

The Oval Zone

The rugby magazine for North and Mid Wales - Issue 36, 8th June 2014



**THE BIG
INTERVIEW
WITH
DAVID
MOFFETT**

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**THE
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Welcome to the latest issue of The Oval Zone.

Like you, I thought the end of the season had arrived, but it would seem that we're turning in to a 12 months of the year sport. As soon as the Sevens and International games are over, it's time for pre-season friendlies and yet more 7's.

Off the pitch, we of course have no let-up, and I get the feeling that whatever happens at next Sunday's EGM, it's going to be more of the same old wranglings for quite a while.

In this issue, we have an interview with David Moffett, who kindly agreed to answer any questions that I put to him. Hopefully, you'll read his replies with interest. The Oval Zone is an entirely independent publication and I'm happy to put forward all views (providing they're not libellous).

Great to see RGC performing so well in their recent venture in to the 7's circuit and also some tremendous news with the three RGC boys currently over in New Zealand taking part in the Junior World Cup. The North Wales Region has come a long way in a very short period of and long may it continue.

From a personal point of view, I'm proud to see that Mid Wales has supplied a quarter of the forwards for the opening Wales tour game of South Africa.

Best wishes and have a great summer - next issue in two week's time.

Gary

Email: gwcymru1@aol.com
Telephone: 07713 514 375

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Porthmadog RFC are looking for a Head Coach

It is an opportunity for a new up and coming coach, or an experienced one looking for a fresh challenge.

Porthmadog Rugby Club are advertising the position of Head Coach. The club has been established for 37 years and is well known in the North Wales rugby community.

It is an opportunity for a new up and coming coach, or an experienced one looking for a fresh challenge in making Porthmadog one of the stronger teams in Division 3 North.

The club is preparing to start training in mid July, with the possibility of a couple of friendlies in August.

Any one seeking more information should contact Ioan Gwilym on 07833494377 or e-mail ioan_gwil@hotmail.com



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With a date of June 15th set for the EGM, The Oval Zone put a few questions of it's own to David Moffett as he prepares to do battle with the WRU hierarchy at Port Talbot

OZ: Recently, you have been very vocal in your criticism of the WRU Board, and have made mention of the ages of several of the Board Members. Why is their age an issue? If that is the case, why is your own not an issue?

DM: Their ages are fact; it is their lack of experience for a business turning over £60m that is the issue. Compared to most other Rugby Unions, Wales is lacking in real business expertise at the top.

OZ: Do you feel that you are capable of maintaining the kind of long-term effort required to complete a term as WRU Chairman, both mentally and physically? Would you be seeking re-election to a second term of office?

DM: Yes I do and as I would be 70 after 3 years I would be trying to find a successor of considerable ability within the top tier of Welsh Business to put before the clubs to take over.



'In my manifesto there is a time frame for North Wales to aspire to have a professional club'

OZ: You criticise the length of time that many of the WRU Board have been in their roles, including some that have been in positions for over 20 years. This would mean that they had already been in their positions for many years when you were CEO of the WRU. What did you do to address this problem at the time when you were in a position to do so?

DM: A CEO has no role to play in the election of Board members. That is the sole right of the clubs.

OZ: Why should the clubs of North Wales back you? When the decision to establish the regional sides was made, we were left out in the cold, an afterthought. It is only in the past five years that any plans for development of the game in North Wales have been actioned. Why should anyone in North Wales think you will be able to continue this development, or that you have any interest in doing so?

DM: Everyone in North Wales will remember that I originally wanted a Region there. The threat of legal action by Llanelli and Cardiff prevented that. My personal support for NW will continue and in my Manifesto there is a time frame for North Wales to aspire to have a professional Club

OZ: Throughout your website, there are references to a semi-pro side in North Wales, which we already have. Would you support plans for this side

to eventually become fully professional and have equal standing with the other regional sides, and are there any provisions for this in your long term plans?

DM: See last point but I would ring fence RGC in the Premiership

OZ: Do you support the continued use of Parc Eirias for Wales' Under 20s internationals?

DM: Yes

OZ: Would you support the inclusion of RGC in Regional Rugby Wales in the future, as well as in some capacity in any new Professional Rugby Game Board? If not, why not?

DM: This is also covered in the Manifesto. North Wales would be 1 of 5 autonomous Regions with the same devolved powers as the rest of Wales. The Semi Pro game will have a full board seat in my plan.

OZ: You propose that each region should deal with disciplinary issues 'in-house' – how can this be a good thing? Taking North Wales as an example: if you have a five person disciplinary board, there is around a 1 in 7 chance that someone on the board that will have some connection to the team whose player is being judged, or the opposition. Add in local rivalries, which could easily cloud someone's judgement regarding an offence, and the result could be a system full of inconsistency and bias. How would you propose to eliminate these sort of issues?

DM: I do not agree that an independent disciplinary board would not be possible in NW. Why should clubs and players be forced to go to Cardiff for a hearing and at huge expense.

OZ: You state in the section 'Key Responsibilities' that you do not want any cross-regional competition outside of the WRU Cup. Does that mean you would make the cup 'open', which it is not at present, despite the potential for a lot more expense?

DM: There has to be an element of aspiration for all clubs and an open cup would provide that

OZ: You state on your website that the WRU are 'denying (the clubs) sufficient funds for growth' and are 'intentionally keeping the clubs poor'. In your opinion, why would they want to do this, and what evidence do you have that this is the case?

DM: I suggest that all clubs attend the EGM in person to get answers to these and many more contentious issues. They will only have themselves to blame if they find out after the event that the information I provide would have been crucial in their decision making. Do not give Proxies to the Union.

OZ: You state in the section 'Living the Game' that there are community clubs pleading for extra funding from the WRU. Would you be able to provide some examples, please?

DM: I will not name them in this forum, the fact that 51 clubs voted for an EGM, 43 Eligible, should be the biggest indicator. Largest no of clubs to call for an EGM in history.

OZ: In the section entitled 'Rebuilding the Network', you claim that the professional sides are 'restricted from assisting semi-professional and community clubs'. Do you have any evidence of this, such as a statement from a club, or is this just hearsay?

DM: The Ospreys and Scarlets have claimed this publicly and have emails from the WRU to that effect. The Ospreys also have evidence that the WRU have been trying to sign players to central contracts despite denials from the WRU.

OZ: Do you intend to ring-fence the Premiership and Championship? You state that you would create a body to represent the clubs in these divisions, which would inevitably seek to safeguard the positions of those clubs who are already there, and also state that you oppose the payment of any players below these levels, which would make it difficult for any

Division 1 clubs to prepare the necessary infrastructure to compete at a higher level – they would immediately go from being amateur to semi-professional, with no experience in how to deal with this, which seems a recipe for disaster.

DM: No I do not believe in ring fencing the Premiership and Championship. The new leagues structure imposed by the WRU will see an explosion of player payments as clubs try to avoid relegation to Division 3.

OZ: You state that you would 'immediately increase funding to the semi-professional game'. Would there be restrictions and guidelines regarding what this money would be spent on, or would it be left to the clubs

themselves to decide what the money would be spent on?

DM: As in all funding there will be guidelines. These would be arrived at in consultation with clubs.

Under the heading of 'No return, no thanks and no negotiation', you state that there is 'anecdotal evidence' of benefactors investing nearly £40 million into the four professional sides. If this is true, why is there no publicly available evidence of this?

DM: The Benefactors run private businesses and their businesses are no business of anyone else. All you have to do is look at the cash required to run each Franchise and you will quickly realise it takes many more millions than that provided by WRU.

OZ: You highlight the fact that there has been no financial return on the investments made by the benefactors, but surely the expectation of a financial return is antithetical to the nature of being a benefactor? If you buy shares, you're making an investment, and would be expecting a return. If you are a benefactor, you are to all intents and purposes gifting that money, without expectation of reward or recompense. What is your response to this?

DM: I cannot second guess the motives of the investors. Benefactors is largely a term used by the media.

OZ: You state that you would introduce around 100 central contracts in collaboration with the professional sides. Have you been given a guarantee by the professional sides that they will be open to discussing this issue

with you, as this would represent a total u-turn from their current opposition to centrally-contracted players?

DM: I have had no agreement with the Regions. The Combined Player Contracts are the right way forward for Wales and I still believe I could deliver a long term agreement with RRW in 10 days.

OZ: You state that you will make an additional £2 million towards increasing participation. How would this money be used, and by whom? What strategies do you have in mind to increase participation levels?

DM: Government funding for this initiative is coming to an end with the loss of many jobs. I would use those funds to grow and improve participation which thus far has not worked.

OZ: One of the most interesting parts of your manifesto is your promise to fund the development of 4G pitches. The intention is an excellent one, and should be applauded, but there are some questions that arise:

Firstly, how would the locations for such pitches be decided? This is an especially important question in North Wales, due to the distances we have to deal with.

DM: They will be decided by the newly formed Regional Rugby Boards which will replace the districts, in consultation with WRU.

OZ: Would they be located at rugby clubs, or at other facilities?

DM: A matter for RRB's.

Continued





David Moffett; *'Selling tickets in Tesco is the ultimate humiliation'*

OZ: Who would be responsible for the management and maintenance of these pitches?

DM: A matter for RRB's.

OZ: Who would ensure that one club is not getting undue priority over others in the area?

DM: RRB's decision but monitored carefully by WRU to avoid such behaviour.

OZ: You bemoan the number of empty seats at some recent internationals, and claim that overpriced tickets are having a damaging effect upon clubs. It is my personal view that the easy availability of tickets through websites such as Ticketmaster is having a far more damaging effect, as people do not need to be members of their local club to be able to get tickets.

What is your view on this, and what would you do to address this issue?

DM: The Ticketing system needs a complete overhaul and tix should be reduced in Price. Clubs should be incentivised not penalised for acting as agent for WRU. You forgot to mention selling tickets in Tesco which is the ultimate humiliation. The increased ticket prices have been used to pay debt off early, a double whammy for clubs.

OZ: You have made several predictions as to the appearance of the rugby union in the future, and have stated that you feel that there will be a 'multi-tier' international set-up in Europe, including promotion and relegation from the 6 Nations. If you become the Chairman of the WRU, and such a proposal is put forward, would you vote in favour of this, knowing that one day it could be Wales facing relegation? This could potentially cost the WRU millions of pounds, jeopardising the whole of the Welsh game, and damaging the Welsh economy.

DM: You have raised a valid point. A wider European competition is an inevitability and is the very reason why Welsh Rugby has to be strong at grassroots, not this year or next year but every year. Clubs are where the future internationals are being nurtured right now.

You also state that you would like the 6 Nations to be played in April and May. When you factor in the summer tours, which there would be great reluctance on all sides to give up, you are effectively creating a 3 month international season, during which the players will be obliged to be away from their families for long periods of time. Will the WRU be paying the divorce lawyers themselves, or will they be paying for the families of players to accompany them on tour? How would you modify the rest of the international calendar to minimise the damage to the home lives of our international players?

DM: I think this is a strange question. Professional Rugby players cannot pick and choose where and when they work, just like any other worker. Exception is Professional Rugby players are paid many times the average wage. By playing 6 Nations at end of season followed by SH tour there will be much less disruption to the domestic club game.

OZ: You claim that the rules of the game have been 'manipulated to suit changes in coaching styles', and that the Pro 12 could be used to experiment with new law changes. What laws are you referring to, and what changes would you like to see in the future?

DM: I have decided to put this in the too hard basket for the time being. Scrums, breakdown and watching 90 to 100 kicks in open play would be a start.

OZ: What is a 'WRU Ambassador for Change'? What would their role be, and would it be a paid or voluntary position?

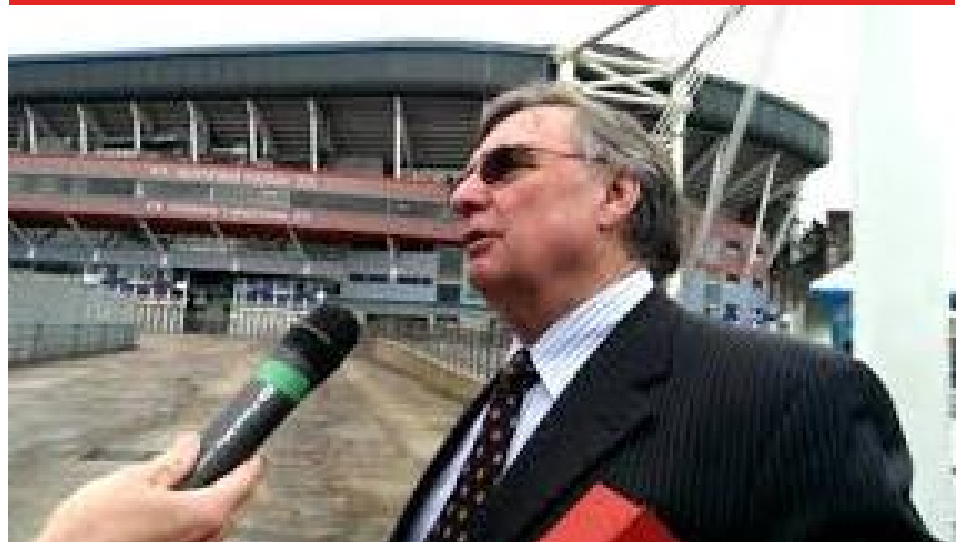
DM: The roles would be voluntary with only expenses being paid.

OZ: You propose a 'Women in Welsh Rugby' weekend, similar to that used so successfully by the NRL in Australia, but then criticise the WRU for paying expenses for the wives and partners of the WRU Board Members to go to internationals. How can you hold both views simultaneously? How can you say that you appreciate the contributions of women in the game, whilst simultaneously saying that no gratitude should be shown to the long-suffering partners of those who give a lot of time to the game? They didn't put themselves forward for a position, yet they are still forced to sacrifice a great deal because of it. Surely the least we can do to thank these women is to make sure they get a couple of weekends away a year out of it?

DM: The money raised on a special weekend goes to Charity. The Board, wives, staff attending home and away games in the 6 Nations cost nearly £1.5m over a 4 year period. How many 4g pitches would that pay for? There is no comparison. The WRU has to run the business for the benefit of the clubs, not themselves.

OZ: Thank you very much.

'I will ring-fence RGC in the Premiership'





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RGC 1404 WIN CALDY 7's

A great couple of weekends for RGC as they win the Caldly 7's tournament and finish runners-up in the Skofic 7's.

Reports and more pictures on next page



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Pictures from the Caldys 7's reproduced with the kind permission of Barry MacDonald

RGC 1404 collect more silverware with a great win at the Caldys 7's

A very young team, all aged 20 or under with the exception of skipper Andy Baston, surprised everyone, not least themselves, by travelling to the Wirral and winning the Caldys 7s.

A very young team, all aged 20 or under with the exception of skipper Andy Baston, surprised everyone, not least themselves, by travelling to the Wirral and winning the Caldys 7s.

After a comfortable win in their opening group match against Old Ellesmerians they had to fight hard to win their second against a very physical Wirral team.

Victory in their final game against the Royal Marines meant they topped their group and a semi-final against the Rugby Club of Liverpool. The result of this match was in doubt right up until almost the final minute when the outstanding Cam Davie broke from the half-way line and although he was felled just short of the try-line Tim Grey was able to dive over under the posts for the winning score.

Facing previous winners Akuma North Wales Exiles in the final the RGC youngsters led 12-7 at the interval before powering away to win 36-7 at the final whistle.

A fantastic effort by all involved:

Squad: Andy Baston (Capt), Cam Hughes, Cam Davies, Luke Williams, Luke Jones, Lewis Stockton, Arron Evans, Tim Grey, Nik Maxwell, Josh Roberts, Allan James



It's summer, so it must be time for the Machynlleth 7's

Machynlleth 7's takes place on August 2nd, 2014

Applications are now being taken for the Machynlleth 7's and it's a case of the first 16 only will be accepted. KO approx 10.30 am to 11.00am

Location- Machynlleth rugby pitches as previous years.

Teams - Machynlleth are looking for all their existing supporting teams and would welcome all new teams to come and enjoy one of the best tournaments in Mid Wales.

Contact - Would all teams wishing to play please register with RICHARD ROBERTS on 01654 700000 or 07882 457510 or E-Mail - chedrws@btinternet.com

Registration should be ASAP, as usual the first 16 teams to send confirmation and register will be guaranteed a place.

Pictured below: the referees line up as soon as the sun came out....



Looking for pre-season fixtures?

Email your details and the dates you're looking for games and we'll see if we can help out.

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A half too far for RGC's Development Squad in the Skofic 7's

RGC went down against Sandbach in the Final of the Skofic 7's held at Tarleton Rugby Club.

For a young RGC development side it was a case of a half too far when they finished runners-up in the Skofic 7s Tournament held at Tarleton Rugby Club in Lancashire.

Winning all three of their group games against Old Ellesmerians, Sandbach & Waterloo, the North Walians saved their best performance for their semi-final win against a Myerscough College side containing a number of Internationals and members of Lancashires recent County Championship winning side.

This meant they were up against Sandbach again in the final and although leading 12-10 at half-time they had no answer to the Cheshire sides pace ultimately going down by 39 points to 12.

They will play their final 7s Tournament of the season in 2 weeks time at Chester.

Pictured left are the RGC 7's squad who played in the Skofic 7's

Super rugby on show at WWRU Women's Super Cup Finals Day



Neath Athletic Ladies claim Cup glory

Neath Athletic's 36-16 victory over Pontyclun Falcons capped off a remarkable day of women's action on Super Cup final's day at Llandoverly.

The day got underway with the Bowl and Vase Finals which was then followed by The Plate final before the Cup final took centre stage.

The first 10 minutes of the Cup final was really tight with both sides looking to assert themselves on with good physicality and intent to play.

Neath opened the scoring through Welsh wing Ellie Norkett but Pontyclun answered quickly through a Brogan Jones penalty.

The rest of the half was really close but two Neath tries through Adi Taviner and Norkett tipped the game in their favour. Jones' second penalty right on half time kept the Falcons in the game with Neath leading 17-6 at the break.

The second half was a little stop start but a converted Jess Smith try gave Neath the breathing space they needed.

Adi Taviner and impressive No. 8 Shona Powell-Hughes added tries to give Neath a commanding cushion but Pontyclun fought back with inside centre Gemma Hallett and fullback Chelsea Cashman ensuring the Falcons had the final say with touchdowns.

Seven Sisters had to withstand a second half fightback from Pencoed before prevailing 15-13 in the Plate Final.

A well work penalty move saw No 8 Cari Bowen-Davies crash over for their first try before Pencoed hit back through scrum half Sam Tricky who landed a penalty. The half ended with the dazzling footwork of fly half Rachel Rees dancing through the midfield to leave the score 10-3.

Pencoed opened the second half showing they were in no mood to lay down as winger Leanne Burnell glided in to the corner. Both sides threw everything at each other and a try from centre Jami Davies five minutes from time looked to bring the game to an end.

Believing time was up, Seven Sisters kicked the ball to touch, but the referee saw enough time for one last play. A well timed lineout and ruthless attacking from the forwards opened space for winger Lauren Aikins to drive over to bring the score 15-13. As the conversion drifted wide, the cheers of the Seven Sisters players confirmed they were Plate winners.



The Bowl Final set the standard for the day in an entertaining encounter.

Kidwelly looked to have the game sewn up with a 27-5 halftime lead but Maesteg Celtic had other ideas.

Maesteg Celtic half backs Tasha Lockyer and Rhian Noakes capitalised on the forward platform enabling them to get back into the game.

A second half Noakes' hat-trick looked to have given her side a remarkable win but Kidwelly however had other ideas with a try from Sian Peters in the very final moments which allowed Jodie Evans to convert and seal a 34-31 victory.

Penybanc were always in control of the Vase final, prevailing 33-5 against Haverfordwest.

The game was really competitive throughout but Penybanc's dominance was reflected in the final scoreline.

It was only late in the game when the Panthers pulled clear through tries from Leanne McBeth, Brittany Price (2), Alana Woodford and Fabiana O'Calaghan.

Haverfordwest's only score came through Clodagh Llewellyn who has been instrumental in creating a real hub for women's rugby down west.

Report by WRU, pictures by Gary Williams



Please go to www.ovalzone.co.uk to view over 300 pictures from the Finals Day - click on photos button



Super Cup finals day scorers:

Cup final:

Neath Athletic: Tries: Elli Norkett (2), Adi Taviner (2), Jess Smith, Shona Powell-Hughes; Cons: Bethan Preece (3).

Pontyclun: Tries: Gemma Hallett, Chelsea Cashman; Pens: Brogan Jones (2).

Plate final:

Seven Sisters: Tries: Cari Bowen-Davies, Rachel Rees, Jamie Davies.

Pencoed: Tries: Leanne Burnell, Lauren Aitkins; Pen: Sam Tricky.

Bowl Final:

Kidwelly: Tries: Hannah Stiles, Karen Mayze (2), Sian Peters, Sian Morgan; Cons: Jodie Evans (3); Pen Jodie Evans

Maesteg Celtic: Tries: Tasha Lockyer (2), Rhian Noakes (3); Cons: Rhian Noakes (3).

Vase final:

Penybanc: Tries: Leanne McBeth, Brittany Price (2), Alana Woodford, Fabiana O'Callahan; Cons: Catrin Rees (3).

Haverfordwest: Try: Clodagh Llewellyn





RGC SOUTH UNDER 14 v WELSH EXILES UNDER 14 at COBRA, 8th JUNE





