

LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

Minutes of the Board Meeting at Liverpool St Helens FC

Monday 4th July 2022

Present: D. Clarke in the Chair, & Messrs K. Andrews, J.T. Hughes, H. Hughes, R.T.J. Briers, G.A. Burns, M.J. Worsley, C.A. Baker, B.H. Stott & M. Downs.

In Attendance : Mr A. Soutar

Apologies: Messrs, J.R.S. Greenwood & P. Deakin.

CB Relationship Managers Report.

AS Reported:-

1. The RFU main priority is the number of players in the 15 a side game. There are over 160 clubs in the Union who are looking at big drops in numbers, 20 of these in Lancashire. This has been seen via data analysis of cry offs and walk overs across the whole of the adult game. Staff have contacted all the clubs in Lancashire to offer support, 5 have not responded. In the short term there could be funding targeted at these clubs.
The majority of cancelled games is in lower XVs which BHS links to the league organisation being too structured. The loss of players may not necessarily be fixed by throwing money at the situation.
2. There are a number of packs for Clubs arranging internal sevens competitions available.
3. CAB has been on the Leadership in Union course and feedback has been excellent, especially on and around our Safeguarding practices.

Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the Board meeting held on Monday 13th June 2022, (previously circulated) were accepted and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Matters arising.

KA – has followed up and asked at Council regarding the potential sponsorship of the County Championship. No response yet but will not be deterred. At the County Championship feedback Zoom meeting, all counties were in favour of the competition being sponsored.

MD – Had requested via Tim Miller that Bill Sweeney and Sue Day watched the recording of the meeting to show the levels of support for the competition.

DC – there is a possibility that Tim Miller is now pro County Championship.

RFU.

No report, attached as Appendix 1 is the RFU report presented to the AGM as the latest RFU report.

Competitions Sub-Committee report attached as Appendix 2.

Red Rose Rugby.

DC – Had met with representatives of Eccles, our stance is that we prefer not running the competition but will allow it without support.

KA – the local schools initiative should not be referred to as a Union but either a project or initiative.

Correspondence.

None appertaining to this meeting.

New Members.

Annual – Graham Murphy Approved.

Annual – Andrew Vickers Approved.

50:50 Draw

Jul 22	Value
JE Nixon	£53.40
M Downs	£8.90
RTJ Briers	£8.90
P Hanson	£8.90
G Jones	£8.90

Date of next meeting.

Next Meeting: 6:30 pm on Monday 12th September 2022 at Liverpool St Helens FC.

Any other business.

BHS – Considering writing to the RFU and explaining that bigger sanctions for discipline issues do not act as a deterrent. Referees need to act earlier in a game with zero tolerance and enforce the technical area.

CAB – at the recent National Safeguarding Conference a new code of conduct for pitchside behaviour was launched.

HH – 84 attendees register for the County Coaching Conference at Fylde.

MD – gave details to the Board of Past President, Noel Atkinsons funeral.

MD – a new club needs to be found for the November general meeting and financial AGM due to the extremely high increase in room hire for the current venue.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:00pm



Chairman Date 12-9-22.

Appendix 1

RFU Representatives Report

General Meeting 22nd June 2022

Notes from RFU Council meeting held at Twickenham Stadium on 17th June 2022

A. CEO Report-Bill Sweeney

Adult Male Contact Rugby

In response to the concerning trends in relation to adult male participation in the XV's contact game, a small group of people from across the organization, have been seconded to a piece of work (approx. 4-6 weeks) to drill into the issues and develop targeted interventions that may be implemented ahead of next season, with a specific focus on the pre-Christmas period.

Additional work is also underway on a new blueprint for the community game. The work around the adult male contact game will feed into this, along with considering the future of the non-contact game, age-grade and women's rugby. This will be the focus of a Game Congress in the early autumn.

Player Welfare

RFU have agreed to participate in the World Rugby Enhanced GRTP Study and an engagement drive has taken place in relation to the Advanced BRAIN Health Clinic and we are starting to see positive results.

The aim is for the Waist High Tackle Trial (WHTT) to begin in the new season and legal agreements are currently being progressed.

2025 Rugby World Cup (Women's)

England have been officially announced as the hosts of the 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup.

The opportunity this tournament can provide to transform and accelerate the growth of the women's game and working closely with World Rugby around the establishment of the Local Organising Committee, which will be key in ensuring the successful delivery of the tournament, while also focusing on the development of an ambitious and far-reaching legacy programme not only for women's rugby but also age-grade and men's adult programmes.

Club Ecosystem

The Club of the Future Commission continues to progress its work on both the future landscape and key components of clubs. This work will ultimately be used to help build the business case for investment from the Strategic Growth Fund.

Those working on the volunteer workload have made recommendations on a small number of regulations. Work is progressing on the further enhancement of the Club Support Centre (with some additional Sport England funding).

As a follow on from the Winter Sport Survival Fund, the RFU have secured significant additional one-year funding from Sport England/DCMS to undertake some Governance and Business Transformation work with clubs.

PGA Renegotiation

The current PGA expires at the end of the 2023/24 season.

Ahead of formal engagement with PRL and other stakeholders, it will be important to establish the RFU's key aims for the professional and wider game.

Coach Succession

This piece of work is being led by Nigel Redman (Head of Team Performance) to identify, develop and support the appointment of future England Head Coaches.

B. Premier 15s Redevelopment- Alex Teasdale

Council has been supporting the redevelopment of the Premier 15s.

Council approved:

- a. the league structure and format;
- b. the season dates and league calendar, which will adhere to the Global Calendar and therefore will begin in November, post the World XV Competition, and end in June after the 6 Nations.
- c. beginning the new league with 8 or 10 teams, as defined by the tender process;
- d. that participation in the league is subject to compliance with the Minimum Operating Standards, participation agreement and regulations and the removal from the league will be as set out in those documents; and
- e. that subject to compliance with the above, participation in the league will be for four seasons (commencing 23-24) with review windows agreed in year 4 and year 7 of the league in line with the business model approved by Board.

C. Governance Report- Chris Cuthbertson

Decisions Taken

- Women's Remuneration Cap
- Alignment of Men & Women's Competition Regulations
- Work is nearing completion on the alignment of Competition Regulations 13 (Women's) and Regulation 16 (Men's), which will be consolidated into a new Regulation 6.
- Regulation 9 Pitch-side Care
- RFU Regulation 22 COVID 19 Regulations
- Adult Competition Advisory Group - Governance agreed to a recommendation from ACAG that the group be disbanded.
- Women's Season Structure 2022/23
- Women's Game - Lichfield / Leicester Tigers
- National League Rugby – Terms of Reference
- Ealing 1871 Voting Membership. The application was supported by Middlesex County RFU.
- World Rugby Council Outcomes –Governance noted that all the Global Law Trials (GLTs) that were trialed throughout the game last season were adopted into Law at the May WR Council meeting.
- Safeguarding – Code of Conduct. A draft Code of Conduct has been produced in response to requests from clubs to assist them in developing their own codes/policies and will be distributed to the game.

D. Supplemental Pot- Steve Grainger

Council endorsed the following and recommend these to Board for implementation through the CGB.

- a. Replace, from season 2022/23, the Supplemental Pot with a Community Rugby Support Fund to be directed towards those voting members (clubs, referee societies and CBs) in greatest financial need.
- b. Set the quantum of this fund at the size of fund that has traditionally been funded by genuine "third party" purchase of tickets.
- c. Smooth the fund to be the same amount each year, not to fluctuate in line with ticket revenue. This would be agreed by Board as part of business planning and is indicatively to be £600k per annum.
- d. Devolve criteria for accessing the fund, along with the mechanism, to the CGB. This will include responsibility for defining "need" in this context. For example, this might be by level, by turnover or another metric, but it will be important that this is as straightforward as possible so that there is not disproportionate administration either for staff or volunteers.
- e. Reserve any funding not "needed" by clubs under this fund against other CGB strategic priorities that benefit clubs.

E. RFU as a NGB Review Group- Mike Waplington

The NGB Review Group was set up to review the volunteer structure of the RFU as an NGB. In terms of process, the Group has undertaken a survey of participants (through the National Rugby Survey), consultation with Board and Council during March, a survey of independents on committees, together with regular updates to Council. This included a detailed survey of Board and Council members as to views of how well the current structure is working, what alternatives could be and how well alternatives would deliver the aims of the project.

In addition, members of the Group have consulted informally with other key individuals, including the Chair of the CGB, the Chair of the Board Nominations Committee and members of the D&I Advisory Group.

The longer term journey of the RFU's governance journey will demonstrate the gradual evolution of the roles of Board, Council and the committee structure.

The review of the size, structure and route to Council should begin formally in the 2023/24 season, with the aim that recommendations are produced by the end of that season.

F. Council Nominations Committee report- Ken Andrews

Council approved the recommendation of the award of Distinguished Membership of the RFU to the following Council Members:

- a. Chris Cuthbertson Middlesex
- b. Peter Whiting RAF

The new RFU Rose Award - the reward and recognition for a national contribution from non-Council individuals. Council approved the recommendation of the award of RFU Rose Award to the following individuals:

- a. Paul Astbury
- b. Sir James Dingemans
- c. Carol Isherwood

Council also approved the initial Sub-committee structure and composition for season 2022-23

G. Aide Memoire- Nigel Gillingham

The Aide Memoire brings together several policies and information that are pertinent to Council members. Aspects of the information change annually, and the policies are reviewed regularly. Council approved the changes made for 2022-23.

H. Community Game Direction- Steve Grainger

It has clearly been great to get the first full season of community rugby completed since 2018/19 but it hasn't been without its challenges.

Whilst activity in the women's game and the age grade game (boys and girls) appears to have bounced back reasonably well the situation in the adult male game does not appear so healthy.

Prior to the pandemic and the cessation of rugby activity there were already concerns about decreasing numbers of matches, teams, players here and this situation appears to have been exacerbated significantly through lockdown and the subsequent return to rugby.

It is important that both the short and longer term implications are considered.

Hence work has been initiated to

(a) respond to the immediate issues and assess what actions may be possible ahead of the start of next season to mitigate decline in adult male contact rugby and

(b) consider the longer term picture for both contact and non-contact rugby for boys, girls, women and men.

There are a number of actions already underway and others being actively considered.

The scope below is being used as a reference point and will continue to be refined over the next few months. CGB, Council and Staff have developed an action plan which CGB will oversee throughout the summer period and into next season. This will be integrated into the work already underway through the Contact and Non-Contact working groups and the Club of the Future Commission, all of which is scheduled for socialisation at a Game Congress (with CBs and Clubs) in September, resulting in a blueprint for the community game over the next 5-10 years.

Initial activity is being considered under the 5 broad headings below and against 3 timeframes (1) immediate – ahead of next season, (2) next 12-18 months (ahead of 23/24 season) and (3) midterm (3-5 years):

These include:

Structures and playing Opportunities

Regulations

Campaigns

Sharing of Good Practice

Player Pipeline

J. Future Competition Structure (FCS)- Stephen Pearson

SP gave an overview of the difficult process of establishing the FCS over the last two years or so. This will now be implemented from September 2022. The Structure of the Leagues and fixtures are now with the clubs. It is appreciated that there will be some teething problems but it is hoped that the game will benefit from all the hard work done to get to this position. Thanks were given to all the clubs, CBs and individuals who have contributed to the process.

K. Professional Game Board – Connor O'Shea

CO'S gave his report which included these headlines:

- Preview of summer international tour
- Premiership Cup 2022-23
- Club World Cup
- Academy review
- Project Everest
- Regulations for season 2022-23
- Review of rest and loading principles

L. Women's and Girls' Game Update- Lou Latter

LL gave her report and included headlines:

- Allianz Premier 15s
- Red Roses 6Nations campaign- Champions and World number 1s
- Women's Competition Review Group (WCRG)
- Girls Game Age Bands
- Expressions of interest to enter the 2022/23 Girls National Cup (U16 and U18)
- Player Pathway – All CBs have had meetings around the plans for the Girls U16 DPP.
- Growing the Girls Game resource document- The Inclusive Volunteer Recruitment Toolkit
- Coaches and Match Officials- online programme and resources, with dedicated course vouchers for 400 girls game coaches/referees.
- Schools and Colleges – Rugby development days for teachers will be taking place in the next 6 weeks.
- Technology – New age bandings built into GMS infrastructure and Team Management module.

M. Board Nominations Committee- Dom Proctor

Two new members that will join the Board with effect from 1 August have now been confirmed as James Cook- Army (Council Elected Director) and Yasmin Diamond (Independent Non Executive Director). Yasmin replaces Dom Proctor who steps down from the Board after six years. The Board size has been reduced to 12 members from 14 in compliance with the Sport England Governance Code.

N. Budget and business plan-Sue Day

Revenues generally follow a four-year cycle based on the number and timing of Men's home Internationals. Given the nature and objectives of the RFU, we normally plan to 'break even' across the four-year cycle, 'distributing' investment back into the game through expenditure on professional and community rugby programmes.

As a result of both the pandemic and the market conditions surrounding broadcast and sponsorship, our revenues in the current cycle are well down on what we had anticipated pre-COVID. Based on current forecasts and understanding we expect these to remain depressed into the next cycle.

In contrast, our operating costs have risen significantly, in particular our energy, people, technology and insurance costs, as well as rugby investment requirements in certain areas as activity has resumed post Covid and as additional priorities have needed to be added in.

Forecast standard inflation rates are now hitting 10%, which is a significant challenge compared the last few years, and inflation rates for some of our biggest cost areas such as energy are significantly higher still than that 10% figure.

To best understand our financial position, we have separated out one-off (or nonrecurring) income and costs/investment from our underlying (or recurring) revenue and cost base. These 'one-off' of non-recurring items include:

- a. RWC 2025 legacy funding and investment;
- b. Commonwealth Games (CWG) legacy funding and investment;
- c. and Winter Sports Survival funding (WSSF) and investment.
- d. Income from our debenture waiver project and the associated spend on gift aid funded programmes.
- e. Project Light proceeds and the associated usage of these.

Coming out of COVID-19 all matches and events (excl. summer tour matches) in 2021/22 were held with no constraints on crowd figures. budgeting will be the same in 2022/23 with similar crowds achieved in 2021/22 expected. Thus the increases in cost of sales is driven by increased matches and increased costs.

The cost of hosting a fixture at Twickenham has increased by about approx. £70k per match from 2021/22. This is due to an increase in staffing costs as we index our staffing costs to the London Living Wage. Additionally, cancellation insurance has increased from 2021/22 as insurance companies continue to increase premiums post COVID-19.

Even without hosting the Barbarians and Summer tour fixtures, International Match costs have increased due to an additional Autumn International and 6 Nations match. These two Additionally, hosting South Africa outside of the World Rugby test window adds an additional £1.0m in visiting team costs. Our Stadium Events cost increases in line with the number of events being held with the more expensive concerts being held. The increase in Box costs is driven by the catering for additional Autumn International and 6 Nations matches to be held.

Debenture cost of sales has increased as the Debenture team aims to renew £31.2m of debentures in over the next 2 years (2021/22: £8.0m).

The increase in Sponsorship cost is in line with the increase in Sponsorship Income.

The increase in Ticketing/Sales Cost of Sales is driven by an increase in staffing costs with 6 additional headcount (4 FTC and 2 permanents) being added over the past year. 3 of these roles relate to Box/Debenture sales. 2 FTC's are to assist with the large debenture renewal program with a permanent role being added to assist the demand for Boxes. 3 additional roles relate to the ticketing team with a need for temporary staff to assist with digital ticketing and the Women's game.

P. Men's International Ticketing Pricing- 2022-23 (Six Nations)- Ansell Henry

Following on from the Board meeting in March which approved ticket pricing for the 22/23 season, subsequent business planning has outlined further utility increases and higher inflation rates than initially predicted.

With this in mind, the Executive are now seeking endorsement following Board pre-approval to further increase ticket pricing for Six Nations 2023. As we are on-sale for the Autumn Nation Series for 2022, we are unable to increase these prices.

The IRTSC (International Rugby Ticket Sub-Committee) has approved the increases given the unprecedented inflationary pressures. Council endorsed the price rises, and would be set to enable communication to Clubs and Debenture members on the 1 st July 2022.

We noted in the March approved ticket pricing paper that a further review will be required to take place ahead of the 2023/24 season to consider future inflation and financial performance. This request is taking place sooner than anticipated due to CPI forecast in the previous paper being estimated at 5.4%, it is now 9.0% (April) and 2022/23 RFU energy costs are expected to be £4.7m more than in 2021/22.

In short, we are requesting a further increase of £5 for the Scotland and France fixtures and £2 on Italy in all categories. The new proposal would deliver c£0.8m in additional revenue:

KA/DC/RTJB
20.06.22

Rugby Development Committee

Competitions Sub Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Competitions Committee held on Wednesday 29th June 2022 by zoom meeting starting at 19.00.

Present: Ken Andrews (Chair), Chris Barrett (Colts), David Clarke (RFU Leagues), Howard Hughes (Rugby Development & ADM), Brian Hurst (Senior) Ian Spivey (Junior), Christine Spivey (CSO),

Apologies: Robbie Jones (Schools), Helen Duggan (W & G)

Minutes 93 Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 05.02.22 were accepted

Minute 94 **Matters arising:** There were no matters arising

Minute 95 **Section Reports**

95.1 **Colts**

CB reported that the Colts Section were happy with the way season 2021-22 went. Originally, 70 teams were entered which eventually was reduced to 56 and 53 entered the Colts League Cup. For season 2022-23 currently 59 sides have signed up. There is a general concern in the Colts Committee about playing down.

In answering a question from DC about Colts playing on Saturdays, CB said the committee would see no problem with that and would welcome the opportunity but this was constrained by the availability of referees when many were officiating in Men's Leagues.

HH raised the issue of transgender players- KA mentioned that the RFU Transgender policy was being debated on 29th July at a specially arranged Council meeting.

See full report in **Appendix 1**

95.2 **Junior 11-16 Committee**

IS paid tribute to Allen Bower who has stepped down from the 11-16 Committee after 11 years of hard work. His replacement will be Phil Lord from Leigh RUFC, with possibilities of other joining the committee.

IS reviewed the season 2021-22 and mentioned the difficulties rising from the decision made that all 11 to 16 competitions would be Waterfall for that season only. This was in response to the RFU directive to get our age grade players playing again. It was regrettable that IS and CS both received online abuse regarding that decision.

IS assured the committee that in season 2022-23 the Junior Challenge competition would be organised with Festivals at U12 and Waterfall competitions at U13 in line with Age Grade regulations.

Following the online abuse, a new Facebook page has been created to allow only those who apply to become members to be able to use it. Generally, this new page will be for information

only and will not allow abusive comment. Each club will have the opportunity to register their Fixture Secretaries, Coach/Managers and DSO's for membership.

Following a question from CB there was a discussion regarding the use of the website to inform clubs and individuals about the relevant competitions and could GMS be used.

HH informed the meeting that the RFU will not allow individual County competitions to be put on GMS so information is best sent by the website and social media. It was agreed to look at the Lancashire CB Pitchero site for use in information giving.

IS mentioned that John Maslam from Oldham RUFC maybe interested in helping with communication/technology.

See report in **Appendix 2**

95.3 Schools

KA reported that the Schools' Competitions had been run successfully albeit with reduced numbers of schools entering in this difficult season. The report sent by Robbie Jones is optimistic that schools will return to the competitions as the situation in individual schools ease. It was noted that more schools are keen to enter the newly formed Girls competitions and it is hoped that these will develop further in future seasons

See full report in **Appendix 3**

95.4 Women & Girls

No report was received

95.5 Senior Men's Competition:

BH reported that the 2021-22 season had been somewhat traumatic. The three levels at Cup, Plate and Vase went ahead but the Bowl competition had to be cancelled through lack of interest with clubs at that level struggling to get players.

Eventually, finals were held at Wigan RFC and produced some excellent matches.

A letter to all clubs has been sent out recently with an immediate response from 8 clubs including Rossendale, who have decided to return after a period of time away from Lancashire Competitions.

BH mentioned that he had been in discussion with Helen Duggan regarding a Senior Women's competitions to run at the same time. So far replies have been received from 4 clubs.

BH hoped that all clubs would agree to Round 1 being played on weekend of 27th August with the 2nd round being held in a free weekend post Christmas with a play by date of 18th March 2023. It was agreed that the finals should held during the first May Bank holiday weekend.

DC mentioned the County Championship and how that may fit with the new proposed six week block at the end of the Men's season assigned to Cup Competition, As yet no information has been received as to how this competitions will be run and what effect it will have on Lancashire Competitions. Generally, watch this space!

95.6 ADM RFU Leagues

HH reported that the ADM Lancashire Leagues have now been incorporated into the RFU Leagues as from September 2022. The leagues will be administered by the newly formed ROC (Regional Organising Committees).

HH is willing to continue run the ADM League Cup if that is the wish of the clubs. Maybe clubs ant to opt out of the RFU Cup Competitions in favour of the local ADM Competitions.

ADM Combination Leagues- HH reported that a number of clubs have indicated returning to the NOWIRUL Leagues leaving the ADM league with 10 teams. With lower XVs still having difficulties with getting players out every match day, the return to the Intermediate Leagues with the conceded rule is baffling.

Minute 96 **Date of next meeting-** Wednesday 19th October 2022 by Zoom call- 7.00 pm

Minute 97 **Any other business.**

IS mentioned that Lancashire continue to pilot the High Tackle evaluation. John Lawn from the RFU Has requested that the 11-16 committee organize two festivals for U15 & U16 level beginning and at the end of the season with using the new high tackle regulation in one and current regulation in the other. IS to keep the committee informed.

Meeting ended at 20.30

KA 04.07.22

Report on Colts Rugby in Lancashire and the Wider Northwest Area

We had 70 sides start the NW colts league in early September. This was the largest number of sides entering the league for many seasons. There had actually been 74 applications but 4 clubs withdrew their applications before the season started.

These set off in the Prelim leagues (13 leagues, 7 Snr, 6 JNr)

- Lancashire 21snr/17 Jnr total 38
- Cheshire 14 snr/ 12 Jnr total 26
- Others 4 snr / 2 Jnr total 6
-

After the preliminary league we had 61 sides start the Conference Leagues (7 Senior, 5 Junior)

1. Lancashire 19 snr / 14 junior total 33
2. Cheshire 12 snr/ 10 junior total 22
3. Others 5 snr / 1 Jnr total 6
- 4.

We had 5 sides combine age groups forming Senior colts sides - Blackburn, Littleborough, PGH, Southport & Fylde.

We have 3 sides made up from combined clubs TMV/Broughton Park , Marple/Glossop, Aldwinians/Ashton UL.

During the conference stage of the leagues we had 5 clubs drop out so by the end of the season there was no colts rugby at Altrincham Kersal, Vale of Lune, Trentham, Fylde and Sefton.

56 sides finished the league season. This is more sides than the 2019/20 season.

Of the 12 leagues

- Lancashire clubs won 4 – Warrington Snr A, Blackburn Snr G, Rochdale Jnr B, Garstang Jnr E
- Cheshire clubs won 4
- Cumbria, Staffordshire, Shropshire & Derbyshire won 1 a piece.
-

League Cup Competition

53 sides took part in the League Cup competition.

- Lancashire Clubs won 3 of the 6 Finals – Warrington Snr Cup, Heaton Moor Jnr Bowl, Garstang Jnr Plate
- Cumbria Clubs won 2
- Cheshire clubs won 1

Thanks to all involved at Heaton Moor & Eccles Rugby clubs for hosting the finals and for all the hard work that goes into making these days successful and memorable.

Lancashire Colts Cups – Finals Played at Fleetwood RUFC

We had 35 (20 Snr & 15 Jnr) Sides enter the county knock out competition, played across 5 rounds in the senior competition and 4 in the Junior Cup. Those sides losing in their 1st round went through to the plate allowing each side to enjoy a minimum of 2 knock out rounds.

The eventual winners in the 4 competitions were:

- Waterloo Snr Cup
- Manchester Snr Plate
- Rochdale Jnr Cup
- Liverpool St Helens Jnr Plate
-

Thankyou to Fleetwood RUFC and in particular Andy Thompson for organising a great finals day. Special thanks for Alan James who put in enormous effort to make sure that all the background work of Cups, Medals, Programmes etc were all organised and that the day ran smoothly.

Squad Numbers during the 2021/22 season

Most sides appear to have built their squad numbers throughout the season , of course there are a few that have struggled with numbers throughout. There is a noticeable effect when the Rugby League season starts with some clubs struggling to raise sides on a Sunday due to dual code players choosing to play League in preference to Union.

Colts League Rugby for this coming season

Entries are in for the forthcoming 2022/23 season , with 59 sides confirmed. These are made up from 39 Senior and 20 Junior sides.

This is a significant decrease from last season, but is in line with the 2019/20 entries, however, it is anticipated that with a season of rugby having been played clubs and age group managers will have a better understanding of where their squads are and that there will not be so many drop outs.

- Lancashire have 31 of the 59 sides involved.
- Cheshire are at 21, Cumbria, Shropshire & Derbyshire at 2 each and 1 side from Staffordshire.
-

Lancashire based U16s sides coming through to colts for this season.

Of the 23 sides that entered the U16s 2021/22 junior competition 10 have come through to Junior Colts. Sefton & Westpark St Helens have merged their squads to form a side. There are a further 9 clubs that have merged their squads to make a single senior colts side. 1 Club that had an U16s side will not have a colts side at either group. We would normally expect to see more sides coming through as single age group side.

Changes /Challenges.

Rugby League appears to be more of a challenge than ever in Lancashire in particular. The RFL were quicker off the blocks in getting matches back up and running drawing players across.

Playing Down of Players – The RFU is pressing to allow more and more players holding a dispensation to play down.

Thankyous & Congratulations : As always our thanks to both Manchester & Liverpool Referee Societies; who rise to the task to provide Sunday Appointments for Colts games.

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

To 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.

Thanks to my colleagues on the Halbro NW Colts League Committee who work so hard and with such enthusiasm and dedication to ensure that Colts Rugby is enjoyed & played by upwards of 2000 lads across as many clubs as possible in the Northwest of the country.

And last but not least to those that organise Rugby within the county & region for their valued support over the season.

Chris Barrett

Lancashire 7-16 Season 2021-22 Season Report.

We always knew that the past season was going to be a trying one, but not to the extent that it became. The season was supposed to start with all age grade teams playing the lower age grade and not moving up to the correct age grade until the New Year.

We suspect that although this information was distributed to everyone concerned that teams just moved up at the start of the season not really understanding what was expected of them. This we think was one of the catalysts towards the frustrations towards the end of the season.

We were advised to run waterfall festivals for season 2021-22, but the main aim was to get everyone back to the game of union after nearly a two year break away from the game. So at the start of the season teams played friendly rounds (lower age grades) up until Christmas when depending on results we would move teams around to try and get a more level playing fields and that we would try to get some sort of meaning full end to the season. No mention of cups or finals days, we hoped to get mini festival/tournament style games to end the season.

Most clubs, committee members and others etc saw the frustration build on social media as to the lack of finals days. Clubs had forgotten where we started at the beginning of the season.

In the 10 years or so that Allen Bower, Ian Spivey & Christine Spivey have been involved in the running of the county events, the number of entries has grown at all age groups. This past season however saw clubs join up with another close by clubs, age groups merging and some teams just fall by the way side. The bigger mini & junior sections thought

that everything could carry on pre pandemic, but this could not be fairly executed. Some teams only played one county game all season whilst others managed more game time.

This season has been the hardest one to date for all concerned. The amount of emails, phone calls and messages that were coming re all manner of thing was relentless. It did not help when those outside of the organization of these county events did not appreciate or understand what we were trying to achieve. These interferences have along with other personal matters led to Allen Bower no longer wanting to be involved.

Can we please take this opportunity to thank Allen for all of years of service to the county games.

Ian & Christine Spivey

Lancashire County Schools Union

I have attached an overview of the CSU schedule, with a few additional notes. Also attached is a sample of the competition structure and a list of school contacts that may be useful for respective clubs/CB. I am aware that here is some very good work taking place within the County regarding schools and clubs but wondered whether that information can be logged centrally and made available to the CSU. The draws have been made for the U14-U18 competitions and will be distributed later this week.

All staff have consented to sharing their information within the work of the CSU and RFU.

We are delighted by the response we've had from schools, with 3 new schools entering competitions for the first time. We are particularly excited by the interest in the Girls festivals, although interesting that there is little/no interest from the more traditional playing schools. The issue there with such schools I suspect is that they are already firmly committed to other sports with regular fixtures.

Questions that I would have asked had I been able to attend are:

1. The situation regarding medals/certificates for participants
2. The booking process for the AGP at PGH: can /how do I access that?
3. Can we involve Sale Sharks more in the delivery of our festivals, both boys and girls?

Robbie Jones

Lancashire County Schools Union Festivals & Cup Competitions Overview for 2022-2023

An excellent response from 31 schools wishing to enter the competitions:

U12 Boys Festival - 25 Schools W/b 21st November 2022

U13 Boys Festival - 27 Schools W/b 16th January 2023

U14 Boys Competition - 26 Schools

Qualifier round W/b 26th September 2022

Round 1 W/b 7th November 2022

Quarter finals W/b 5th December 2022

Semi Finals W/b 23rd January 2023

Finals W/b 27 th February 2023

U15 Boys Competition - 23 Schools

Qualifier round W/b 26th September 2022

Round 1 W/b 7th November 2022

Quarter finals W/b 5th December 2022

Semi Finals W/b 23rd January 2023

Finals W/b 27th February 2023

U16 Boys Competition - 19 Schools

Qualifier round W/b 19th September 2022

Round 1 W/b 10th October 2022

Quarter Finals W/b 21st November 2022

Semi Finals W/b 9th January 2023

Finals W/b 6th February 2023

U18 Boys Competition - 13 Schools

Round 1 W/b 26th September 2022

Quarter finals W/b 7th November 2022

Semi Finals W/b 5th December 2022

Finals W/b 30th January 2023

U12 Girls Festival - 14 Schools W/b 7th November 2022

U14 Girls Festival - 12 Schools W/b 7th November 2022

- The number of entries for all age groups is highest since we combined Emerging Schools Competitions within the main CSU competitions framework (2017).
- We have collated a list of clubs which players from each school participate, with main school contact.
- U12 & U13 waterfall festivals.
- U14-U16 teams start in main Cup Qualifying round, with winning teams progressing to meet seeded teams in R1 and losing teams move into Vase. Teams losing in R1 of cup progress into Plate.
U18 teams start in Cup, with R1 loser moving into Plate. Plate QF loser moves into Vase Semi Final.
- U12 & U14 Girls' Festivals are new events and are scheduled the week between Women's RWC Semi-Finals and Finals