

Eastern Counties Rugby Union Ltd
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 10th June 2011 6.15pm

Sudbury RFC, Whittome Field, Spicer Way, Sudbury, CO10 0GB

AGENDA

1. To consider and approve the minutes of the last AGM on 11th June 2010.
2. To review and approve a report from the Committee on the affairs of the Constituent Body since 11th June 2010
3. To receive a Financial Report.
4. To propose the following amendments to the ECRU Constitution - these are recommended by the ECRU Management Committee:-

i) Amend Rule 13.1.2. to read:

Fifteen Members (or such other number not exceeding twenty as may be determined from time to time by the Constituent Body in General Meeting) duly elected in accordance with Rule 8.4. A Member of the Committee shall hold office from the end of the Annual General Meeting and shall be eligible for re-election from year to year.

Note: The changes to Rule 13.1.2. allows us to bring on to the Management Committee, as elected Members, all the key people who play a part in the work of the CB

ii) Add new Rule 13.1.4:

The Regional Rugby Development Manager for the Constituent Body appointed by the Rugby Football Union whilst holding that position shall hold office from the end of the Annual General Meeting until the end of the following Annual General Meeting.

Note: New Rule 13.1.4. makes the Regional Rugby Development Manager a Member, and as such eligible to be a Member of the EC Executive Committee

i) Amend Rule 13.3:

The quorum at any meeting of the Committee shall be 12 (or such other number as may be determined by the Constituent Body in General Meeting) and the Member elected to take the chair shall be entitled to exercise a second or casting vote.

Note: Rule 13.3 reflects the increase in Members of the EC Management Committee and ensures more than 50% are present when decisions are made.

ii) Amend Rule 33 (Schedule of Definitions):

"Executive" means a Sub-Committee composed of the Officers designated in Rule 12.1 and the Members under Rule 13.1.3. and 13.1.4,

Note: Rule 33 strengthens the EC Executive Committee by the inclusion of the Members elected under Rules 13.1.3. and 13.1.4.

5. To elect Officers and Committee for the ensuing year.

The nominations of the Committee are:-

Officers

President H. Moore
Vice-President T. McNeill
Hon Secretary R.A. Pierson

Management Committee

Hon Asst Secretary R. Watson
Chair of Governance T B A
Chair of Finance S. Hughes
CBRDP Chair-Elite Group A. Gilbert
Chair –Club Player Group R. Cowie

Hon. Treasurer	S. Hughes	Chair Community Rugby	J. Winders
Volunteer Co-ordinator		G. Underwood	
Chairman of Executive	R. Cranna <i>MBE</i>	Referees Representative	G. Cross
		Chair of Sponsorship & Communications	A. McCallum
		Chair- Discipline	H. Davies
		Competitions	Chair –
		M. Stott	
		EC Safeguarding Manager	M. Peacock
		Sub-County Representatives	One each
		(to be proposed by each sub-county)	

6. To consider any other motion or business duly proposed in accordance with Rule 8.5.

Note: No motion or proposal has been received by the Hon. Secretary by the 'due date' (30th. April 2011).

7. To consider any other business of which due notice has been given.

8. To hear any other relevant matter for the consideration of the Committee during the ensuing year, but on which no voting shall be allowed.

By order of the ECRU Committee

Roger Pierson
Hon. Secretary, ECRU Ltd.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

It is always a pleasure to be involved with rugby at any level . It is that sort of game where involvement with the national side can bring as much pleasure as involvement with the local pub XV . True the experience is somewhat different but the level of pleasure can be on a par. The key is involvement. The more involved you are the more enjoyment you get.

A great deal of pleasure can be derived from involvement with a losing side, provided it has played to the very best of its ability and done everything it could to win . Nothing compares with the pleasure of winning however, and the more difficult the task the greater is the pleasure derived from the victory.

Many people ask me how I have enjoyed my presidency. The question is not unexpected .The position has been changing from one where the president was chosen by his peers as an honour but was expected to become very closely involved with the running of the Constituent Body, to one where the president is elected by the clubs but leaves the running of the CB to the chairman. The answer therefore is not straightforward.

Where I have had most enjoyment is on the variously named Marketing and Communications Committee of which I have been a member. The committee has been actively involved in raising the profile of the Constituent Body. Not only by finding new income streams in the form of sponsorship, but by developing an image of a strong united body which people want to be part of and want to support. It has not been easy.

In Eastern Counties we are fortunate that the Constituent Body is divided into three sub counties Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. They make many of the CB administrative tasks simpler and provide a natural structure for internal competitions among other things. However they do cause one enormous problem. They mask the fact that our region is a rugby backwater where rugby is hardly ever played at a reasonably high level and if the present trend continues will not be played at all. It is because of the weakness of rugby in this area that three counties have had to combine to try and match the strength of one in most of the rest of the country. If people continue to confuse playing for one of the three sub counties with playing for “the County” Then the Constituent Body or County as recognised by the RFU, comprising Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk will continue as a rugby backwater, clubs will gradually lose their best players to genuine rugby playing regions, and the people who have never known where or what Eastern Counties was , will not need to. No one will need to since any meaningful rugby in Cams, Norfolk and Suffolk will cease to exist.

This would be shame .Not least because the EC Management Committee, its sub –committees and other volunteers have worked very hard under the skilled guidance of our very able chairman to build a fantastic environment, in deed a “palace” to enable rugby to thrive. Without the active cooperation of the sub counties it will continue to be a palace but a palace where no one wants to live.

By the way, anyone who believes the competition they can get playing for Eastern Counties is not a step up from any other rugby they can get from their club or sub-county is gravely mistaken. I have sympathy with Clubs and their coaches who may subscribe to a different view since they have their own and their clubs position to consider. It is never the less a lost opportunity in a players development to pass up a chance to play representative rugby at the highest level possible and a bold coach who would discourage a player from doing so.

Finally, I thank all those, and there are many, who have helped make my two year tenure an enjoyable one. I thank particularly all those clubs who have entertained me, often at their own not inconsiderable expense. I hope the function of President will continue to be a very important one since the respect shown to the President is indicative of the respect shown to the game itself. And I wish my successor every good fortune and Eastern Counties every success both on and off the field for many years to come.

Tim
President E.C.R.U. 2009/11

HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

The season seems to have finished with a whimper, and not a 'bang', but perhaps we are all suffering from the effects of a disjointed winter, and the impact that this had on many of our Clubs.

As usual, the visits that EC Committee Members make to our Clubs always provides much food for thought – the innovative ways that many of our Volunteers use to profile Rugby, and to sustain their Clubs is always a 'positive; for us all. Our thanks to you, and an assurance of our continued support.

The effects of the poor winter weather, has impacted on many of you, we realise, with cancelled or deferred fixtures at a time when financial pressures are increasing, is a matter for everyone to reflect on. For those Clubs that participated in the RFU 'National' Cups, finding that many of their early matches were cancelled by their opposition, with this even happening right up to the final stages, causes de-motivation to Players, Club Officials and Referees alike.

The control of the National Cups lies with our friends at Twickenham, and all we can do is to echo your frustration when participation means a lack of matches.

One of our immediate concerns is how we encourage the playing of Rugby throughout each Club - much had been made of attempting to involve 2nd XV's within a meaningful competitive structure, as we fully recognise the need to ensure a Development Pathway for Players. In previous years our Competitions Manager, Mike Stott, has written to Clubs seeking participation of their 2nd XVs, but has been met with little enthusiasm. It seems that the tide is changing on this, so let us hope that we can provide an appropriate framework for such competition.

A selective mention to some of what goes on within the CB, if I may:-

Our Coaching Association, winners of an RFU President's Award last year, now provides a framework opportunity for continued personal development in one area of the Game where direct impact and guidance on the quality of Playing can be made – we have some 120 Associate Members, so 'buy-in' is recognised as positive support to one of the strategic strands provided by ECRU.

Our Women and Girls development continues at a steady pace, but we have to recognise that the numbers being attracted to play will continue to be on the low side; nevertheless, some highly-skilled individuals have been unearthed, due in the main to the work carried out by Paul Lee (Suffolk) and Michael Tidder (Norfolk) with the Girls. Our impetus continues, but for this we need some additional Voluntary support.

ECRU is an 'equal opportunity' organisation, and Equity plays a large part in our plans; the development of Rugby covers all parts of the spectrum, and we encourage all to participate.

For the record, our Safeguarding Team is now acknowledged at the RFU as one of the most effective in the Country, and is testament to the dedication, discretion and professionalism of the Safeguarding Committee, with Chris Mephram (Cambridgeshire), Sally Lloyd (Norfolk) and Martin Pratley (Suffolk) under the careful direction of Martin Peacock, our CB Safeguarding Manager. Talk to them if you need advice or support – you will always find someone to listen. Thank you, folks.

This AGM sees the departure of two of the most long-serving Officials of ECRU - Norman Potter (CBRDP) and Mike Youngman (Governance) whose combined service, experience and knowledge will be greatly missed. Both these Gentlemen have given exemplary service at Club, County, and at ECRU Level, and I for one will miss the wisdom and guidance given to us all; Gents – on behalf of ECRU can I just say 'thank you' for your contributions.

We also say 'goodbye' to Tim McNeill, our out-going President, who has now completed his term of Office, again with our thanks, and hopes that his two years in Office have proved enjoyable and stimulating for him.

Our welcome is now to Harry Moore as incoming President, with our wishes for an interesting two years of Office. I am sure that Harry will want to visit as many of our Member Clubs as his Diary will allow, and witness for himself the vast amount of work carried out by Volunteers in the cause of Rugby.

Roger Pierson
Hon. Secretary, ECRU Ltd.

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Introduction

The intention of this Annual Report is to summarise the work that has been managed by the ECRU on your behalf over the last year, and to include an account of the Action and Development Plans that are intended to cover our activities in the key areas over the current, as well as the coming season and beyond. It is worth acknowledging that being in partnership with the RFU, particularly at the present time is, 'like being in bed with an elephant' in the sense that every time the animal moves or changes its position we too, as volunteers, have to find some alternative space/accommodation - this invariably involves even more time, effort, and discomfort!!

All the key volunteer post holders will be providing detailed reports and I merely wish to acknowledge and comment on some of the more important issues with which we are engaging. In this report last year I referred to the importance of our joint work with the RFU employees, the Community Rugby Coaches (CRC's); the Rugby Development Officer's (RDO's); who are all accountable to the RRDM (Regional Rugby Development Manager) who now has a regular place on the ECRU Executive Committee – this has been an extremely valuable arrangement not least in the joint construction and implementation of a coherent ECRU Action Plan for which we are all managerially answerable.

1. ACTION PLANS

- a) 2010/11 – the current year's Plan has been kept under continuous review both through the respective sub committees and the General Management Committee. The vast majority of the defined outcomes have been achieved and this has been recorded and noted through the RFU 'PFR' (Performance, Funding and Reporting) Committee of which our current RFU Council Member is the Chairman.
- b) **2011/12 – the Plan for the coming season has now been constructed and will shortly be placed on the ECRU website for all to see.** This has involved much consultation and an improved level of communication with the sub counties – this could ,however, still be much improved particularly in getting 'buy in' from all the clubs for whom we have a responsibility. These Plans are independently assessed and reviewed by the RFU 'PFR' Committee – the feed back we receive is that ours are well prepared and within the top quarter of any notional league table. This is an important area of work not only because it determines what our priorities are but also because from Season 2012/13 the delivery of our performance outcomes will be measured against available finite RFU funds with the better performers i.e. those reaching their targets, receiving a greater share of the designated RFU 'financial cake'!

2. FINANCE COMMITTEE

This committee has met regularly throughout the year although it was slightly disadvantaged in terms of its budgetary planning time for the Action Plans of 2011/12 due to the bad weather. **A surplus budget for 2011/12 of £10,000.00 has been agreed and the final budget for the individual components parts of the coming seasons Action Plan has now been agreed.** This may cause some consternation to a number of budget holders since they will experience a reduction in comparison to this season. We have , however, over

the last 3 years deliberately 'lived beyond our means' in order to 'pump prime' some important developments in particular; Coaching; Youth Playing; Marketing and Communications; Safeguarding; and Volunteer Recognition to name but a few. We have been well rewarded by their development but now need to concentrate on consolidating the improvements made so that we can return to a balanced budget. Harry Moore, our Hon Treasurer will be relinquishing his post at the AGM in order to take over the Presidency of the ECRU – we extend our congratulations to him and record our appreciation of his work as the Treasurer. We are proposing the appointment of Sean Hughes to succeed him and he has a substantial rugby pedigree most recently with the Saracens Amateur club.

3. CBRDP

This committee represents the biggest workload of any and carries an enormous responsibility since it is directly concerned with all aspects of playing the game. For some time now its organisational structure has not been 'fit for purpose' and as a result Two(2) Policy Documents have been produced both of which have been ratified by the Management Committee within the last 6 months. These Documents are entitled:

a) Player Development Pathway and Club Eastern Counties.

This principally concerns the need to improve the continuum between Youth and Adult Playing rugby. It also includes a 5 year Strategic Plan and Objectives in relation to this including the formation of an ECRU U20's XV as a means of further developing the transition to the Senior XV.

b) Review of the existing ECRU 'CBRDP' Organisational Structure 2011.

This Document which was ratified by the Management Committee in February this year establishes a new CBRDP organisational arrangement comprising 2 Key Groups namely:

- Player Performance Development Pathway Group (Elite)
- Club Player Development Pathway Group (Aspirational)

Each of the Groups will have a Chairman and Vice Chairman, will work closely with each other and be answerable to the ECRU Management Committee. The Chairman of both of these Groups has now been provisionally appointed through our newly formed 'Nominations Committee' processes. Adrian Gilbert will Chair the Player Performance Development Pathway Group (Elite) and Ross Cowie, the Club Player Development Pathway Group (Aspirational). We are extremely pleased with these appointments and wish them every success and support in their efforts to develop and consolidate these new arrangements, which we believe will improve on the quality and range of the current playing provision at all levels.

Both of these ratified Documents can be viewed in their entirety on the ECRU website.

I could not complete this section without recording the deep gratitude we all owe to Norman Potter, the outgoing Chairman, for the massive commitment he has demonstrated to this committee and youth development over so many years. He has been instrumental in the development of Youth rugby from its embryonic club days in the early 70's to the larger and more sophisticated place at which it now sits within ECRU.

4. GOVERNANCE

This Committee chaired by the 'eminence grise' Mike Youngman also takes responsibility for Discipline and Competitions in addition to its tasks in relation to the Constitution and other governance matters. Mike will be reporting on these issues. It is worth noting that we are proposing to change the numbers at the Management Committee to take into account our need to include all the key managers involved in delivering and reporting on the relevant sections of the Action Plan since this will be the primary focus of the Management Committee Agenda in the future. They will be expected as now to provide a written review of progress at each meeting.

Mike and his competitions committee have been wrestling for some time with problems over cup commitments and adult playing fixtures and at item 10 in this report I comment on what action we are now

proposing in order to comprehensively investigate and make recommendations as to how to increase the number of adult players playing the game.

Mike is another key post holder who is leaving his post this season and we are shortly going to interview a possible successor. We will miss Mike's wise counsel so much and he has been such a talented, calming and efficient contributor to ECRU over so many years, and in so many different posts that he will be sorely missed. He tells me he will be around to offer quiet support/advice should we ever wish and I find that most comforting.

5. COACHING

We continue with our substantial investment in Coaching and this year we established the first Coaching Association formed by a CB within the RFU. It was launched last September and under the chairmanship of Spencer Smith it now has just under 200 active members. The Annual Coaching Conference took place successfully on the 21st May at King's School, Ely on the topic of Youth Player Development. The disappointing feature of coaching this season has been that, although we have provided more CPD courses than before at club level, for the first time in many years we have not been able to run a Level 2 Course through lack of sufficient numbers wishing to attend. This will be addressed!

6. SCHOOL of RUGBY/CLUB E.C

Ian Forton, has managed both these parts of the playing organisation. The School of Rugby has been well run and is keenly supported by an enthusiastic and skilled 'coterie' of team managers, administrators and coaches. Ian will be relinquishing this role at the end of the current season and moving on to take over from Mike Ward as Secretary to London Division Competitions Group. He will be much missed in this role and we extend Spencer Smith his admirably efficient and enthusiastic successor every good wish in this important task.

Ian will also be leaving the role he has as manager of Club EC, a task he has performed for some 7 years with considerable success particularly in the earlier years. He was part of the Working Group that looked at the Youth to Adult Playing continuum and made a valuable contribution to the final document, which also included the formation of an ECU20's XV which under his management played in the U20's County Championship this season.

7. REFEREES

We continue to support joint working initiatives of any kind with the referees aimed at improving the game and they are an integral part of the newly re-organised CBRDP. We wish to encourage collaborative arrangements involving the coaching and development of young players in particular. David Locke continues to provide a magnificent service in the development of young referees.

8. MARKETING and COMMUNICATIONS

This enthusiastic committee chaired by Andy McCallum continues to busy itself as you will see from its report. We are about to enter into our last year of Greene King sponsorship and this is our only major deal to date. I do not believe we can continue to financially maintain ourselves on the strength of the RFU income alone and we will have to discover other financial income streams if we are to continue developing at our current rate. The paradox is that the more successful we are at creating a greater range of playing facilities, activities and volunteers, then the more time we need to devote to fund raising in order to support and sustain them.

9. COMMUNITY RUGBY

In my last report I stated that this committee had devised a framework concerning how we can more easily and appropriately recognise and reward volunteers. The process commenced last year and has further consolidated its development this year to the extent that we won the RFU President's XV award for 'More Volunteers' as recognition of this work. We are proud of this achievement and pay tribute to Gregory Underwood and his small committee which includes Lee Adamson one of our RDO's.

I also wish to record my appreciation to Andrew Sarek for his sterling efforts in Chairing this Committee over a number of years. He, with Roger Pierson, will be continuing their substantial involvement in the Funding and Facilities section of this committee through which EC clubs have been greatly rewarded by RFU funding.

John Winders, has been appointed as the next Chairman of this committee and will no doubt bring his considerable energy and diligence to the post.

10. SAFEGUARDING

Martin Peacock and his group of sub county coordinators continue to provide a first class educative service to all clubs within the area. Their work is performed in such a responsible and sensibly well organised manner that we can feel confident we are discharging our responsibilities as well as can be reasonably expected and better than most!

11. SUB COUNTIES

We are grateful to the sub county representatives for providing us with written and verbal feedback from their respective areas. This has been supplemented by members of the ECRU Executive and Management Committees also attending sub county meetings to discuss specific topics. The system of communication with clubs remains flawed since not all are represented at their sub county meetings, in fact, far from it! This also undermines the 'buy in' we achieve with the Action Plans. I am aware that some areas do manage to consult with all their clubs on their Action Plan and I visited one when ECRU played Durham in May this year. The major disadvantage we have is primarily caused by our division into 3 sub counties and having such a large geographical area to cover. We do, however, need to find a method of improving this level of communication with clubs.

12. ADULT PLAYING AT CLUB LEVEL

Although this subject could have been included under either 'Governance' (Competitions) or CBRDP it is such an important current topic that I have given it a 'stand alone' place in this report.

ECRU Management, like most of you, and most of the CB's in the RFU are concerned about the diminishing numbers of adult players playing the game at 'grassroots' level. The 'bleeding' of adult club players away from the game has been happening for a number of years but is now reaching a critical point with some teams unable to find suitable fixtures, others unable or unwilling to honour fixtures and competitions being undermined by team withdrawals. There are many and varied reasons postulated as to why this should be so but we are all agreed it is having a demoralising and counterproductive effect on the adult club game. **As a consequence of our growing concern the Management Committee on the 10th May this year commissioned a Working Group complete with Terms of Reference charging it to produce Proposals/ Recommendations that are 'Aimed at increasing the number of players actively participating in Adult rugby at all club and team levels within the ECRU'.** This Group will be chaired by our new President, Harry Moore, and will be charged with consulting with all ECRU clubs as well as with other stakeholders and areas. It will be required to report back to the first Executive meeting in 2012 with regular reports before then. It would be our intention to implement any agreed proposals/recommendations in sufficient time for implementation at the start of the 2012/13 playing season. **The Terms of Reference may be viewed on the ECRU website. This is an extremely important piece of work and we would hope to seek and receive the full cooperation of all clubs.**

13. CONCLUSION

I can do no better than to reiterate what I wrote last year. We are so fortunate in the RFU staff with whom we work so closely, and they are, in turn like us, so supportive and appreciative of the hardworking and committed volunteers without whom the game would not exist. The ECRU Management Group is united in its view that our focus must be on club development since it is only by supporting improvements in all aspects of the game at this level will we ultimately enhance playing skills and discipline. It is our best, and indeed, only way of ensuring that the core values of rugby are enshrined and embedded in all future sporting behaviour within the game. Congratulations to the Lowestoft and Yarmouth Club for winning the

RFU President's XV Award for the Whole Club Seal of Approval Club of the year, a perfect example of what can be achieved through a combination of Volunteers working in conjunction with RDO's.

I wish to record my personal gratitude to the Management Committee for their support and on their behalf to Lisa Greetham, our lone and often lonely Admin Manager. I want to thank every volunteer working on behalf of rugby football at clubs within Eastern Counties – these are the real heroes of the game and we hope you will see a small fraction of them recognised at this years Annual Dinner. Finally, I wish to personally record my great appreciation of the support given to me and to ECRU by our outgoing President, Tim McNeil, a real rugby man and the very embodiment of the Core Values.

Much has been achieved but there is so much more to do as we continue our dynamic efforts to improve the attraction of rugby football on an ever more inclusive basis.

Bob Cranna
Chairman of ECRU Executive Committee

CONSTITUTENT BODY RUGBY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CBRDP)

This is my last report and the last report from the CBRDP in its current form. Again much progress has been made in synchronising the various elements of this wide ranging committee. Nigel Jones resigned for personal reasons part way through the season; I would like to thank him for all his hard work in the past and acting as a conduit to Cambridgeshire over the years. It was felt rather than replace Nigel we would combine the meetings of the 7-18 committee with the already arranged CBRDP meetings. This proved successful, if a little cumbersome.

We were joined this year by Dave Myers who combined with David Locke to represent the referees on the committee. David Locke also continued to run the mini rugby refereeing courses which have been invaluable in getting many more volunteers qualified to referee at Mini Festivals. Lee Adamson has done sterling work with the emerging schools and has proved once again to be a great asset to the committee. Ian Forton has continued with the School of Rugby which still, in the opinion of many is recruiting too many good[as opposed to outstanding] players and showing reluctance to return them to their clubs early enough. This is not a criticism of Ian but of the system as we administer it. Martin Peacock has done great work throughout the CB with the Safeguarding, rapidly adapting to the many changes forced upon him from above.

Richard Duckett as ever has been all things scholarly and has been an invaluable link between the schools and Clubs organisations. This season he has been most ably supported by David Masdin .

At the beginning of this report I mentioned the changes to come. Adrian Gilbert is to take over the Elite part of the committee and I can think of no-one in the county better qualified to do this, Adrian has many years experience with representative rugby and I am sure will use all that to progress his department.

Ross Cowie, another well established figure in youth rugby and an ideal choice takes on the rest of the committee's responsibilities and will I know bring his extensive knowledge and experience to it with good effect .

I will not be at the AGM [for the first time in over 20 years] to wish my successors well so I would like to include my best wishes to Adrian and Ross in this report.

In my opinion, the help given to my committee and every other part of Eastern counties by Bob Cranna and Roger Pierson is a major reason for the enormous progress Eastern Counties has made over the last few years. I would like to record my thanks to these gentlemen for the tremendous help and support I have received from both of them.

Lisa Greetham has over the years been a constant brick and even occasionally has had to remind me of minor things I may have forgotten! Lisa thank you for all your help, and encouragement it was always much appreciated.

Norman Potter
Chairman

AGE GROUP REPORTS

UNDER 17s/18s and 19s.

Coaches Dave Harvey & Chris Roome

E C Under 18's

E Counties had an exceptional year at Under 18 level. Alex Day and Will Hooley were both selected for the full England Under 18 side via their association with Northampton thus ruling them out of playing for EC. Nonetheless expectations were high that we would do well under the new England Counties regime. We had many players playing their second season at this level aided and abetted by some talented players that had moved up from the 16s the previous spring. With several of the squad also part of the successful St Joseph's College side a warm up match between the two sides allowed nearly all the squad to be looked at in September.

The opening Divisional Match was away to Essex and after a horror start where we conceded two tries in the opening few minutes we slowly got back into the game. The EC forwards led by Tom Crozier who scored a hat trick, dominated their opponents and almost pulled off an unlikely victory.

Next up was Middlesex at Bury St Edmunds. With a full strength side to pick from we blew the visitors away with some thrilling rugby...this time it was the threequarters who impressed the watching selectors.

The final game against Herts. was played on a mud bath of a pitch at Cheshunt. Counties struggled to live with the abrasive home forwards and trailed by 8 points going into the final few minutes. Two glorious counter attacking tries sealed the game for EC and ensured the side finished on a high.

Following the games no less than 11 players were invited to go forward to London Division trials! From that group, Jake Harvey, Gabriel Carroll, Shaquile Meyers, James Crossley and Tom Crozier were selected to represent London at the Divisional Festival at Broadstreet



Tom was also given the honour of captaining the side. To round off an amazing season, James and Tom were invited to play for England v Ireland in Dublin!

EC Under 17's

The period between Christmas and May sees E C run an Under 17s side with a view to formulating the following seasons 18s. The games are not graded and gives the chance for many players to try out and impress. We were overwhelmed at the first trials night and struggled for much of the first few sessions trying to reduce numbers down to a manageable level where accurate assessments could be made.

At 17s we have established two long running Home and Away fixtures with Yorkshire and Hampshire. A young and inexperienced side were called into action against Yorkshire in February and despite competing well, we were undone by a much bigger well drilled side and lost 26 – 3.

The trip to Hampshire was spread over two days to allow the chance for boys to mix and bond as a group. Saturday saw the squad travel down together and take in the London Irish game v Exeter at the Madjeski Stadium before transferring to a Hotel near Farnham. Post dinner a team meeting was held where ties were presented etc. A light training session in the morning then saw the squad board the coach down to Gosport for the game. Sadly once again Counties were undone by a more robust and experienced set of forwards and we tumbled to a 35 – 12 defeat.

For our final game of the season we were able to call on players who had finished with other commitments, be it Daily Mail Cup, Academies or Divisional games. The side certainly looked more balanced but once again we were up against a bigger set of forwards. However, the side had adapted to playing a more expansive game and with some real pace out wide we won a thrilling game against Middlesex by 33 points to 31.

Under 19's 7's

The final act of the season is to bring back some old faces to take part in the National County Colts 7s Competition. Historically we have gone to the event merely to enjoy ourselves and use it as a way to keep in touch etc. With the growth in popularity of 7s and the support from Andrew Sarek and others in the EC Management we aimed to enter far more prepared this year.

An in house EC Clubs Competition was held at W Norfolk to help talent spot followed by a training session. A squad was assembled and were kindly allowed to enter the Ely Charity 7s as means of a warm up. At Ely the sides youth and pace proved too much for the other sides and we won the event at a canter conceding only 3 tries on the day!

The squad arrived at the Nationals optimistic about their chances but an opening game 20 – 19 points defeat to Lancashire, after being 19 – 10 up with only minutes remaining seemed to take the wind out of our sails... The side were asked to play immediately afterwards against Leicestershire and clearly shell shocked we slipped to a 17 - 12 defeat.

Those 2 defeats meant we would sadly end up in the Plate. The Players to their credit regrouped and were determined to put right the mistakes of early in the day. Dorset and Wilts were despatched before an incredible come back victory over Cheshire put them into the Final. Warwickshire felt the full wrath of E Counties frustrations at not being in the main competition as won 47 – 0! And that included playing 2 minutes with only 6 as one player was sin binned!



Simon Lord
Teams Manager

Under 20

This is the first time for several years that ECRU has entered a team in the under 20 County Championship. Glen Remnant (Shelford) invited players to attend fitness sessions at Shelford, and with the help of Tony Begovich (Bury St Edmunds) reduced numbers after nine sessions, to thirty, for games against Essex (won) and Middlesex (lost). We challenged the RFU for the best runners up spot, but our appeal was turned down.

Josh Walker (Bury St Edmunds) was selected for London & South East.

Thanks to Glen, Tony and Angela George (Physio), the Shelford Club for use of their facilities to train and play, and to the Clubs for releasing their players for mid-week training.

I have to ask the question, if asking players to attend nine mid week sessions, then to play, possibly two games in a week-end, is not putting too much pressure on these players. Also we need to look at the location for these sessions.

Ian Forton
Team Manager

SENIOR XV

Once again we suffered from lack of support from senior players, having only two National League players play for us, Red Newberry (Shelford), and Des Brett (Blackheath). The squad selected from, Diss, Colchester, Holt, Saffron Walden, Lowestoft & Yarmouth, Southwold, Nth Walsham, Thurston, Shelford, Blackheath and Beccles, played two games, unfortunately losing both. 22-32 against Northumberland, and 24-51 against Durham. Despite the results Counties did play some, open, attractive Rugby, thanks to coaching from Nick Greenhall (Nth Walsham), and Ian Rees (Beccles), Thanks also to Mark Ballman (Team Sec.) Angela George (Physio) and Mike Byrne (sponsor) Neal (coach driver) and of course all of the players.

A thank you for the hospitality we have received from clubs, during my visits to spot players, and their commitment to Eastern Counties.

It is with mixed emotions that I step down as Manager after seven years, so I would like to thank the Committee for their help and support, but most of all to my wife Sherry, taxi driver, kitty master, who has supported me during the joys of getting to the Final at Twickenham, then again in Durham, and the frustrations of losing, and the endless nights making contact with players. Sherry I thank you.

Ian Forton
Team Manager

School of Rugby U13's

- Selection for 2011/12 successfully completed in a new format; all on May 7th at Culford School, three sessions one for each sub-County. Assessments were performed by Head Coach Dave Locke together with EPDG coaches Simon Sinclair and Tim Malone. Final selection was then completed on May 11th at Bury St Edmunds following same model.
- Very positive feedback received from all involved especially players, parents and coaches.
- 2011/12 season programme will be four one day sessions; this follows the successful one day session held earlier this season which demonstrated the greater possibilities for development in that environment. One session will be held in each sub-County.
- One key focus for 2011/12 will be to greater integrate the SoR programme with the sub-County U14 programmes.

School of Rugby 14's

- Very successful training camp at Finborough on March 19/20th; extremely positive feedback from parents and boys, good coverage in local media. Programme was well supported by specialist coaches from Leicester Tigers and Northampton Saints and included sessions on S&C, Nutrition & Hydration and personal goal-setting.
- First match played against Essex on Sunday April 3rd; Eastern Counties won.
- Second and final game drawn against Herts on Sunday April 17th at Bury St Edmunds.
- Squad now reviewed for 2011/12 season with boys to go up to U15 and U16 groups identified, and other boys released with player personal development plan.

School of Rugby U15's

- Played Herts. at Old Albanians on February 27th; lost.
- Very successful training camp at Finborough on March 19/20th; extremely positive feedback from parents and boys, good coverage in local media. Programme was well supported by specialist coaches from Leicester Tigers and Northampton Saints and included sessions on S&C, Nutrition & Hydration and personal goal-setting.
- Second and final game won against Essex on Sunday April 10th at Shelford.
- Squad now reviewed for 2011/12 season with boys to go up to the U16 group identified, and other boys released with player personal development plan.

School of Rugby General

- Coach selection for 2011/12 season will be carried out by Tony Robinson (RFU Coach Development Manager) on July 12th; we have 20 applicants.
- The full programme of dates for SoR training and matches from U13 to U16 has been finalised in line with the RFU and Eastern Counties Youth Structured Season.
- The SoR section within the ECRU website has been reorganised and updated to reflect the new structure; all dates, squad and coach information are available at; <http://www.ecrfu.com/playing/school-of-rugby>
- Survey of all U14 and U15 squad players and parents to review 2010/11 programme show almost all facets rated as 'very good' or 'excellent'.
- Thanks to Ian Forton for his past Chairmanship and handover.

Coach Association

- Terms of reference, action plan and objectives were agreed in late summer 2010 for the Coach Association.
- CoachWeb software selected as the platform for the Association with the support of Suffolk Sport and Active Norfolk; very favourable financial agreement reached.
- Association was launched in October 2010 at Stowmarket RFC with Gary Henderson, RFU Head of Coach

Development and practical demonstration using the Northampton Saints EPDG squad, this was attended by over 90 coaches from the region and delivered considerable positive media coverage in the local press and radio.

- A protocol was agreed and established with London North Coaching to facilitate members receiving discounts on all award courses.
- An excellent administrative process for new members was implemented, this was then brought 'in house'.
- A programme of 'coach events' was set-up and delivered based on guided observations for members at EC SoR and EPDG sessions, these were well attended and delivered very positive feedback from attendees.
- The management team was extended with the appointment of Andy Steward as 'web-site' manager and Phil Sharpe as 'training and development' manager.
- Membership now stands at 204 coaches.

Spencer R. Smith

EASTERN COUNTIES DISCIPLINE REPORT

All Adult matters 39

All Youth matters 17

All Schools 4

A similar number of incidents were dealt with this year as last year. Although not exactly an improvement perhaps it represents a tailing off of offending. It is saddening to see that despite the best efforts of Eastern Counties the standard of behaviour of Youth sections and some coaches, at various levels, has not improved. There appears to be a particular problem with Under 9 coaches! Please, at this age level children should be taught the basic skills of the game and not how to cheat and abuse the officials. Those dealt with by the clubs and the Discipline panel have received swinging sanctions and will continue to do so.

To assist the Youth Sections throughout the Counties, workshops were held in Norfolk and Cambridge to explain what is required for the following seasons. There will be further workshops in August/September 2011 at Colchester, Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds. The Information will be made available to clubs during the off-season.

I would draw the attention of coaches to Eastern Counties pitch-side security and protocols which will continue to be strenuously enforced in the new season.

My continued thanks to the discipline panel of David Broughton, Declan Gallagher, Martin Warren and John Winders, all of whom have added their sage council and rugby knowledge to our meetings. Graham Feest continued his excellent work as Secretary to the Panel.

Huw Davies

Chairman of Discipline

COMPETITIONS REPORT

Another season has been completed except for the County Championships and we wish Ian Forton and his team good luck for these matches. There has only been one sub county championship game taken place this season as sadly Cambridgeshire were unable to field a side, this was between Suffolk and Norfolk where

Suffolk took the spoils. The league play offs have been completed and we congratulate Holt who won their play off, albeit by a walk over as Millwall failed to fulfil the fixture, to get promoted to London 3 North East, also congratulations to Lowestoft and Yarmouth who were runners up in their league and get automatic promotion to London 2 North East.

The Eastern Counties Leagues. Stowmarket won Eastern Counties One and we congratulate them and they will now be playing their rugby in London 3NE next season. Ipswich YM won Eastern Counties 2 and must also be congratulated and they will be, as well as Broadland, runners up, playing their league rugby in Eastern Counties One next season. On a sad note Sudbury, Mersea Island, Wisbech and Thurston have all been relegated. We have lost Lakenham who have pulled out of the leagues and will be playing the rugby in the Norfolk Merit Table next season. We have gained two clubs who have rejoined the leagues namely Sawston and Norwich Union.

The weather in December and January made absolute chaos with leagues and cancellation of games; however we eventually got through the games with all the leagues and playoffs completed, including the RFU cup games.

We congratulate Ian Forton who will now be Divisional Competition Administrator of the London and South East taking over from Mike Ward and as Ian can no longer be a League Secretary we welcome David Myers to take over position of Eastern Counties One.

I have to report that since my comments at the Management Committee, that it has now been decided to hold the RFU Cups i.e the Intermediate Cup, Senior Vase and the Junior Vase, for next season.

Finally I would like to personally give thanks to all the Competition's Committee who have given me the support and helped to run whatever competition they are involved with and make it run smoothly. This is a great game of ours, but it needs volunteers to make the game run and I thank my committee for all the work they do.

Mike Stott
Chairman of Competitions

EASTERN COUNTIES MARKETING AND COMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

This is our second year as a subcommittee, and I must first of all thank all those involved, they are Bob Cranna, Tim McNeil, Lee Adamson, Lisa Greetham, Chris Mephram and Greg Underwood, without them, not only would it be very difficult to manage and run this committee, we would not have been able to undertake so many successful projects.

We have met some seven times during the last year, meeting at Bury St Edmunds to discuss various topics.

We continue to modify and keep updated the web page, along with help from Wetink of Norwich, we have made it a lot easier for everyone to use, team managers, coaches and admin staff all have access to manage the edit content system, and upload stories and pictures on a regular basis, keeping the web page up to date. We have also been involved with the launch of the coaching association web page, which has been extremely successful.

We have organised a number of rugby first training programs around the region, and this continues to be a worthwhile and successful event. We have attended a number of sub county committee meetings to explain our role and offer any assistance we can on marketing and improving club income.

We have recently been asked to facilitate the National Youth leader's Annual camp, which held at Bassingbourne barracks in Cambridgeshire in Sept. We are extremely privileged to be able to assist the RFU in this way and look forward to this unique event.

I have been asked to sit on the National Volunteer Curricula Group which is made up of six people from around England, our remit is to look into how we can improve both on and off the pitch the future of rugby and I feel honoured to have been invited onto this special committee.

We have initialised an on line ecommerce web shop for both playing and supporters, and negotiated large savings with Tyler's sportswear. In addition, we will continue to market this to all members of Eastern counties.

We continue to update and improve the yearbook and fixture card. This year increasing the size and information contained along with increasing the font, making it easier to read.

We continue to be involved in the management and marketing of conferences and other events, these have included coaching conferences, and a very successful Volunteers weekend at Bassingbourne Barracks in Cambridgeshire. We are managing the A.G.M and the yearly Dinner at Sudbury and we have already decided that in 2012 the AGM and dinner will take place at the prestigious Ickworth House near Bury St Edmunds and we hope you will enjoy this unique event.

One of the most important roles of our committee is to increase our profile both by good publicity and marketing, and to find new sponsors, we continue to liaise closely with our existing main sponsor Greene King, this sponsorship arrangement is for a number of years and has seen the Eastern Counties league names changed, and Greene King Logos displayed on various publications we promote.

We continue to promote the RFU and its current promotions, and we look forward to a new season with great anticipation

Andy McCallum

Chairman Marketing and Communication

GOVERNANCE REPORT

Separate reports have been completed by Mike Stott, Huw Davies and Martin Peacock to cover Competitions, Discipline and Safeguarding.. They are included in this Annual Report to Clubs. I would like to thank the three of them and their committees for all the work they have put in to ensure the smooth running of rugby in Eastern Counties

This has been a quieter year for Governance following the elections in 2009/10 for our RFU representative and our Vic-President for 2010/11. No elections have been required this year.

The main emphasis has been ensuring we operate within our rules and looking to see what changes are needed.

As a result a Nominations Committee has been established and this will look to find volunteers to fill vacancies on the Management Committee and after interviewing candidates make recommendations to the Management Committee.

Changes in the rules are being taken to the AGM. They include an increase in the numbers on the Management Committee to reflect the wider aspect of the work being undertaken by Eastern Counties. This includes the breakdown of the CBRDP into two more manageable units. The Executive is also being

redefined to ensure those regularly attending are members. There will still be opportunities for others to attend when the subject under discussion comes under the committee of which they are the chair.

M. S. Youngman
Chairman of Governance

SAFEGUARDING

The Safeguarding team have made well over a dozen visits to Clubs over the season both to support the established CSOs (Club Safeguarding Officers) and those new in post. Thankfully, the turnover of CSOs in this last season has slowed down to 30% from the previous season's 50%.

We formally visited seven Clubs as part of the RFU monitoring programme, leaving only eleven Clubs to visit and we'll have been into every Club in the CB during the last three years. Other Clubs have been visited both to help new CSO's understand their role and also to help Club's with their Seal of Approval application, of which Safeguarding is a big part.

The RFU expect CSOs to attend a Safeguarding Workshop within six months of appointment. We held one in Norwich before Christmas and one at Cambridge in May. We now have 30 qualified CSOs in the CB out of a possible 35. (Several Clubs are no longer running Youth/Mini Sections!) We also keep them up-to-date with bimonthly Newsletters (Safeguarding Matters) and a biennial Conference. We are planning one for October finances permitting.

A major part of the CSO's role is getting coaches, Managers and others in regular contact with young people CRB'd (Criminal Record Bureau check). This burden has somewhat improved as a result of the RFU's e-application process which has seen some CSOs getting clearance within one week! The paper version can take several months. (Every coach should apply for a CRB within 8 weeks of working in the Club) They are also renewed every three years.

One coach from each age group is expected to attend a Safeguarding & Protecting Young People course. Ten courses have been held from Holt to Colchester and Cambridge to Lowestoft. My thanks to Lee Adamson and Penny Chapman, who have help me with these courses. Something like 250 coaches and managers have attended the Courses in the last year. We deal with a wide range of issues from equity to good practice, but in spite of highlighting unacceptable behaviour such as referee abuse and pitch invasion, the CB Disciplinary Committee has dealt with far too many of these offences this season! Clubs emphasise the RFU Codes of Conduct in their Handbooks and on their websites, but adults still ignore them in spite of Clubs best intentions.

The team (Martin Peacock, ECRU, Chris Mepham, Cambridgeshire, Sally Lloyd, Norfolk & Martin Pratley, Suffolk) meet every two months to discuss activities and programmes as well as updating themselves on current safeguarding issues. The RFU have just sent out a new draft Policy to Safeguarding Managers for consultation in preparation for passing to Council. The RFU actually hold two conferences a year to update Managers. There was one at Leigh last November which Peacock attended and one in May at Bournemouth which Pratley attended.

We have only dealt with three Safeguarding cases in the last season of which two occurred outside the Rugby environment (Police informed us as the individual was involved with a local rugby Club.) We attend Case Conferences representing RFU and report back to them. I am sure there are many more incidents within Clubs that are dealt with internally and not reported. It would be better if they were, as it is not a slight on the Club but a problem with the individual concerned, and s/he might move on to another Club to offend there.

Martin Peacock
Safeguarding Manager

RFU REPRESENTATIVE

This is my third season on the RFU Council and although in many respects I feel I am still a new boy at Twickenham, I have settled in to the various protocols, procedures and ways of working. The advent of John Steele as CEO has seen change sweep through the RFU and I believe it will be a better organisation as a result. The focus will be very much on 'The Rugby Experience' whether it is as a player, coach, referee, volunteer or supporter.

The RFU hasn't done itself any favours in recent weeks with negative press reports about the appointment of the Rugby Performance Director. The 'will he, won't he' speculation surrounding Clive Woodward has been damaging and the further delay in the process has not helped. However, the RFU is strong financially, the young England squad is improving season by season and John Steele is already looking forward to 2015 when Twickenham will host the Rugby World Cup and all the benefits to the game nationally which that will bring.

Last season I was asked to chair the CB Planning, Funding & Reporting Task Group and that has taken up most of my time when I'm at Twickenham. The group is tasked with putting in place a process to simplify the funding of Constituent Bodies (CBs) such as Eastern Counties through a single plan to be used by volunteers and staff. I didn't realise at the time how far-reaching the effects this work is having and how dramatically it is changing the way the community game is funded. It is a challenging task but one that I am enjoying.

In all I have spent 45 days on RFU business this season and I must thank my employers for allowing me to take the time off. However, my ideal weekend must include watching a game from the touchline of a local club and talking to local volunteers about local issues, so I'm pleased to have managed to fit in 35 visits to 29 different Eastern Counties clubs, plus the Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk committees.

I believe one of my key roles is to communicate to clubs what is happening at Twickenham and I have continued to produce briefings after every RFU Council meeting including notes of what was discussed. I know my Twitter and Facebook feeds are followed by a significant number of people around Eastern Counties but in January I embraced another new technology by starting a blog. It is a web-based account of my thoughts and opinions about the game locally and nationally where I have published over 20 articles so far and I hope to continue to write one or two per month. You can take a look if you are interested at <http://asarek.wordpress.com>

Like all of us I am looking forward to the upcoming Rugby World Cup season and the challenges that will no doubt arise for the RFU, England, Eastern Counties and the grass-roots game.

Andrew Sarek
RFU Council Member

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

A number of Eastern Counties committee chairs had given notice that they would step down at the end of the 2010/11 season and a process needed to be put in place to find potential replacements. It was proposed that a Nominations Committee be established along the lines of the committee of the same name at the RFU and the following Terms of Reference were agreed:

- Annually evaluate, for the purpose of succession, the Chairman of the Management Committee, its members, and the Chairmen of the various Committees and Sub-Committees.
- Annually evaluate the potential and suitability of CB volunteers, not holding one of the appointments listed in Paragraph 1 above, for such appointments.
- Annually evaluate the potential and suitability of any person recommended for a position by a member of the Management Committee, as part of a succession- planning process.
- Annually recommend to the Management Committee nominations for the appointments listed above and that of President.
- Review assessments made by Chairmen of the various Committees and Sub Committees of the performance/contribution of CB volunteers who serve on those committees.
- Annually recommend to the Management Committee the appointment of CB volunteers to various Committees and Sub-Committees.
- Identify, provide and support CB Volunteers' training requirements.

The committee membership was agreed as Bob Cranna, Jo Martin, Roger Pierson, Norman Potter, Andrew Sarek and Brian Williams.

A flyer advertising the vacant posts was circulated and a number of high-calibre candidates came forward and were interviewed. The Nominations Committee was able to recommend people to fill the posts of Chair of Community Rugby and Chair of Governance, and the newly created posts of Chair of the Performance Player Development Committee and Chair of the Club Player Development Committee. They also made recommendations for the Vice-Chair of the Performance Player Development Committee and the School of Rugby Manager. All of the recommendations were accepted.

This was a successful start to this embryonic committee and the principle of succession planning for Eastern Counties has been established.

Andrew Sarek

COMMUNITY RUGBY

Overview

The Community Rugby Committee met four times during the season to plan and review progress towards our objectives in the Eastern Counties Action Plan. Most of these were met and are reported on below. Over the season nearly all clubs in Eastern Counties were visited by one of the team and advice on a wide range of subjects was given. We know that clubs appreciate the visits and it helps us and them to have a point of contact when issues arise.

For the record, the Community Rugby Committee comprises of Andrew Sarek, Roger Pierson, John Winders, John Taylor, John Langford, Greg Underwood and Lee Adamson.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our game and their recruitment, retention and recognition is vital if clubs are to flourish. This was Greg Underwood's second season as CB Volunteer Coordinator and his report is at the end of this one. Greg and his team have significantly raised the profile of the volunteer, particularly in the area of recognition and reward, and the President's XV award is well deserved.

Club Development

As part of our commitment to develop clubs and their volunteers we held meetings and workshops covering Catastrophic Injury to Players, Ground Maintenance, Funding & Facilities, CASC and Incorporation, and Volunteering.

We have been recommending that all clubs become incorporated to avoid the risk of members being sued in the event of an uninsured accident and we now have nearly half registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee or an Industrial Provident Society with more going through the incorporation process. We have also been encouraging eligible clubs to reap the financial benefits of becoming a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) and so far 20 have done so.

Three more clubs have been awarded the Mini & Youth Seal of Approval and four have now got the Whole Club Seal of Approval. My thanks go to our RDOs and CRCs for their hard work and perseverance in helping the clubs get their accreditations.

An important part of our role is to identify clubs that are struggling on or off the field and to offer whatever help and advice we can to keep them playing rugby. We have been busier this season than in previous years but in most cases the clubs in question have turned the corner and are facing a brighter future.

Funding & Facilities

Over the past year clubs in Eastern Counties applied for and received approval for RFU grants and loans totalling over £200,000 for projects to improve facilities. This will make the total invested by the RFU in ECRU clubs almost £1.8m in the past 6 years, supporting projects worth over £4m.

The biggest beneficiary this season was Diss RFC who received a £90k grant and £60k interest-free loan towards the cost of a £600k changing room extension and general refurbishment. Brightlingsea received a grant of £30k towards a new £500k pavilion mainly funded by the Football Foundation. Both of these projects should be finished early in the 2011/12 season.

Andy Spetch from Bury St Edmunds has suggested that an ECRU Groundsmans' Association is set up to share ideas and to see how clubs can cooperate and benefit through bulk purchase and sharing equipment. We are working with Andy to get something going during the summer.

Leisure Rugby

Beach Rugby

Beach Tag Rugby events were held at Clacton-on-sea, Great Yarmouth and Southwold, proving to be as popular as ever with over 1200 participants in total. They will continue in 2011.

Floodlit 40s

This midweek Vets competition took a rest in 2010/11 but there are plans to reintroduce it as a league competition for 2011/12 in Suffolk with smaller events to be held in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

10s

Cambridge RFC hosted the third Eastern Counties 10s tournament but only seven clubs took part calling into question the value of arranging the tournament in future years. However a charity 10s has been proposed for 13 August at Stowmarket RFC so we will promote this event and see how well it is supported by clubs.

7s

This form of the game is likely to grow in popularity as we get closer towards its inclusion as an Olympic sport in 2016. As part of a strategy to grow 7s in Eastern Counties the first ECRU Colts 7s tournament was held at West Norfolk RFC with selectors on hand to look at player for the ECRU U19

7s squad. This squad took part in the National U19 7s competition and came away with the plate. As the game grows locally more tournaments at youth and adult levels are planned.

Touch

This form of the game is being promoted by the RFU this summer as a way to get more people involved in Rugby. 19 clubs around Eastern Counties are already holding touch rugby evenings and where there is interest we are encouraging local leagues with teams from local businesses, pubs and clubs playing on weekday evenings.

And finally...

This is my last season as Chair of the ECRU Community Rugby Committee. Since 2004 we have seen the support we offer to clubs grow from the occasional phone call or letter to a programme of club visits undertaken by a team of knowledgeable volunteers able to give advice to club members. We have instigated workshops about Player and Volunteer Recruitment & Retention, Incorporation, CASC, Seal of Approval, Insurance, Health & Safety, Groundsmanship, Facility Management, RugbyFirst, Fundraising and Club Finance, all of which have been well received by clubs.

The Funding & Facilities programme has seen match floodlights spring up in all three counties and major clubhouse building and extensions that otherwise could never have happened. Additionally we have funded many smaller projects that have allowed clubs to attract and retain players by making the playing and training experience better, such as portable lights, kitchen refurbishments, shower upgrades, pitch improvements, boiler and heating renewals, etc.

Leisure Rugby has seen variants of our 15-a-side Saturday game flourish with midweek 20 minute each way matches, Tens, Sevens, the hugely popular Beach Rugby events and now Summer Touch Rugby.

Visits to clubs are now well established and welcomed as an opportunity to discuss specific issues and to offer advice. But most satisfying has been the help, advice and support we have been able to give to four new clubs that have started during my time as Chair: Cambourne Exiles, Wattisham Warriors, Mildenhall and Thorpeness.

Clubs are now better equipped on and off the field to provide players, coaches, referees and supporters with a good quality rugby experience, and that is what will bring more people and players into the game and keep them in the game. I wish the incoming chair John Winders every success in continuing to grow the game in Eastern Counties.

Andrew Sarek
Chair, Community Rugby Committee

VOLUNTEERS REPORT

The Eastern Counties Volunteer Team, Ray Collins, Steve Brudenell, Jimi Matthews and Gregory Underwood are grateful to all the volunteers in Eastern Counties at whatever level for all the hard work that they have put into their particular area of volunteering work over the past 12 months. Without the time that you all give so freely to our game it would not flourish in the way that it does.

Volunteering in Eastern Counties has continued to set standards, develop new initiatives and provide clubs with regular support. The team have met regularly. They have worked closely with the RFU and other local volunteers to raise the profile of rugby volunteering by trying to offer opportunities to more people and at the same time provide enjoyable experiences. An important philosophy that has underpinned everything they do is that it must improve the rugby experience for volunteers.

The year started with the ECRU annual dinner at Cambridge RFC. This event is moving towards being a celebration of individual achievements and volunteering. The RFU President's XV awards were presented to the Eastern Counties Coaching Committee for outstanding work and to Mildenhall RFC for facility improvement. The dinner also provided a platform to make the first ECRU President's Awards. The top honours went to Ross Cowie for Volunteer of the Year and North Walsham RFC for outstanding Club of the Year.

Volunteer recognition in Eastern Counties has now developed a system that is managed by the Awards Committee. This is a sub-group of the Volunteering Team which takes responsibility for the promotion, records and awarding of all volunteer recognition in ECRU. This puts recognition at the centre of the team's activity. It enables recruitment and retention to build from a strong foundation that values volunteers and celebrates the enormous number of hours that so many volunteers give to rugby every week.

Young volunteers and vRugby have been a central theme to the group's activity throughout the year. This year ECRU held its first vRugby Young Volunteer Camp at Bassingbourne Army base in October. 33 young volunteers received training in teamwork, leadership, coaching and event planning. After the camp they went back to their Clubs and delivered 24 projects across the ECRU. The camp was organised and led by the Cambridgeshire vRugby County Activator, Sean Hughes. Sean has proved that vRugby projects can be a real benefit to young rugby volunteers. The Volunteer Team learned that the key to vRugby success was finding an able and talented County Activator. Unfortunately the recruitment of suitable candidates for this post in Norfolk and Suffolk proved more difficult.

The Volunteer Team held a Club Volunteer Coordinator's (CVC) Workshop in December. It was well attended but hopefully more clubs will participate in future Workshops. The CVC's were provided with training on how to develop a club volunteer recruitment plan by the RFU Volunteer Executive.

This year the team were set a target to increase the number of RFU President's XV award nominations from 22 to 30. This target was exceeded and 37 nominations were submitted. This resulted in Eastern Counties receiving the RFU President's awards in two categories. The first for ECRU Volunteering Team and the second for the Seal of Approval Club of the Year award going to Lowestoft and Yarmouth RFC. The ECRU Coaching Association & Suffolk Youth 7's were also highly commended.

It is now widely considered that volunteer recognition within ECRU is a model of best practice nationally.

This year's ECRU President's awards will be presented at the annual dinner.

Sadly, Steve Brudenell, Volunteer Co-ordinator for Cambridgeshire, has left the team due to work relocation. Our thanks go to Steve for all the hard work he has carried out over the last 12 months in raising the profile of volunteering in Cambridgeshire RU. It has been very much appreciated by all.

Finally, thank you all for the support that you have given me over the last 12 months as Eastern Counties Volunteer Co-ordinator and, in particular, the Volunteering Team. Without this support, my task would have been that much more difficult and a lot less enjoyable. Also my thanks to the RFU Officers who have worked so closely with me and given their assistance, encouragement and time, so readily. Eastern Counties RU are truly fortunate.

Gregory Underwood
RU Volunteer Co-ordinator

CAMBRIDGESHIRE REPORT - ATTACHED

SUFFOLK ANNUAL REPORT

The season started with the magnificent RHS Youth Sevens. (Thanks to Royal Hospital School) Fifty four sides, over 600 boys and 139 games played. The results are not significant, the real winner was Rugby Football.

September also saw the start of the Suffolk Cup in the form of the Suffolk Shield Competition, the winner of which would go through to the Plate. It proved to be the beginning of a brilliant season for Ipswich YM. Not only did they win the Shield but then went on to the Plate final where they narrowly lost to Southwold. (*Who won it for the 10th time!*) In the Leagues YM won EC2 and their Hawks won the Suffolk League 2. To cap it all they had a visit to Twickenham where they received their whole Club Seal of Approval.

Stowmarket made sure they were not pipped at the post this season and won EC1 convincingly and also got to the final of the Suffolk Cup where they lost to Colchester. As a result of the bad weather before Christmas it ended up being played on May 1st. Our thanks to Simon Lord and the Clubs who arranged mid week fixtures to ensure the competition finished.

The season seemed to be built around retaining players (or recruiting new ones) as several Clubs struggled in their Leagues through shortage of players. Haverhill had to drop out of EC1 unable to field a side. Thurston struggled, kept their heads above water, but are relegated to EC2. A similar story explains the demise of Sudbury (relegated to LNE3) with a young enthusiastic side but lacking experience. Mersea too, saw many 'old heads' hang up their boots resulting in relegation to EC1. On the bright side, the new Club Thorpeness flourished in Suffolk League 2, (*They won a special award at the annual dinner*) Mistley fielded a second side and it looks as though we have a new Club forming at Honington. Wattisham showed their mettle at the beginning of the season winning the Cambridge 10's and then went on to win Suffolk League 1.

The various trophies for these competitions were presented at our Annual Dinner, this year hosted magnificently by Southwold RFC in their beautiful pavilion. Over 100 guests saw the County celebrate successes, particularly winning the Inter-County Cup for the second time in a row. The Fair Play Cup went to Harwich and Dovercourt RFC and a surprised Martin Peacock received the President's Cup, for his work in the County.

Gregory Underwood's work in Rugby was recognised with a Torch Award presented in London and he and his team also won a President's XV Award for their Volunteering work. We await to see who wins the EC President's Awards but we know that Andy Spetch of Bury St. Edmunds has already won a Groundsman's Award from the Institutes of Groundsmen, and is due to get a similar award from ECRU.

The County Youth sides hardly lost a match against the other Counties, but the opportunity to be selected for EC was foremost in the players minds and many were selected. Our thanks to the Clubs who hosted these matches – Woodbridge, Sudbury, Colchester & Stowmarket.

The Youth Cups. In the Plate, Sudbury won U13's, Southwold U14's, Bury St. Edmunds U15's and Ipswich U16's. When the Cup came round, and these finalists joined the Cup, it resulted in the following winners. U13 Ipswich, U14 Colchester, U15 Colchester and U16 Cup is shared between Ipswich & Colchester. It is gratifying to note that more Clubs are now beginning to take part in this competition.

Those Clubs just starting up Youth sides had the opportunity to play in 12-a-side Developmental Festivals at the end of the season in a non-competitive atmosphere. Our thanks go to Ross Cowie, Dave Harvey and all the coaches, and particularly Ann Were the administrator for their hard work this season.

Schools Rugby flourishes in State Schools with the Emerging Schools Competition Finals at Ipswich RFC showing just how many young people are involved in the sport now. You could hardly move for young people on the pitches! Our thanks go to Suffolk Schools Rugby and Andy Wilesmith.

Girls Rugby is gradually taking off, with Paul Lee at Colchester taking an active part. Three fun days have happened through the season with a final one at Diss on May 29th before Suffolk take on Norfolk in a Women's match. The first we've had I believe, and hopefully the start of something new.

Finally Suffolk Rugby will be in the Sports Village at the Suffolk Show on June 1st and 2nd. An opportunity for us to display this wonderful sport of ours. Perhaps we'll see you there?

Martin Peacock
Honorary Secretary Suffolk

NORFOLK ANNUAL REPORT

Overview

The Norfolk Sub-County Committee has made the decision to appoint a chairman to run the sub county along the same lines as Eastern Counties Management Committee.

The New re-structured sub-county committee are looking forward to taking a more dynamic roll within the County going forward next season.

John Hipperson has been appointed the first Chairman.

Pat Wakefield (WNRUFC) is the President for the 2011-2012 season.

Mike Dack (Crusaders RFC) President elect.

Sub-County Volunteering

Jimi Matthews is continuing the role as the Sub County Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Jerry Stone L & Y received an ECRU Presidents award for outstanding contribution to Rugby Football. Also L & Y received the RFU President's 15 recognition award seal of approval 'club of the year' category.

Club Rugby

Club Rugby in the County remains in good health.

On the positive side, Lowestoft & Yarmouth gained promotion to London 2 North East and Holt was promoted to London 3 North East.

On the down side, North Walsham and Diss were relegated to London 1 North and Fakenham dropping out of Eastern Counties 1.

Wymondham was the first club in Norfolk to gain whole seal of approval.

L&Y RFC gained seal of approval and are well on the way to achieving whole seal of approval.

There are also a number of other clubs within the County just waiting to be signed off for whole seal

Youth

Youth Rugby in Norfolk continues to go from strength to strength under the guidance of Youth Chairman David Masdin.

There were a number of youth players gaining ECRU honours in various age groups.

There has been a number of coaching courses/seminars taken place at various venues throughout the County although numbers attending have been disappointing, it's hoped we can improve on this next season.

Norfolk has turned out an U20 side for the first time in a number of years.

Women's/Girls Rugby

Norfolk has seen an increase in the numbers of ladies & girls playing Rugby, with Wymondham Wasps being the latest club to enter league rugby next season.

The RFU held a Women's open day at Diss RUFC on the 29th May.

Veterans Rugby

Veterans Rugby in Norfolk seems to have come to a standstill, with the Norfolk Veterans Cup being scheduled to be play at West Norfolk. With no other teams from the County prepared to take part in this tournament for the Norfolk Veterans Cup the tournament was cancelled for this year, however, with the introduction of the Floodlight 40 tournaments, this may galvanise some interest back into Veterans Rugby in Norfolk.

John Langford

Norfolk Representative