

LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

ANNUAL REPORT

2015-16

THE SECRETARY'S OPENING REMARKS

As always in these opening remarks my first and most enjoyable job is to thank our President, Tim Stirk. Tim has done a great job this season and has represented the office of President and the County extremely well.

Having sat through many meetings with Tim he never fails to mention how much he has been enjoying his year as President and will recount the pleasure he has gained from getting out in to our clubs. He has tried to ensure that he attended as many finals days, tournaments and club matches as possible and has been frustrated at times that the weather has got in his way this season. People have found, like I did, the enjoyment of speaking with Tim before or after a game and getting his informed views on the match as a whole and playing individuals.

Tim was a member of the RFU Council for many years as the Representative of the Schools Union and went on to become President of the ERFUSU, a tireless grafter for Rugby through his whole life I thank him for what he has given to Lancashire. We should be grateful that 40 years ago this incomer from Durham chose our County to teach in and has never left.

Being Chairman of Governance, Tim is also still involved in the day to day business of the County and his attention to detail has ensured our rules and regulations are kept fit for purpose.

Tim's Exeter, the power behind the throne, is his lovely wife Alison who many in the County will have met this season. Alison is not only a pleasure to be with she also has an in depth knowledge of Rugby that I am quite jealous of. Thank you Alison for supporting Tim. Thank you both for representing Rugby and Lancashire Rugby Football Union.

To Rugby matters, Our Senior XV sadly did not make the final of the County Championship this season. A win away at old friends and rivals Yorkshire in the first game set us off confidently. Another win against new friends from the Eastern Counties at Fylde put us in a strong position going into what would be a semi final, must win, qualifier against Cheshire at Sedgley Park. On the day conditions were tropical, less glorious sunshine, more torrential downpour, the Cheshire lads came to play rugby and they did. Cheshire are now on their way to their first final in many years and I wish players, officials and friends from Cheshire the very best of luck against Cornwall.

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.

Our Under 20s have had a new management and coaching team in place this season with more ex International players involved than you can shake a stick at. They have aligned themselves more closely with the Senior XV which should see a better progression of players in the future and a stable

base to work from. Howards full report is here within on the season and I would like to thank him and all the team for what has been a successful season in what was looked upon as a rebuilding year.

As far as the Finance team is concerned this has been the phoenix from the ashes this season, we have a new Treasurer, Paul Deakin. Chris Smail is now Chairman of Finance, with Stephen Briers as Assistant Hon. Treasurer, Mike Bailey organising the International ticket applications and Catherine Ryan helping run the books. My thanks go to all of them for creating a transparent, open committee that is already moving in new directions. Thanks should also be given to Mel Whittle for ensuring we stayed on the straight and narrow in the period immediately preceding this new team.

Our Mini & Junior Committee have ensured that the competitions have been run well and were an enjoyable experience for the participants. New rules of play have been brought in after the Age Grade Review and our committee will ensure that these are workable into next season. Thanks go to Ian Spivey, his committee and the clubs who have hosted the competitions this season.

Marketing, Club & Community and Volunteering have all been intrinsically linked this season and suffered a massive loss at the start of the year when Mike Baker passed away. Mike was a true gentleman and would have had an enormous effect on our volunteer recruitment which was his passion in life. It is a testament to the strength of his wife Carol that she took on his role on the Board as well as her work as Safeguarding Manager. The new County website is up and running but is shy of articles, even though our clubs have been asked for these, a web site is only as good as its contributors and these are sorely needed. Please seek us out if you feel you can help. One format of social media that has been a great success was the facebook link to the rugby mums blog on the website. Read by 392000 people and shared by 33600 this went viral and really raised our profile. Thanks to all on these committees for all your hard work.

Rob Briers continues to hold a post on the RFU Board of Directors, and Ken Andrews has enjoyed his first full season as a Council Member. I have a great appreciation of what they do and how much time they spend in travelling and participating in committees. This season has been particularly testing for them as we have been through the Adult Competition Review and they, at times came under what I would deem unacceptable pressures. We must remember they serve the RFU Council first and foremost and are not given a mandate by the County, they must decide individually what they think is right for the game as a whole. I would also congratulate Bill Beaumont who has been made Chairman of World Rugby, I'm sure he will keep our ship on the right course.

The County Schools Union under the Chairmanship of John Morgan is in the rudest of health with established rugby playing schools competing with great energy within their respective competitions and they 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.

The Womens and Girls game continues to grow at an exponential rate with many clubs now having U13s, U15s, U18s and Senior sides, Waterloo even have an occasional Over 35s team playing with our own Vice President Gill Burns pulling on a shirt. From personal experience of my daughters club team I know how much effort our volunteers who coach and administer put in, not forgetting the parent taxi drivers giving up their time. As I write the Senior Womens XV have qualified for the final of the first Womens County Championship which is to be played at the Stoop. Playing in a competition which our own Helen Duggan has sat on the planning committee. I wish them well. As a Board this is an area that we see as important in rugby and one that we have every intention to be a leading CB in. My thanks to all involved in our County Womens and Girls group.

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.

Our referees are reporting a slight increase in numbers of members taking up the whistle, which is indeed a good sign for without them we have no game. Thanks to the referees who give up their time on Saturdays, Sundays and in the week to give us a game.

The Disciplinary committee have been busy again, but from the statistics they are not much changed from last season. Although still too high, I am always grateful that we are not soccer with their complete lack of respect for the office of referee. This season sees the retirement from the Chairmanship of Nigel Yates who has been in post for 6 years and has had a particular reputation for cutting to the chase, he will be missed, as will Rowan Mellalieu who steps down from the panel due to work commitments and I wish them both well for the future. This committee is held as a model of good practice at the RFU and they should be congratulated for that.

Now to me personally, my thanks to Brian Stott the Assistant Hon. Secretary and to Tom Fitzgerald, they have helped and advised me throughout the season, without them the role would be a lot more difficult. My mentors David Herriman and Ken Andrews have been invaluable in my learning curve, Rob Briers for a common sense approach to administering rugby and of course his much better half Anne-Marie our Membership Secretary.

I am still searching for the mythical beast, The Closed Season, this is when all rugby activity stops. If anyone spots it please let me know.

Mark Downs

Honorary Secretary

SENIOR RUGBY

Another exciting season of rugby in the top tier of County Championship. First game away at Scarborough against Yorkshire and at half time it did not look too rosy, Yorkshire went in at half time leading 20-18. Not the best of starts to the championship and certainly made for a nerve twitching second half. At the end it was turned around and we won 40-27 having given Yorkshire a penalty try in the final minutes.

Next up was Eastern Counties who we hosted at Fylde. We got off to a comfortable start playing some open flowing rugby in great conditions, 31-5 at half time. Not sure what was said in the Eastern Counties changing room at half time but they came out a different team, the second half finishing 5-5, the final score being 36-5. News filtered through to the Woodlands that Cheshire had beaten Yorkshire so that made for a Semi Final must win last game. Both teams on equal points with Cheshire having a slightly better points difference.

The first half saw both teams pretty equal and by half time we were 10-6 down but one still had the belief we could pull it off. Not so, as Cheshire came back at us and finished the game deserved winners 27-11. They played hard, celebrated hard and we wish them luck in the final against Cownwall. In the other game Eastern Counties beat Yorkshire.

This season's team has been a mix of experienced players and some young apprentices coming through with 8 ties being presented for first appearance against Yorkshire, it is an exciting prospect

for the future. I would like to thank the Captain, Evan Stewart and all the players who represented Lancashire this season, its great commitment after a long year of club rugby to don the red and white and I fully appreciate it. Thanks also go to coaches and backroom staff who give their time freely so that we can continue to be a strong force in County Rugby.

Mark Downs

Honorary Secretary

UNDER 20s

This is my first report with regard to the U20 Group and it's a bit hard to explain a somewhat of a curates egg performance in a season of highs and not that many lows.

The "season" started pre-season with some well attended training camps at Liverpool St. Helens under the tutelage of our new Coaching Team of Warren Spragg, Stuart Turner and Martin Scott. Like the start of some corny joke it's not every season you have an Italian, English and Scottish international player forming your coaching setup but thanks to the County Coaching Committee we are blessed with some quality on the coaching front.

The pre-season camps led to our trial held at Blackburn RUFC, again some really good stuff on show to impress the Coaches and the County selectors. We managed to whittle the 50 players in attendance down to a squad of 33 and away we went.

We managed to fit a couple of good training sessions in at Myerscough College which in itself was a miracle given most of Lancashire spent the early winter months under water. From a county point of view the new U20 competition "structure" saw us placed in the National County Shield instead of the cup. We decided as a group that our target would be simple, win a game at U20 level, something we hadn't managed in the past 2½ seasons. Our first game was a warm-up against Cheshire who were placed in the Cup Competition. We travelled away to Burnage RFC (bit bizarre as they are a Lancashire Club) and put in a really good team performance to come away winners 32-19, highlights included a George Peel (Rossendale) hat-trick and a brace from Louis Townsend (Bolton).

So technically season target achieved.....we had a re-think and decide that maybe a win in a competitive fixture should be our next goal. Roll on Staffordshire who in the new competition were considered to be in the "North". We had an uneventful trip to Longton RFC near Stoke but were faced with somewhat of a ploughed field to play on. This made our running game really difficult and to be honest coming away with a hard fought 7-5 victory was actually very good seeing as Staffordshire hadn't lost at home in three seasons!

At this point our focus shifted again, any result other than a loss at home to Durham would mean a home Quarter Final in the Shield. The squad looked well prepared and confidence going into the game at Vale of Lune RUFC was high. Sadly we looked to have saved are worst for last. Durham had picked a strong side and we couldn't cope too well with their set piece, nett result meant we ended chasing the game and just couldn't breakdown their stubborn defence, the final score of 24-10 to the visitors. On the plus several of the lads performed well enough to earn a North U20 Trial which ended with George Peel (Rossendale), Henry Hadfield (Myerscough), Connor Wilkinson (Fylde) and Skipper Jamie Brookes (Fylde) making the final North Squad. All four of the Lancastrian acquitted themselves well in the Divisional game against the Midlands with Connor Wilkinson one of only THREE North players to go one step further and make the plane to Russia for the England Counties U20 tour.

So there you have it, we achieved what we originally wanted to do but felt somewhat unfulfilled by end of the programme. Work starts now and we aim to redress our minor failings this season by being right on the ball next season.

The support of all the Clubs/Schools and Colleges Directors of Rugby in the County has been fantastic and long may that continue. I must thank my Coaching Team and our Physio Sarah Louise Rothwell all of who have been first class and to Carl Fox who came along to watch how the Coaches work but got his hands dirty helping out. Thanks also to the following Clubs and establishments who have supported us, Liverpool St. Helens, Blackburn, Myerscough College and Vale of Lune.

Howard Hughes

U20s Team Manager

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

The U18s enjoyed a largely successful season with the following results.

Sunday 18th October 2015 - Warwickshire 7 – 25 Lancashire - Kenilworth RUFC

Sunday 25th October 2015 – Lancashire 23 -11 Northumberland – Liverpool St Helens RUFC

Sunday 1st November 2015 - Yorkshire 21-10 Lancashire – Morpeth RUFC

Sunday 29th November 2015 – Cheshire 0 – 20 Lancashire – Wilmslow RUFC

Of the 28 players that were chosen to represent Lancashire U18s in the autumn of 2015, 9 were chosen to trial for North and seven made it to the divisional games. Of that group, Tom Carleton (Kirkham Grammar School and Wigan RUFC), Nick Ashcroft (Kirkham Grammar School and Wigan RUFC) and Matthew Woodward (Kirkham Grammar School and Tyldesley RUFC) were selected to play for England Counties U18s against France and Ireland in Ireland at Easter 2015. We had anticipated at least one other player being of sufficient standard to qualify but, as ever, competition for a place in the England Counties elite group was fierce.

Over 80 players were nominated to attend an open trial for places within the new U17s squad in February 2016 and again, thank you for your support in that process. Although it is always a labour intensive approach, we finally selected a squad of 28 players to represent the Lancashire u17 development squad, with the following results ...

Sunday 1st May 2016: Staffordshire 12 v 49 Lancashire – Stoke RUFC

Sunday 24th April 2016: Cheshire 14 - 7 Lancashire - Chester RUFC

Sunday 17th April 2016: Yorkshire 36 v 12 Lancashire – Queen Ethelburga’s College, York

The coaches and selectors select a squad based on what we see of the players on the day of the trial, and interestingly, this year over half the squad selected had not played County rugby before. This tells me that the aspirational player pathway is a good method of identifying players whose skills may have been missed between ages 14 and 16. However, there is always the chance that that players may have been injured on the day and not attended the trial, or were on holiday and therefore not able to attend, or some who simply did not perform on the day to the level that you may know they are capable.

For this reason we will be holding two development sessions at Myerscough College on 11th and 18th September, where the U17s squad will be joined by some additional players, so that we can be confident that we can select a squad capable of performing to the requisite standard in the three North Division selection games. Those games will be played on.

23rd October v Durham at a venue in Cumbria yet to be confirmed (Divisional Festival where all 6 counties play each other at the same venue on the same day)

30th October v Cheshire at a venue in Cheshire yet to be confirmed (Divisional Festival where all 6 counties play each other at the same venue on the same day)

6th November v Yorkshire at a venue in Yorkshire yet to be confirmed

Preparation for those games will be held on the following dates at Blackburn RUFC: 26th September and October 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st

The U17 and U18 Coaching and Management team are continually appreciative of the support we receive from you and would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for all your efforts. We would like to think that we have an open relationship with all our key stakeholders and we want to ensure that we are always looking to enhance our efforts.

Stuart Kohler

Lancashire 18 Group Manager

UNDER 16s / 16s GROUP

Significant changes in age grade rugby took place this season. Divisional rugby at 16 group was disbanded and responsibility for selecting an England U16 team passed onto the professional academies. The Autumn festivals disappeared from the fixture list leaving stand-alone matches against Cheshire and Yorkshire.

Training and preparation ahead of the opening fixture went very well in September and October and optimism was running high. The first match against Cheshire, at Bowden RFC, was a huge disappointment as the home side ran out convincing 50-7 winners. The damage was done in the first half when Cheshire converted all their chances scoring five tries. Lancashire, on the other hand, only had an interception try, from Jamie Morris, to show for 15 minutes of territory and possession. Three more Cheshire tries in the second half completed a demoralising rout.

Lessons were learnt and the Red Rose boys produced a much better performance against a very strong Yorkshire side at Preston Grasshoppers. Lancashire made a bright start in difficult conditions and went toe to toe with their White Rose opponents but yet again they could not turn their chances into scores. Two Yorkshire penalties made the score 6-0 at half-time. Lancashire came out at the second half flying, and winger Joshua Moreau scored a fantastic solo try in the corner. Yorkshire responded with two tries of their own to extend the lead to 13 points with 15 minutes to play. Lancashire showed great character and spirit throughout the game, and staged a late fight back through a Kian Stewart try, after a great break and offload by Matty Ashcroft. Stewart converted his try to bring Lancashire back within six points with minutes to play. That is how the game would end, as Yorkshire were able to hang on for a narrow victory.

Lancashire showed vast improvements from their last outing against Cheshire, and Coach Iain Crosley saw plenty of positives, as he said: "It was a lot better than our performance against Cheshire

in both attack and defence. We showed great spirit to get back into the game, and played some really good stuff with the ball in hand".

- **Cheshire: lost 50-7** at Bowden RFC, Sunday 25th October 2015
- **Yorkshire: lost 15-12** at Preston Grasshoppers, Sunday 8nd November 2015

The boys were quick to acknowledge backroom team of Ian McFarlane (Chair of selectors), Coaches Ian Crosley, Rod Murray, Mark Murray, Damien Hamilton, Brad Tuft, Brad Jones, Alex Loney who deserve great credit for preparing the team. Also many thanks to physio Andrew Baldwin, Robbie Jones at AKS, Ray French at LSH and journalists Phil Hannah and Ash Cooper . Finally, many thanks for the encouragement and support of the boys' families and friends.

An interesting footnote to this age group is that two U16 Kirkham Grammar School boys Sam Dugdale and Kieran Wilkinson, who played up an age in the 2014-15 season and were on the EPD pathway, went on to represent England U16 against Wales in April 2016. Congratulations to these fine players who played No. 8 and stand-off respectively. We can only wonder what difference they would have made to this Lancashire team if they had been available to play.

At the post match dinner Lancashire President Tim Stirk marked Ian McFarlane's retirement by presenting him with a commemorative plaque to celebrate 18 seasons as a valued coach and selector.

John White

Lancashire 16 Group Manager

UNDER 15s / 15s GROUP

Lancashire snatched victory from the jaws of defeat to beat a big Yorkshire side and regain the Yorkshire Building Society trophy which was presented to inspirational captain Lewis Johnson at Rosendale RFC. Lancashire started the game brightly, with winger Joe Senior making an excellent break after linking up well with scrum-half Rafael Quirke. However it would be Yorkshire who opened the scoring after four minutes, with their winger crossing the line after a sweeping attack from a scrum on halfway. The fly-half added the extras to give the away side a seven point lead. Lancashire were penalized at the breakdown moments later, and Yorkshire extended their lead to 10 points with a penalty kick from right in front of the posts. Yorkshire enjoyed plenty of possession in the opening quarter and another penalty gave them a 13-0 lead after 12 minutes. This seemed to be a turning point in the game though as Lancashire began to settle down and fight their way back into the game. Another Yorkshire penalty took the visitor's lead to 16 points, but Lancashire fought back bravely and started to control the match. Prop James Harper gave the home side a life line minutes before half time, taking a quick penalty tap and powering his way over the line from 10m out. Fly-half Alex Clayton kicked a difficult conversion to take the score to 16-7 at half time.

Lancashire seemed to gain confidence from Harper's try, and started the second half brilliantly, keeping Yorkshire on the back foot, and penned in their own 22. Harper scored his second try of the game, again showing great strength to force his way over the line from 5m out. Clayton sent his conversion just wide, but the deficit had been cut to just four points. The home side began to dominate the game from this point, and were excellent in both attack and defense against a very physical Yorkshire side. Phase after phase of good attacking rugby from Lancashire followed before replacement Joe Simpson crossed the white wash after scrum-half Quirke took another quick tap from a penalty. Clayton just missed his conversion from the touchline, but Lancashire now had the lead 17-16 with only a few minutes left. The second half showing was much improved from Lancashire, and they managed to hang on to claim victory over their biggest rivals.

Lancashire went into this match knowing that the U15's had not won this fixture since 2009, so they knew this would not be an easy task, but after their victory over Yorkshire the confidence was up. The Red Rose boys were once more slow out of the blocks and Cheshire capitalized with two well taken tries. Lancashire had chances to get themselves back into the match but handling errors cost them dearly. Trailing 10-0 at the break, a much more competitive Lancashire team emerged in the second half. An interception by Lancashire released wing Louis Houghton who had too much pace, for the home defense, in a 70 yards dash to the line. Straight from the restart Lancashire broke away and back-rower Jake Pagen scored under the posts to level the scores. Evan Powell kicked the conversion to put Lancashire into the lead 10-12. The omens were now good for the visitors however the Cheshire scrum-half, Jacob Ainscough, took control of the match, exploiting gaps in the Lancashire defense which resulted in four more tries. The euphoria of the Yorkshire win was well and truly deflated. Lancashire head coach, Bill Nichol's reaction was "We made too many errors in all areas at crucial times and Cheshire took all their opportunities, we were too lateral in the first half."

The U15 season drew to a close with a new fixture when Lancashire travelled to Newcastle-u-Lyme to play Staffordshire. The thirteen Sale Development boys were missing but nonetheless a strong squad represented the Red Rose. For the third match running the opposition scored first however the visitors got back on terms much quicker as Ceiron Sutcliffe and Tom Guest touched down to give Lancashire a well-deserved 10-5 lead at the interval. Lancashire took control of the match when Ben Apps intercepted the ball and ran sixty yards to score the third try. A converted Staffordshire try ensured a nervy ending but a last gasp try from Guest, converted by Adam Clayton, rounded off a good evening's work. Lancashire coach Bill Nichol said afterwards that he was happy with the win and even happier with the performance. It was hard to pick a man of the match with so many decent players to choose from but went with back-rower Sam Shepherd for a commanding display.

- **Lancashire 17-16 Yorkshire** at Rossendale RFC, Sunday 14th February 2016
- **Cheshire 36-10 Lancashire** at Wilmslow RFC, Wednesday 23th March 2016
- **Staffordshire 12-22 Lancashire** at Newcastle-u-Lyme RFC, Wednesday 27th April 2016

For the record, the following boys will be involved in Sale Development activities over the coming months: forwards Lewis Johnson, Cameron Wilkinson, Joe Simpson, Ethan Hall-Lyon, Jake Pagan, James Harper and backs Rafael Quirk, Massi Poli, Evan Powell, Louis Houghton, Joe Senior, Charlie Warren and Joe Shields.

The boys were quick to acknowledge backroom team of Iain Crosley (Chair of selectors), Coaches Bill Nichol, Mark Bailie, Bernie Bowers, Mark Goodman and Ian Graydon who deserve great credit for preparing the team. Also many thanks to physio Andrew Baldwin, Robbie Jones at AKS, Wright Robinson College and journalists Phil Hannah and Ash Cooper. Finally, many thanks for the encouragement and support of the boys' families and friends.

John White

Lancashire 15 Group Manager

WOMENS & GIRLS RUGBY

Growing the game:

Women and girls rugby within Lancashire is going from strength to strength.

Lots of volunteers across the county are turning out week in week out coaching, administering, raising money and often for many parents ferrying the players around. Without these volunteers we could not continue to grow the women's and girls section across Lancashire, which is has continued to do this year.

We currently have 81 clubs, including universities, taken part in rugby from touch to full 15-a side contact. There has been great work taking place with the development of the Local Rugby Partnerships, which has been rolled out by the RFU targeting specific clubs and regions.

This has helped create 12 new seniors teams, from new women's side being created from scratch through contact and touch rugby or existing clubs building their base and setting up a second team. We also continued to grow the youth section with seven new teams across U13s, U15s and U18s.

The success and the hard work is not limited to one area of the county. In the south of Lancashire we have Littleborough in their first year as part of a Local Rugby Partnership Club, starting with no player base in 13/14, now have full U13s, U15s and U18s sides. They are now starting to build their ladies section and I know they will make it a success.

In Greater Manchester four more clubs will join local partnerships (Old Bedians, Broughton Park, Bolton and Didsbury Toc H) and we hope it will generate a number of new women's sides to add to the great work taking place at Eccles, Leigh and Littleborough – where eight new sections have already grown in the last three seasons.

North Lancashire has seen the greatest expansion of players across all age groups this year. Around 134 new players have started playing rugby across 8 new sections within the first year of the region being within the Local Rugby Partnership. Clubs working hard to expand and grow the game include Clitheroe, Fleetwood, Burnley, Vale of Lune Ladies and Preston Grasshoppers, who alone have set up three new sections.

Merseyside have continued to grow with a new U13s section at West Park St Helens, they have a large number of volunteers who have invested in the section and helped bring in at least 10 new players.

Representative rugby:

The Lancashire youth section campaign for 2015/16 had mixed results.

The U18s lost against Yorkshire, for the first time in five years. A number of players had moved on from youth to senior rugby and there was also a large influx of new players who were stepping up to the new age banding. They did, however, finish their season on a high with a resounding win against Northumberland, winning 68-0. With more than 70 girls taking part in the trials demonstrating the section is growing across the county.

The u15's also had mixed season with a loss against Yorkshire but a resounding win against Northumberland 63-15. Again there was an influx of new players and it was great to see more than 45 girls at the trials.

We have also continued our tradition of providing players to the elite programs. Of our u15s seven were chosen for the North of England training academy. It was also nice to see that there was a spread of five clubs represented in the North squad, another indication that the strength in the player base is starting to develop as well.

We had eight players selected for the North of England u18s academy and four players were selected last year as part of the u20s squad Sally Stott, Rachael Woosey, Holly Aitchison and Molly Morrissey. They will hopefully be joined by Sarah Beckett and Amelia Cadman this year who have been invited to trial for the U20's.

The senior ladies campaign has just started as the report is being written. It started with a decisive victory over Cumbria (55-0), a tougher win over Northumberland (24-33) with the last home game against Durham deciding who goes to the semi-final. For the first time the ladies are taking part in a national Senior County Cup Competition, with the final being at The Stoop on the same day as the men 29 May.

Four years ago the squad was picked from around 25 ladies who trialled and only two teams in Lancashire were normally represented. This year we had more than 100 women trial from clubs as well as universities. The final county squad selected is representing fourteen different teams. Some only play rugby at University, which has been one of the links we have been trying to build over recent years.

Finally a thank you. Thank you to all the RFU staff who has supported the women and girls across Lancashire this season, you have been invaluable to the clubs and teams. A personal thank you to Claire Antcliffe as our WRDO. Her unwavering confidence in Lancashire's ability to grow the game and enthusiasm is infectious. Also a big thank you to Peter Morrissey, he has helped steer the ship of the representative teams for a number of years and will be stepping down at the end of this season.

We have some big plans and some big aims in the coming seasons to grown the game across the county and build a stronger base. We are getting closer to 2020 – the 30th anniversary of the first ever women's representative county game, against Yorkshire. I hope by our 30th Year we achieve our goal that no girl or woman has to travel more than 30 minutes to play rugby in Lancashire. So the push for us now is 30 by 30.

Helen Duggan

Women & Girls Chair

RUGBY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (RDC)

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

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

Coach & Referee Development:

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

The Development Centre Club Coach Mentoring Scheme also provides up to ten hours of coach and player development free of charge to local clubs.

The Development Centre, working with the RFU Area Training Officer, also offers specialised coaching and refereeing development courses to players reaching the end of their playing careers

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

Player Development

16-24 Age Group: The Chairman of Lancashire RFU has convened steering group for club, school and Colts League to review and seek to redress the loss of players in the 16-24 age group

The Lancashire RFU Rugby Development Centre Programme is forging strong links with the FE and the tertiary education sector. Student specific rugby clinics for coaches and players have been held with view to building links with clubs.

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

13 - 16 Age Group: Lancashire's District programme and the Schools of Rugby have been replaced by a National District based program delivered in Lancashire & Cheshire in partnership with RFU, Sale Academy and Cheshire CB. The programme is branded as the North West Developing Player Programme; Lancashire supports but, does not own the programme that is being delivered.

Age Grade Representative Rugby

15 -18 Age Group: The Development Centre and the Lancashire Senior Rugby Group (Senior XV & U20s) provide a team of professional coaches to mentor our CB Representative Squad coaches. This is a move to introduce continuity and a Lancashire style of play that players can take with them as they progress through the age grades. Fitness programmes are in place. Trials, assessment and selection protocols are being introduced.

U20 National Championship: Three Development Centre coaching workshops in July/August were also used to develop players eligible for selection for the U20s and this will be continued in the coming season. We now have three full Internationals coaching the U20s: Warren Spragg, Martin Scott and Stuart Turner.

RDC Strategic Planning 2017 & Onwards

The RDC proposes to incorporate the following courses of action into the Annual Operational Plan for season 2016-17 and the Five Year Strategic Plan:

Lancashire Rugby Union Academy

The Rugby Development Committee together with the Team Lancashire, Coaching and Player Development Committees will form an academy to develop targeted players and coaches. The Academy will initially focus on the U15-16 and U17-18 age bands

Lancashire Rugby Development Centre Programme

There will be a review of the Development Centre Programme. Specific sessions for targeted junior age grade coaches will be included in the programme

Club Coach Mentor Scheme

Delivery of the Mentor Scheme will be expanded. In addition to the existing scheme the programme will also offer district based sessions to promote whole club coaching aimed at both senior and junior age grade sections of clubs

Town Team Competition

The Town Team completion will be re-introduced to promote rugby in schools

Tom Fitzgerald

RDC Hon. Secretary

RUGBY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Rugby World Cup proved to be a great success notwithstanding the performance and outcomes of the host team in the tournament. The Area 5 Legacy board led by Fran Cotton did some great work adding real value to work at the RFU and locally.

Ken Andrews and his group working alongside the RDOs did a great job of ensuring the clubs in Lancashire were in the best place possible to maximise the opportunities of the RWC, with a series of 3 workshops bringing clubs together to plan their individual campaigns. As ever the clubs who did the most got some great results in terms of recruiting players returning former players and links to the broader community.

All preparations are in place for the World Rugby U20s Championships

Only one major change within the team this year with the retirement of University RDO John Livesey, John has been a great asset to the game and Rugby in Lancashire over the past decade. Chris Lowden former CRC in the North of the county has stepped up and has complemented the great relationship work done established John, and is proving a really strong member of the team.

Andrew Soutar has settled really well into the Merseyside RDO role and has already established great relationships with the clubs and I expect even more good things next season.

George Glenn has also made a good start as Greater Manchester RDO and is proving a very capable and popular team member

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

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 “All schools” programme targeting non-rugby playing schools, with the aim of making them self-sustaining rugby schools through investment of up to £10000 and substantial staff hours continues to grow in both number and impact within Lancs.

Targeted workstrands also sees each RDO identifying Education establishments or clubs based on need and potential to focus on to retain and recruit players, over 20 more schools in Lancashire will benefit this season. Once again the majority of the targeted work are on target, to sustain or grow the game in the county.

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

As ever a big thank you to the CB and club volunteers who have helped with Development in the County, I must mention Rob Briers, Dave Herriman, Ken Andrews, Tom Fitzgerald, Malcom Worsley, Carol Baker, Peter Saunders, Mark Downs and Paul Deakin, President Tim Stirk 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 first few months of the season were taken up by World Cup planning. Some clubs put a lot of effort into making the event profitable to their clubs. Amanda Brazendale came on board and did an amazing job with the World Cup Trophy tours.

I would like to thank Steven Blackburn for taking on the roll as secretary to the committee.

The bad weather took its toll on some clubs with postponed fixtures and lack of players.

The cluster meetings have not been as successful as anticipated so we will have to look at a new format for next season.

Helen Duggan came on board and made a very useful contribution to the committee. The Ladies section is going from strength to strength under Helens guidance. Stuart Urquhart kept us well informed on how the clubs we're coping during this very wet season. Carol Baker gave us up to date reports on all Safeguarding issues.

Once again the volunteer evenings were very successful and enjoyed by all.

The U20s World Cup is now the main focus. Finally I would like to thank all my colleagues who have attended and contributed to the meetings.

A special thanks to the Ladies who have brought a new dimension to the table

Malcolm Worsley

Club & Community Rugby Chairman

CUP & COMPETITIONS

All competitions started on time and the first matches were played in August prior to the start of the league season as planned.

Then everything that could go wrong went wrong. League matches were postponed as players took time out to go to the World Cup. Then the league programme was thrown into disarray as the wet weather meant a higher than usual number of postponements due to unfit pitches.

As the counties competitions are the last in the list of priorities all competitions fell further behind. After consultation with the clubs the Competitions Committee made the very difficult decision to cancel the competitions for Season 2015/2016.

Planning is well under way for Season 2016/2017.

Brian Stott

Competitions Secretary

COUNTY SAFEGUARDING

The 2015-2016 season has been a great success with regards to Safeguarding the Young People and Vulnerable Persons involved with rugby in our county. Very few incidents have had to be investigated and reported upon. A most welcome statistic.

Safeguarding and Discipline continue to work closely and fall naturally under the Governance committee remit.

Clubs throughout the county continue to have highly qualified and skilled officers in the Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO) role. The wealth of experience brought to protecting young people in our county is second to none. With many officers responsible for safeguarding in their paid professions. These officers using transferrable skills to the voluntary roles they undertake within Rugby Union.

To those officers I send my most sincere thanks, both from the County Board but also the thousands of young people who play the wonderful game. The young people they work tirelessly to keep safe.

There have been two 'In Touch' courses run specifically for CSO's this season with more planned at the start of next season.

There have been a number of (Play it Safe) courses (10+), run throughout the county; training coaches, managers and volunteers. All people engaged with young people on a regular basis.

Volunteers at your clubs who make a positive contribution to developing happy well rounded young people.

"We all have a responsibility to support and nurture the children of today for they will be the adults of our future"

The RFU have recruited two new Safeguarding trainers to help deliver further courses, Amanda Walsh and Carole Alker, members of Sefton RUFC and highly experienced in the safeguarding arena. I thank you for your commitment to the new posts and welcome you delivering more courses next season. Stuart Urquhart RDO, Alan Jack coach tutor, have supported in delivery of courses also and I thank you. Both gentlemen bringing a balance to the training (along with some humour).

Christine Spivey (Aldwinians) Ange Pender (Liverpool Collegiate) and Jane Lyth (Preston Grasshoppers) have again provided continued support as Deputy Safeguarding Managers for the county covering the cluster areas, of Manchester, Merseyside and North Lancashire respectively. Thank you ladies.

It is with sadness but understanding that I have had to accept Jane Lyth's resignation from her post. Family circumstances and responsibilities now prevent Jane from continuing in the role. Jane in the

past nine seasons has provided a support and level headedness to the Safeguarding Mangers role, bringing a 'common sense' approach to dealing with incidents, supporting other club safeguarding officers and liaising with her cluster clubs.

Thank you Jane we sincerely appreciate your hard work and dedication and wish you much happiness in the future.

Lancashire CB Safeguarding has been identified as a model of good practice and I personally was asked to support nationally the newly appointed CBSM's of Durham, Cumbria & Yorkshire. These new RFU officers are currently adapting to their new roles and I am delighted to have been asked to provide support and mentoring to these people.

At the time of writing I am unable to report on the National CBSM conference that was held in June 2015. (Very sudden personal circumstances meant I was unable to attend last June) but I will report on the forthcoming (June 2016 conference) in next year's report.

If I may beg an indulgence and take this opportunity to personally thank each and everyone who has supported Thomas, Matthew and myself over this very difficult past year. The RUGBY Family Truly is something very special to us and has given us so much to be thankful and grateful for. Providing many happy memories of Michael and his involvement within the County also. My role as CBSM has provided focus and distraction at times. Thank you I am most grateful.

The Lancashire CSO conference will be run again for the county at the start of the 2016-2017 season. The agenda will include interesting and diverse aspects to safeguarding. I am fortunate to have secured the services of some interesting guest speakers. Date and venue to follow once confirmed.

Carol Baker

Lancashire CB County Safeguarding Manager

MANCHESTER & DISTRICT REFEREES

We have regretfully to report the loss of two members, Alan Johnson, a long serving member both of the Macclesfield club and Cheshire RFU also Colin High, an International referee who later became the first manager of the RFU Professional Referee Group. Both members a great loss to the game.

Our representatives on the RFU panel, Referees: Chris Bennett, Andy Taylorson and Matt Turvey have now been joined by Callum Sharp, congratulations Callum. Assistant Referees: Steve Bennett, Steve Halliday and David Lodge. All of whom continue to perform well and also contribute to the Society for our mid-week games or when not required at top level at weekend As yet we now only have one North Group member: Matthew Riley. The invaluable work done by Nigel Yates both with the Federation Development Squad and Development Forum will hopefully assist more referees to achieve their potential in the near future and swell the numbers.

David Guerin continues as our representative on the RFRU.

We have another representative to the RFU in Nick Taylor who is a presenter of the Level 2 Awards Courses which is the compulsory stepping stone to becoming a Society referee.

The RW Cup was not England's finest hour but at least Graham Hughes's input as the only TMO from the Northern Hemisphere was well merited. Winning the 6 Nations went some way to alleviating the disappointment. During the World Cup the RFU Road show held in Albert Square, Manchester was well attended and hopefully may encourage some to take up the whistle.

The World Rugby Under 20 Championship which is to be held in Manchester in June, the Society intend to have a presence which should give another referee recruitment opportunity.

Once again the weather has played a major role in disrupting the best laid plans for the season, even worse than that of last year. Fortunately our three Appointment Secretaries, Alan Farmer, John Jeskins and Peter Hughes are made of sterner stuff and have coped excellently with all the re-arrangements and changes which ensued. They were well supported by the team of seven re-appointment secretaries.

On the league weeks, especially before Christmas when the schools are active, we are short, albeit we have scraped through most of the time, mainly thanks to the hard work of the reappointments teams and the flexibility of a goodly number of the membership (especially those who have doubled up from time-to-time). Both the Sunday and Midweek situations are being pushed to very tight limits. This problem is exacerbated by the lax administration of some of the academic establishments despite the work of Peter Hughes in arranging a pre-season meeting for representatives of those institutions in which the organisation and requirements of the Society are outlined.

We await with anticipation the announcement of the new Structured season, we would not want to again have the situation of non-league Saturdays whereby referees do not get games.

This season we have lost 32 active referees, mainly due to injury/age or moving out of area. The level of abuse encountered by referees especially encountered in junior games has not helped retention nor the fact that at the lower levels of games there has been an increase in the number of times sides have turned up with less than 15 players or have had to have uncontested scrums from the start. The situation could result in our not being able to fulfil all requests especially in the period leading up to Christmas when there is a high level of school games.

On the positive side we have recruited 37 new referees which include two returning members and two ladies.

To conclude on a much more positive note, thanks must be given to the overwhelming majority of referees who give reliable, selfless service on a regular basis. Those thanks should also be extended to virtually all the Club Contacts whose conscientious work, administration and excellent communication makes the lives of the Appointments Team a whole lot easier, they accept the inevitable re-arrangements without complaint. We just now need to encourage the recalcitrant few to achieve their high standards. Just a polite reminder to Contacts to ensure that they receive a reply from their referee should they require to leave a message in any format.

To enable referees to meet compulsory fitness levels where applicable and others to measure and improve upon their fitness levels Nigel Longley has again organised sessions at venues in both the north and south of our area, our thanks are extended.

It is the intention of the Executive Committee to encourage more members to take on responsibility for tasks in the administration of the Society.

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

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

Geoff Gill

Hon. Secretary, Manchester & District Referees Society

LIVERPOOL & DISTRICT REFEREES

We come to the end of another season, one which marked the passing away of two stalwarts of the Liverpool Referees Society. Colin Christy a member of the Society for over 50 years, past President, assessor with the North Group and the RFU, a member of the Appointments and Grading Committee will be sorely missed for his commitment, integrity and good humour. Bob Smith a referee for many years, an assessor, and as a member of the Appointments and Grading Committee was responsible for keeping individual data for each referee. The Society will miss both of them for their support, time and energy they gave refereeing.

During the season we all witnessed England's abysmal performance in the World Cup, not even managing to get out of the qualifying group. However, a transformation took place with a new coach in Eddie Jones England achieved a very creditable Grand Slam in the 2016 Six Nations. A young talented team who will be a force to reckon with in 2019. At this point a reminder that the U20 World Cup starts this June in Manchester.

Once again this season there are many positives to report regarding on the field matters. The Society is very pleased and proud to note that Ian Tempest is now a fully fledged Premiership and International referee. He represents the Society with distinction and we hope to see him fulfil his potential and achieve Six Nation status. At this point congratulations must go to Ben Davis and Brenden McGaffney who have progressed well as RFU referees. We wish them well for next season. We also have to say well done to Colin Burrell and James Brown as RFU assistant referees. Well done to both of them! Our young referees are beginning to show their potential as part of the North West Federation and we can look forward to their elevation in the near future. Geraint Davies and Bob Wilkinson still maintain their positions within the RFU as coach and watcher. At North Group Paul Warrington and Ron Johnson retain their position as coaches as does Bryan Davies as a watcher. Once again it is pleasing to note that the Liverpool Referees Society continues to deliver an excellent service to our clubs, schools, universities and colleges, not to mention our Sunday Colts leagues. During the season our referees have been available to ensure that we honour our commitments in a professional manner which has brought praise from many quarters of the game. Hence, I can inform the meeting that several promotions to referees, coaches and watchers have taken place at the lower levels and whilst too numerous to mention individuals the message that is being displayed is that the Society structure would appear sound and is fostering the development of refereeing at all levels. Many thanks must go to the Appointments and Grading Committee, led by Gary Spengler and John Munn for ensuring that all referees, no matter what level are treated fairly and honestly.

Off the field it has been a good season for our mid-monthly meetings. Thanks must go to Ben Davis ably assisted by Kevin Toole for their positive, instructive, and enjoyable meetings. It is good to note that the attendance has improved considerably and this augurs well for the future. Thanks once again must go to the Liverpool Collegiate Club for their hospitality throughout the season.

At this juncture I am pleased to take the opportunity to thank Kevin Toole for all the hard work he has put in during the season presenting Level 1 and Level 2 referee courses which has seen many new recruits to the Society. It also worth noting that Kevin continues to work with the North West Federation in attracting and training young referees who officiate at junior and senior games. Mention must be made that only last month Kevin received an award from Cheshire and the RFU for his work in recruiting new referees.

This years Annual Dinner was once again a very successful occasion enjoyed by Society and Club members meeting in central Liverpool. The guest speaker Pat Sanderson was excellent giving a player's insight into the game at the top end. His question and answer session then proved to be very successful with those present. Again the Society must thank Colin Kershaw for the time and effort he put in order to make the occasion worthy of the Liverpool Society.

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

Finally, after 32 years as Referee Committee member, Chairman, President, Exchange Secretary and recently as Hon Secretary I have decided that it is time to stand down and take a rest from duties concerning running the Society. I will of course remain actively involved within the Society in some

capacity. May I take this opportunity of thanking all the people I have worked over the years; it has been an experience not to be forgotten and one that has been very enjoyable.

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

Anthony Rossall

Hon. Secretary, Liverpool Referees Society

DISCIPLINARY REPORT

At the end of this season Nigel Yates will be standing down as Chairman after six seasons. During that time he has continued the work started by Clif Barker which has made the Lancashire Disciplinary Committee well respected by the RFU and other CB's. Rowan Mellalieu will also be standing down at the end of the season after four years as a committee member. I would like to thank the both for their hard work during the tenures.

There have been twenty seven disciplinary hearings so far this season. This is another increase in the in the number of hearings. The number of cases fell by four this season a decrease of 2.4%. However, as other indicators show that less rugby has been played it is an increase in real terms.

There are two things of concern to the Disciplinary Committee.

Parents and/or Coaches

The "advice" coming from parents and/or coaches is increasing in volume and is abusive in nature.

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

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

Referee Abuse

This is becoming something of a perennial issue but we are once again seeing an increase in the questioning and disputing of referee decisions. In some cases this is becoming abusive. This season has seen an increase in referees being called cheats, bent or corrupt usually accompanied by several expletives. Disciplinary Panels will be using the mid entry point of 12 weeks for anybody appearing for this sort of remark.

It should also be noted that dissent/abuse cases have increased from 14 to 24 an increase of 71.5%. It is often said that referees are important we wouldn't have a game without them. Comments like the ones above means that unless clubs address this issue we may run out of referees.

Season 2015/2016 Statistics

Total Cases Heard	166
Proved	156
Dismissed	10
Sent Off	154
Charged (5.12)	12
Number of Clubs	52

Striking	69	41.6%
Butting	4	2.4%
Kicking	9	5.4%
Stamping	7	4.2%
Dangerous Tackle	9	5.4%
Biting	0	0%
Contact With The Eye Area	0	0%
2 Yellow Cards	8	4.8%
Dissent / Abuse	24	14.5%
Other	8	4.8%
Misconduct	16	9.6%
Dismissed	10	6.0%
Pending	2	1.2%
Total	166	

Conclusion

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

Brian Stott

Disciplinary Committee Secretary

RFU NORTHERN COMPETITION COMMITTEE (RFUNCC)

This season has been severely affected by unprecedented rainfall, the greatest in the history of recorded statistics, in spite of this we did manage to get the majority of the League programme finished with some dead rubbers not played.

The Adult Competition Review which was set to be implemented in 2016-2017 has had to be curtailed due to the influence of 'NAG', however only recommendation 9 of the review has been 'parked'. The remainder of the review is due to be implemented by all four DOCs by clustering Leagues so that fixtures can be played with nearer neighbours to give an opportunity for increased revenue and reduced travel costs. Lower XV rugby could also have changes made in line with the recommendations in the review. However these changes will not happen overnight and we shall need to show patience for them to happen.

Next season we will be tweaking the Leagues at lower levels in Lancashire and Cheshire to even out the playing standards. In addition our proposition to the RFU for 5 replacements at level 8 and below has been approved.

Promotions:

Promoted		
Southport	Merseyside West	Into SLC1
Trafford	Lancashire North	Into NLC
Manchester Medics	Cheshire South	Into SLC1

Play off Winners:

West Park	NLC v SLC1	Into N1W
Littleborough	Cumb v L.North	Into NLC

Congratulations to all of the above.

RFU Cup Nominations

Intermediate Cup	Bolton
Senior Vase	Tarleton
Junior Vase	Mossley Hill

Dave Clarke

Northern League Rep, Divisional Organising Committee

COUNTY SCHOOLS UNION

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

In a season where rugby has certainly had its detractors, and at times been the centre of unwanted attention, it is great to report that new schools have joined the county; and through the Emerging Schools agenda, we obviously hope to encourage many more, especially in the primary schools sector. Girl's rugby continues to flourish and the schools section will continue to support any initiatives which will increase the number of girls playing rugby.

The 2015 World Cup did not bring the expected success on the field, but the impact it had off the field was fantastic, with packed enthusiastic crowds supporting every match across the country. It was a shame that in the North West we only had the opportunity to host one match, but with the World Rugby U'20 Championship being hosted in Manchester between the 7th and 25th June this year, we have a wonderful opportunity to introduce and expose so many youngsters to our sport being played at the highest level.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Robbie Jones at AKS Lytham for organising the Lancashire Schools Teacher's Coaching Conference at AKS in September. It was a great afternoon with really positive contributions from the RFU re: New Rules of Play, and players and coaches from Fylde RFC. I hope that this is an initiative that can be continued in the future, as I am sure it will be of great benefit to anyone who attends, regardless of their rugby pedigree.

Cup Competitions.

This season, the county schools programmes culminated in Finals Days at Fylde RFC, Liverpool St. Helens RFC, and Southport RFC. These competitions are the mainstay of the County Schools calendar, and are something I believe adds positively to the normal school calendar of fixtures and it means a great deal to the players to be involved in such occasions.

The annual cup, plate and emerging schools competitions' successfully took place towards the end of the season. An early Easter meant that the Finals Days were brought forward to avoid clashes with prestigious seven-a-side tournaments. Unfortunately the inclement weather also had an impact, as matches had to be rearranged, and there were some hasty rearrangements made to ensure that matches went ahead. One victim of the weather was the U'18s Finals Night traditionally held at LSH, but thanks to the positive support from all four schools involved these matches were hastily rearranged, and the players were able to enjoy two extremely competitive matches. Thanks to Paul Fernside the Plate Final between Bolton School and Merchant Taylor's was held at Bolton, and to Evan Stewart and Mark Evans for arranging the Cup Final between Lancaster RGS and Stonyhurst College at Fylde

RFC. This latter match was the best advert for schoolboy rugby one could wish for, and the 17 -17 final score was perfect, as neither side deserved to lose.

The other two finals days were superbly hosted by Liverpool St Helens and Southport. The event at Southport was especially well attended, on a very sunny, if not cold March Sunday. The great support we have from the clubs on these occasions cannot be underestimated. They make us all feel very welcome, and more importantly provide the players with great facilities to enjoy their day.

Paul Fernside done a magnificent job organising the competitions for a number of years. His terrific organisation and enthusiasm, have been at the centre of competitions' success. Sadly for us Paul is stepping down from the role this year, and on behalf of the County Schools I would like thank him for the great work he has done.

I would also like to thank everyone else who contributed to the events and throughout the season. I would like to personally thank Ken Andrews, Dave Herriman, Tom Fitzgerald and Tim Stirk for their support of myself as Chairman and of Lancashire Schools rugby in general.

SCHOOLS CUP AND PLATE FINALS 2015 RESULTS

Wednesday 12th March 2016 at Liverpool St. Helens RFC

Under 18s

John Fletcher Cup	Lancaster RGS	17-17	Stoneyhurst College	(Shared)
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Wednesday 16th March 2016 at Bolton School

Under 18s

Plate	Bolton School	13-26	Merchant Taylor's School
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Sunday 20th March at Southport RFC

Under 13s

Brian Cauwood Cup	The Manchester GS	19-17	Kirkham GS
Plate	Bolton School	10-19	Audenshaw School

Under 14s

Peter Hughes Cup	St Edwards College	22-21	Lancaster RGS
Plate	Merchant Taylor's School	8-7	Bolton School

Under 15s

Ian Sinclair Cup	Kirkham GS	31-12	The Manchester GS
Plate	AKS Lytham	3-45	Merchant Taylor's School

Under 16s

John Dewhurst Cup	The Manchester GS	18-19	AKS Lytham
Plate	Audenshaw School	16-0	Birkdale

SANDERSON SCHOOL OF THE YEAR

Kirkham Grammar School

Emerging Schools Competition

The Emerging schools competition is still working towards an ideal format, especially in the early stages of the competition. As rugby is not the primary sport in a number of the schools that participate, it is sometimes difficult for teachers to play on the regular basis needed to complete Pool matches. However, that format does provide the opportunity for teams to play more competitive matches than a knockout system may allow. Having said this a number of new school have entered the competition, and some from traditionally rugby league playing schools. These schools have certainly strengthened the competition, and as they progress into the Senior School's competitions, I am sure they will be very competitive.

The Emerging Schools finals were again held at Liverpool St Helens. Many thanks must go to all at LSH for enabling the matches to be played, and for rearranging at short notice as a result of the poor weather. We always have a great welcome at LSH, which is very much appreciated by all who attend. This year there were nine different schools represented in the finals, which has emphasised the breadth of the competition.

EMERGING SCHOOLS CUP AND PLATE FINALS 2016 RESULTS

Wednesday 16th March at Liverpool St. Helen's RFC

Under 13s

Trophy	Standish HS	51-0	Birkdale Academy
Plate	St. Augustines RCHS	18-17	Ormskirk School

Under 14s

Trophy	Standish HS	17-20	Range HS
Plate	Millfield College	10-10	St. Margarets HS (Shared)

Under 15s

Trophy	St. Margarets HS	12-7	Garstang Academy
Plate	Ormskirk School	17-32	Canon Slade School

KEN ANDREWS EMERGING SCHOOL OF THE YEAR Standish Community HS

REPRESENTATIVE RUGBY

Once again, a range of schools provided players who represented the County at U'15, 16, 17 and 18, with a number of players achieving success with the North, and England. Kirkham Grammar School have again led the way, with no less than five players representing England at various points. An exceptional achievement for the school, but more importantly for the players, who we wish well for the future.

Once again our thanks go to the referees and officials of both Manchester and Liverpool Societies for supporting our schools during a very busy season. The Manchester Society provided referees for both U18s finals, and the Liverpool Society for the Emerging Schools Finals at LSH and Schools Finals at Southport.

Finally, thank you to the officials of our own schools section, who sit on the many different sections of this and other committees. Also to the RDOS, the Senior County Committee, for their continued support and all the many individuals who support schools and youth rugby.

Whilst the number of people involved is too large to thank everyone personally, there are two people it would be remiss of me not to mention. I would like to reiterate my earlier thanks to Paul Fernside for all his efforts both as Competitions Secretary and Chairman of the Schools Section; his enthusiasm and knowledge will be sorely missed. Ken Andrews is also retiring from his many roles within Lancashire Schools. Indefatigable is one of many words I could use to describe Ken. He has been the heartbeat of our organisation for so many years, and it will be strange not having him at our meetings, ensuring that we always do the best for the rugby playing youngsters in Lancashire. He has deservedly gone on to greater responsibilities within the RFU. Our loss is very much their gain, and on behalf of the Schools Section I can only thank him for his invaluable efforts, and wish him all the very best for the future.

John Morgan

Chairman, Lancashire County Schools Union

COLTS RUGBY

I am pleased to report, for the first time in recent years, an upturn both in player numbers and Clubs running Colt's sides within the County. This has been accredited to the changes made at the beginning of the season to exclude U19's from all Competitions.

Despite this seasons awful weather, majority of all matches took place, no mean feat by my colleagues in The North West Colt's League, well done to you all.

When reporting success it is easy to forget other teams who have fought a long and hard season, without victories. One such team was Oldham, despite a valiant effort, only managed one Win all season, these players were a credit to their Club and should be applauded, many of whom will continue playing next season for the Clubs senior sides.

Our Clubs/Sides did extremely well in all Competitions as follows:-

	Senior U18s Winners	Junior U17s Winners
League A	Caldy	Lymm
League B	Manchester	Bowden
League C	Widnes	Rochdale
League D	Bolton	Bolton

League Cups

Senior Cup	Caldy	28 - 13	Sale FC
Senior Plate	Glossop	28 - 20	Blackburn
Senior Bowl	Fylde	3 - 34	Newcastle (Staffs)
Senior Shield	Wilmslow	10 - 5	Fleetwood
Junior Cup	Caldy	14 - 20	Lymm
Junior Plate	Trafford MV	15 - 12	Leigh
Junior Bowl	Ashton Under Lyne	38 - 12	Hawcoat Park
Junior Shield	Didsbury Toc H	5 - 15	Liverpool Collegiate

National U17s Divisional Finals (North)

Bowl	Durham City	22 - 21	Rochdale
Shield	Huddersfield YMCA	26 - 18	Bolton

County Cup Winners

Frank Morgan Snr Cup	Widnes	37 - 18	Bolton
Joe McDonough Snr Trophy	Blackburn	10 - 11	Manchester
Rob Briers Jnr Cup	Trafford MV	12 - 10	Kirkby Lonsdale
Alan James Jnr Trophy	Ormskirk	27 - 8	Tarlton

My thanks to all the volunteers at Widnes, this seasons hosts of the County Cup Finals (and for looking after Frank!!) You did us proud.

To both our referee's societies a "special thank you" for covering all our match's given this seasons last minute changes caused by the weather.

To the players who represented the County, The North & England via the 18gp Well Done.

To all the players, Coaches, Physios and especially the Mangers your efforts are appreciated keep up the good work!!

To all the parents who ferry their lads to practice sessions and match's, we know it's a labour of love and without your support week in week out our game would not be the same, thank you.

We all await the outcome of this year's consultations with the RFU (Age Grade Review) for our age group and let's hope for another great season of Rugby for 2016/17.

Alan James

Colts Competitions Chairman

MINI JUNIOR (7 – 16 AGE GRADE) COMMITTEE

Season 2015-16 has yet again progressed well with more openness communication between clubs and the committee. With this come's transparency and members can see what is being done within the CB and encourage more inclusion form club members.

There were three very well contested and well attended finals for the under 12's festival at Aldwinians RUFC, Black Sticks Blue Challenge plate and vase finals at Southport RUFC then, the cup and bowl finals at Fylde RUFC. I thank those clubs for hosting these events and all the volunteers on the day. These events have rounded off a good season of rugby.

The way the DPP is now running there seems to be more players taking part and more training sessions being delivered. Even through the bad weather not many sessions were cancelled and during this time other venues were sought across the county. All games have been played within the correct spirit of the game.

One of the big things that, has been done this season was the setting up of a face book page for Lancashire mini & junior rugby. This has improved communication no end and proved to be a valuable tool for the 7-16 committee. This proved its worth when the meeting for age grade rugby was announced on this site and the attendance was above all expectations. The site is monitored and items that are not relevant are removed.

I hope that the continued openness of the 7-16 committee will continue to succeed, and the growth and progression of mini & junior rugby will continue to flourish at all levels of our great game.

My thanks go to the committee and the 7-16 committee for their continued support along with all the clubs that enhance the game of rugby union.

Ian Spivey

Chairman, 7 – 16 Age Grade Committee

COUNTY SQUADS RESULTS & SCORES – 2015/16

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

07-May	v	Yorkshire	Scarborough RFC	W	40-27
14-May	v	Eastern Counties	Fylde RFC	W	36-10
21-May	v	Cheshire	Sedgley Park RUFC	L	11-27

18 Group County Squad

18-Oct	v	Warwickshire	Kenilworth RUFC	W	7-25
25-Oct	v	Northumberland	Liverpool St Helens FC	W	23-11
01-Nov	v	Yorkshire	Morpeth RUFC	L	21-10
29-Nov	v	Cheshire	Wilmslow RUFC	W	0-20

Under 18s Development (Under 17s) Squad

17-Apr	v	Yorkshire	Queen Ethelberga's College	L	36-12
24-Apr	v	Cheshire	Chester RUFC	L	14-7
01-May	v	Staffordshire	Stoke RUFC	W	12-49

16 Group County Squad

25-Oct	v	Cheshire	Bowden RFC	L	7-50
08-Nov	v	Yorkshire	Preston Grasshoppers RFC	L	15-12

15 Group County Squad

14-Feb	v	Yorkshire	Rossendale RUFC	W	17-16
23-Mar	v	Cheshire	Wilmslow RUFC	L	10-36
27-Apr	v	Staffordshire	Newcastle under Lyme RFC	W	12-22

COUNTY OFFICERS & OTHER OFFICIALS 2015 - 2016

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

Members of the Management Board
Chairman: David Herriman
Hon. Secretary: Mark Downs
Hon. Treasurer: Mel Whittle (*resigned*)
Paul Deakin

RFU Chairman of Management Board
Bill Beaumont CBE DL

RFU Council & RFU Management Board
Rob Briers

RFU Council Members
Ken Andrews

Hon. Meeting Secretary
Peter Elliott

Hon. Membership Secretary
Anne-Marie Briers

Hon. County Press Officer
Peter Elliott

Safeguarding Manager
Carol Baker

Senior Deputy: Jane Lyth

County Committees:

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

Club & Community Rugby Committee
Director/Chairman: Malcolm Worsley

Marketing & Media Committee
Director/Chairman: Peter Saunders

Finance & Funding Committee
Chairman: Chris Smail
Asst. Treasurer: Stephen Briers

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

Disciplinary Committee
Chairman: Nigel Yates
Secretary: Brian Stott

Governance Committee
Director/Chairman: Tim Stirk

Coaching Committee

Chairman: Mark Nelson
Secretary: Tom Fitzgerald

Womens Rugby Development Group

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

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

County Schools Union

Chairman: John Morgan
Secretary: Ken Andrews

Colts Competitions Committee
Chairman: Alan James
Secretary: Jon Kitchen

Assistant Hon. Secretary
Brian Stott

Operations Manager

Match Programme Editor
Iain Griffiths

Hon. Solicitor
John Bullough

Hon. Doctor

Chairman of Selectors for

Senior XV & U20s John Greenwood
Womens XV Mike Dale

The RFU's Rugby Development Team

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

Area 5 Responsibilities:

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

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

www.lancshirerugby.com

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

The Lancashire County Rugby Football Union was established in 1881

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

Registered Office:

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Directors: DN Herriman (Chairman), M Downs (Company Secretary),
K Andrews, CA Baker, RTJ Briers, JRS Greenwood,
JT Hughes, P Saunders, 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**