warrington 29 – 29 Widnes. Wids & West Park progressed to the final, on the away team rule, countback being equal. Yes, for the many who witnessed the final, West Park 29 – 29 Widnes was also the score at no side. West Park crowned County Champions following the “Golden Boot” kicking competition decider 4 – 3. (Love it or hate it - re named by some the Marmite Penalty Shoot-out)

### County Cup Winners

Frank Morgan Snr Cup	Widnes	29 - 29	West Park
Joe McDonough Snr Trophy	Rossendale	10 - 12	Littleborough
Rob Briers Jnr Cup	Heaton Moor	28 - 18	Blackburn
Alan James Jnr Trophy	Eccles	20 - 36	Kirkby Lonsdale

To Paul Thorpe and the team of Volunteers at Eccles “what a day”! The first time Eccles RFC runs out of beer!! albeit late in the evening when the crowds where leaving. Your expertise in running the event showed from start to finish; thank you and well done to you all, a true community rugby club.

As always our thanks to both Manchester & Liverpool Referee Societies; who rise to the task to provide Sunday Appointments for Majority of Colts games; an achievement in its self, given the falling numbers of referee’s.

To the players who played for the County, The North & England Counties via the 17/18gp, congratulation’s.

To the clubs who did fall in the revamped National U18’s Colts Cup, I applaud your “courage” entering a side against, what turned out to be, some hefty opposition. (Perhaps the RFU may adopt/ask for sides to be recommended rather than request entries; leading to miss match’s!!)

I would also like to extend my thanks to all the Coach’s/managers and parents who support their sons each week, as they travel around the North West of England, playing this great game which we are all

privileged to be a part of. Without your commitment, Colts Rugby, on such a scale would be hard to achieve.

To all the people who wished me well following my spinal surgery thank you I am getting there...where? I don't know.

Well done to **us all** especially Jon Kitchen & Bill Borrett for this season and undoubtable challenges lay ahead for next season, they always do!

Enjoy the summer break (what break!) and let's make 18/19 season a memorable one.

**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 successful 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 and some excellent displays of good sportsman ship at the end of games on the day, which were a credit to all teams involved. This season we again ran the developments games for those that were knocked out at the semi final stages. We had certificates produced to be given out as recognition of their participation in the final game. Generally these were all well received and the ethos of the game under stood.

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 Bolton and Old Bedians.

With the use of facebook communication between clubs and county information is hopefully getting out there more quickly than before. Do to the facebook page growing we have noticed that anyone can add anyone, so parents and players are on there and as this was meant to be a tool for contact with clubs, so we will be introducing up a new page. This new facebook page will be for club officials only. This will mean direct contact with clubs and will be by invitation only.

Special mention must go to Allen Bower for his continuous hard work in putting the JRC 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. To try and lighten the work load for Allen, we introduced age grade league secretaries. All team had a new point of contact for results and information. This has had a few teething problems as with anything new.

The Mini & Junior committee wish to thank all those clubs that have taken part this season, look forward to your participation next season.

I would just like to express my thanks to the M & J Committee for their commitment to County rugby.

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 use of the website continue to be consistently used as a source of information for what is happening in Lancashire County RFU. At the AGM, Howard Hughes was appointed as Press Officer, and has proved to be an extremely valuable asset to the County in the way

he has used Social Media, including Twitter and Facebook to promote what is happening in Lancashire which in turn has prompted people to link to the website to find out more!

Recent analysis shows that the website is being used consistently with a total of 181476 page views over the past year. The most popular 'hits' being information about Fixtures/Results of County Squads and groups and the Disciplinary section where information is added weekly., Disciplinary Information continues to top the 'Leader Board'. The Lancashire Mini and Junior section information is also extremely popular. The Lancashire Facebook page has an average of 9.000 views weekly and Twitter continues to add followers with the weekly page showing up and coming fixtures creating great interest around the country.

It is hoped during the close season to look at how to develop the website further in order to provide more information for people within the County and also to ensure that all areas of County rugby are included.

Many thanks to everyone for their contributions this season, Secretary Mark Downs, who I am sure I have continued to hassle with constant questions and to Howard Hughes for his advice and expertise with the use of Social Media.

**Anne Clarke**

*County Webmaster*

## COUNTY SQUADS RESULTS & SCORES – 2017/18

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

05-May	v	Northumberland	Percy Park RFC	W	20-64
12-May	v	Eastern Counties	Sedgley Park RUFC	W	52-31
19-May	v	Cheshire	Fylde RFC	W	64-23

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

29-Apr	v	Durham	Hartlepool RFC	W	5-27
06-May	v	North Midlands	Birmingham University	W	12-47
13-May	v	East Midlands	Southport RFC	W	59-0
20-May	V	Yorkshire	West Park Leeds RUFC	L	43-5

### Lancashire Royals XV

15-Nov	v	Cheshire	Sedgley Park RUFC	L	8-43
30-Dec	v	Anti Assassins	Blackburn RUFC	L	24-29

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

21-Jan	v	Liverpool University	Tyldesley RUFC	W	34-15
25-Feb	v	Staffordshire	Stafford RFC	W	0-69
18-Mar	v	Northumberland	Wigan RUFC	W	53-11
01-Apr	v	Buckinghamshire	Wigan RUFC	W	72-7
15-Apr	v	Berkshire	Wigan RUFC	W	45-32
6-May	v	Notts, Lincs & Derbys	Mosley RUFC	W	54-38

### 18 Group County Squad

29-Oct	v	Cumbria	Darlington Mowden Pk RFC	W	10-41
03-Dec	v	Yorkshire	Bishop Burton College	W	5-15
17-Dec	v	Cheshire	Preston Grasshoppers RFC	L	31-32

**Under 18s Development (Under 17s) Squad**

18-Feb	v	Cheshire	Burnage RUFC	W	24-45
25-Feb	v	Yorkshire	Keighley RUFC	W	10-45

**16 Group County Squad A**

21-Jan	v	Cheshire A	Burnage RUFC	L	15-13
04-Feb	v	Yorkshire A	Burnage RUFC	L	13-17

**16 Group County Squad B**

21-Jan	v	Cheshire B	Burnage RUFC	W	0-21
04-Feb	v	Cheshire B	Burnage RUFC	W	35-12

**15 Group County Squad A**

11-Mar	v	Yorkshire A	Aldwinians RUFC	L	21-50
25-Mar	v	Cheshire A	Bowden RUFC	L	5-17

**15 Group County Squad B**

11-Mar	v	Yorkshire B	Aldwinians RUFC	L	5-17
25-Mar	v	Cheshire B	Bowden RUFC	W	10-15

**Under 18s Girls County Squad**

29-Oct	v	Cheshire	Winnington Park RUFC	W	24-29
19-Nov	v	Yorkshire	Thornensians RUFC	L	40-0
03-Dec	v	Northumberland	Rochdale RUFC	W	34-0

**Under 15s Girls County Squad**

29-Oct	v	Cheshire	Winnington Park RUFC	W	0-62
19-Nov	v	Yorkshire	Thornensians RUFC	L	47-17
03-Dec	v	Northumberland	Rochdale RUFC	W	17-10

# COUNTY OFFICERS & OTHER OFFICIALS 2017 - 2018

**County President** Steve Blackburn  
**Vice Presidents:**  
Dave Clarke (Senior Vice President)  
Mark Nelson  
Gill Burns MBE  
Brian Stott  
Carol Baker  
John Greenwood

## **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 Office**

Howard Hughes

## **Safeguarding Manager**

Carol Baker

*Senior Deputy:* Christine Spivey

## **County Committees:**

### **Rugby Development Committee**

*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 Hurst

### **Disciplinary Committee**

*Chairman:* John Greenwood  
*Secretary:* Brian Stott

### **Governance Committee**

*Director/Chairman:* Carol Baker

## **Coaching Committee**

*Chairman:* Mark Nelson  
*Secretary:* Tom Fitzgerald

## **Womens Rugby Development Group**

*Chair:* Helen Duggan

## **17-18 Committee**

*Chairman:* Tommy Hughes

## **7-16 (Junior Rugby) Committee**

*Chairman:* Ian Spivey  
*Secretary:* Mike Murphy

## **County Schools Union**

*Chairman:* Robbie Jones  
*Secretary:* Ken Andrews

## **Colts Competitions Committee**

*Chairman:* Alan James  
*Secretary:* Jon Kitchen

## **Assistant Hon. Secretary**

Brian Stott

## **Assistant Hon. Treasurer**

Stephen Briers

## **Hon. Solicitor**

John Bullough

## **Chairman of Selectors for**

Senior XV & U20s John Greenwood

## **Hon. Team Secretary**

Senior XV Steve Rigby

## **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.lancashirerugby.com](http://www.lancashirerugby.com)

Note to Annual Members:  
Individual Subscriptions (£20.00) are due on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018  
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, T Fitzgerald, JRS Greenwood,  
JT Hughes, AS Kerboas, JB Morgan, 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](http://www.lancashirerugby.com)**