



1890-2015

"Celebrating 125 Years in Rugby"

PRESIDENT HUW DAVIES JP



EASTERN COUNTIES RUGBY UNION

ANNUAL REPORT TO CLUBS 2015/2016

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 3rd. June 2016 19.00
The Nelson Hotel, Norwich, NR1 1DX

AGENDA

1. To consider and approve the minutes of the last AGM on 5th.June 2015.
2. To review and approve a report from the Committee on the affairs of the Constituent Body since 5th. June 2015
3. To receive a Financial Report.
4. To consider any other motion or business duly proposed in accordance with Rule 8.5
Proposal One: *That we should consider combining the AGM with the Dinner, as in past years*
Proposal Two: *That we should consider competing in the Lower Level in the Bill Beaumont Series*
5. To answer specific questions about our activities to Committee Chairmen
6. To receive a short explanation of our PFR process (CB Planning)
7. To elect Officers and Committee for the ensuing year
8. Presentation from Alun Powell, RFU Head of Regional, Academies

The nominations of the Officers and Committee Chairmen are: -

President Ian Forton to serve in seasons 2017-18 and 2018-19
(Ian's candidature is supported by the ECRU Management Committee)

Officers

Chairman John Phoenix
Honorary Secretary Roger Pierson
Honorary Treasurer Pamela Clarke

Committee Chairmen

Governance	Richard Watson
Finance	Pamela Clarke
Player Development Group	tbc
Club Player Group	Ross Cowie
Club Development	John Winders
Marketing & Communications	Russ Clarke
Discipline	Declan Gallagher
Competitions	John Mackay
Safeguarding Manager	James Pepper
Chair of Coaching	Chris Capps-Jenner

7. To consider any other business of which due notice has been given. ***Note: no notice of other such business had been received by the Hon. Secretary by the due date (30.04.16)***
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 Ltd. Committee

Roger Pierson,
Hon. Secretary, ECRU Ltd.
22nd.May 2016

EASTERN COUNTIES 1890-2015 - an abbreviated history

Founded at a meeting in the Great Eastern Hotel, Liverpool St. on 28 October 1890, Eastern Counties Rugby Union started life as an affiliation of the Counties of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk. With a Mr H R Ladell of Norfolk instrumental in helping to found the Union. Cambridgeshire joined in 1928.

It seems that primarily the interest was in fielding Representative Teams to compete in the RFU County Championship, and some of the later Teams were involved in Touring in Europe.

Between the years of 1921 and 1997 the record shows that 21 Senior EC Players were awarded International Caps.

By the end of the 1950-1 season, EC had 93 'Clubs' of which 30 were Schools, and 13 were Old Boys Associations. Essex had 38 Clubs, Cambridge 6, 6 in Norfolk, and 8 in Suffolk; at one time Hertfordshire (6 Clubs) was included in our area.

Many Clubs struggled to survive during the early years, with some casualties; St. Helens RFC re-formed as Ipswich RFC, and they are our 'Oldest' Club. Recent years have seen the demise of Downham Market, Chadacre College, Swanton Morley, Eccles & Attleborough and Ransomes/Orwell, but the overwhelming trend has been to see new Clubs formed and thriving; our current number of Clubs sits at fifty-one, as well as the Counties.

The departure of Essex, in 2003, has had a mixed effect on ECRU – with a wide-spread geographical area to administer, this was probably a positive outcome, as it allowed us to improve the quality and depth of the support that we should give to our Member Clubs, this being the major reason for our being.

For the record, Eastern Counties has provided three Presidents of the Rugby Football Union; Dickie Jeeps (1976-77); Sandy Sanders (1989-90); and Brian Williams (2008-9) - the hundredth to assume this Office.

For those of a practical historical 'bent', in 1890 a Try was worth 2 points, queen Victoria was in her 53rd year on the throne and pint of beer cost 1½d. (that would work out to about 70p a pint today adjusting for inflation).



PRESIDENT



From the President

Having been appointed as President of Eastern Counties Rugby Union for the seasons 2015- 2017, I would like to thank those who believed I would make a success of the appointment.

I have been involved with the game since I started playing as an 11-year-old at school in North West England. I played Youth rugby in South Wales and adult rugby in NW London. I refereed and then became a referee adviser for The London Society and on moving to Suffolk I continued as a referee adviser until I took over the chairmanship of the Discipline Panel in 1998.

During the first of my two years of Office I haven't visited as many clubs as I'd have hoped, but those I have were extremely hospitable and I hope to visit many more during my final year as president.

As we all know the RWC was disappointing for England as hosts and the fact the team didn't progress into the knock out stages of the competition had an impact on clubs who had hoped to bolster their coffers by showing the games. However, there is no doubt that the competition was extremely well run not least due to the band of volunteers a number of which came from within Eastern Counties.

It has also been an important year for ECRU where we have been celebrating our 125th year, with a number of events, including a senior XV game against Essex and the highlight so far for me being a President's Lunch held at Bury St Edmonds RFC ahead of an U20s fixture against Kent. We were privileged to have seven past presidents join us at the lunch (see photo). Our celebrations culminate with our Annual Dinner on the 1st July, at which Current RFU President, ex England, Lions and ECRU legend Jason Leonard will be our guest speaker.



*Huw Davies, Bill Rollings, Mike Youngman, Norman Potter, Brian Williams
Rod Jones, John Taylor*

On a final note Rugby at our level is almost totally reliant on the huge number of volunteers who, from managing the everyday running of the clubs to the coaching of minis and upwards, are to be acknowledged as the backbone of Constituent Body Rugby. Age-group rugby is hugely important as it is the foundation of the continued success of our clubs.

I will continue to do everything I can to support the volunteers and make their task as easy and enjoyable as possible. Without them rugby will be unable to flourish as it does and we hope will continue to in the Eastern Counties.

**Hugh Davies JP
President**

SECRETARY



Another year of change, with the appointment of Chloe McMorran as the RDO for Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, following Jonathon Pearce's decision to seek pastures new. We say 'goodbye and thanks' to John Taylor, as Immediate Past President, and also to Adrian Gilbert, who stepped down as Chairman of PDP after some 25 years in a Volunteering role.

In terms of improving communication, we have taken our quarterly Management Committee meetings to the three Counties – a development which will further open up our contact with our Clubs. Similarly, we have conducted six regional meetings within our Competitions Group, a repeat of last year's exercise, to listen to the comments of Club Fixture Secretaries, and hope that productive conclusions will follow that reflect the playing needs of our Clubs and Players.

Our PFR process continues to improve, and our intention remains that all Counties feed into this through their various Representatives on all of our Committees – we need to ensure that as many of our Clubs needs as possible are addressed.

We have made a conscious effort to visit as many of our Clubs as possible this year, but if you haven't had the pleasure of seeing us, we will make sure that you do next season. Many thanks to those Club Officers that I did speak with this season – feed-back and comments are always welcome.

One (late) highlight was the participation of our Ladies Team in the inaugural RFU 'Development Competition' – a real trail-blazer to support our involvement with Female Rugby. Many of our Clubs now offer Rugby for Women and Girls, and we intend to support this in the 2016-17 season, given our belief that this will help Clubs to thrive and to offer a wider range of Rugby-related activities in their community.

Roger Pierson
Honorary Secretary

CHAIRMAN



At this point last year I was writing about the anticipation of the World Cup, the 125th Anniversary celebrations of Eastern Counties and looking forward to a Twickenham appearance for our Senior Men's team. How life can seemingly pour cold water all over you! However, if we scratch beneath the surface we can all probably agree that the World Cup was fantastically run and financially successful, that we have enjoyed celebrating our longevity and that the experience of Twickenham will not be forgotten. I would rather deal with the positives and plan to put the negatives right!

The stated aim of the CB during the year was to encourage the recruitment of more Players, Coaches and Referees. I know there is still much work to do, but more rugby has been played in the CB than last year, we have had far more activity this year through our Coaching committee and far clearer structure and better dialogue with our Referees, so I think we are on the right track. Incidentally, our priority for next year is to try to give the Women's and Girls game a push, as I perceive that we are falling behind other areas of the Country in this regard.

The detail of all our activities for the year you will be able to read in the individual reports following, but it's part of my role to consider the Strategic. You will know that the Management changes I proposed for the CB did not pass the last AGM, and I have to admit at that point I did consider my position. Some of the changes though have come about naturally, through taking our meetings around the Counties, through expanding the Executive and through changes to personnel, although my opinion though there is still some way to go! As I said there have been several new people join the CB this year and all have added to the activities and smooth running of the organization, but inevitably this also means some people have stepped down, so I would particularly like to thank, Greg Underwood, Adrian Gilbert, Martin Pratley, Graham Cross and the Chairs of Suffolk and Norfolk who all stood down. I know all of you will remain supporters of the game and that we will be able to call on your good council when required. There have also been changes with our valued RFU staff, with Jonathan Pearce leaving and Chloe McMorran joining us. We wish Chloe well and I know she has already made a great start.

Finally, it is the Clubs we fundamentally serve, and it is for them to comment on strategy and performance. I would encourage them to attend our open meetings whenever possible and question what is happening. I congratulate all the Clubs in our area that have achieved league success, and there is a considerable list of them, but I am also very much aware this is not the only measure of how successful a Club can be.

John Phoenix
Chairman

HONORARY TREASURER



The 2014/15 season has resulted in a deficit of £11,175 (2013/14 deficit £12,286), against a budgeted deficit of £11,250. Overall income has reduced compared to the previous season; this has been due to the impact of the introduction of the two academies this season resulting in player contributions not being collected from the three Counties. The income and spend on Innovation projects were significantly below the budgeted level and as a result the income has been carried forward into future seasons to ensure that new initiatives are funded going forward. Also due to the success of the Eastern Counties Senior team, in reaching the final at Twickenham, additional expenditure was incurred in this area.

At the end of the season, the CB held £214,521 in the bank (2013/14 £213,883) and owed £78,543 to creditors (2012/13 £78,843).

Going forward into the 2015/16 season a number of RWC initiatives are going to be invested in, the provision of additional NatWest Rugby Force packs and a RWC TV Offer. This will see over £5,000 being invested in clubs on top of the CB's on-going initiatives with regards to Goalposts, Pitch Maintenance and Pitch Flags.

With respect to the current 2015/16 season, the budgeted deficit is £11,450, the latest review of income and expenditure indicates the CB likely to meet its budget.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Finance Committee members and Executive for their support over the last season.

Pamela Clarke
Honorary Treasurer

Detailed financial information can be found overleaf

EASTERN COUNTIES RUGBY UNION LIMITED

Eastern Counties Rugby Union Accounts 2014-15

	2014-15	2013-14	
Income			
RFU			
Base Funding	£64,180	£59,672	
Schools of Rugby	£8,200	£12,451	
Long Distance Travel	£1,138	£6,403	
Innovation	£3,305	£100	
Other			
Subscriptions	£4,624	£5,319	
Player Contributions	£3,675	£9,688	
Disciplinary	£2,490	£3,091	
Interest	£1,244	£885	
Sponsorship	£12,500	£12,000	
Other	£12	£0	£109,608
	£101,367		
Expenditure			
Women & Girls Rugby	£0	(£630)	
Competitions	(£2,399)	(£1,315)	
Playing & Training	(£746)	(£4,321)	
Cambridge Playing	£0	(£4,682)	
Norfolk Playing	£0	(£2,771)	
Suffolk Playing	£0	(£2,812)	
Player Performance Development	(£7,500)	£0	
EC U16's Playing	(£7,401)	(£3,378)	
EC U17's, U18's & 7's Playing	(£4,903)	(£8,382)	
EC U20's Playing	(£9,252)	(£6,550)	
EC Senior XV Playing	(£12,124)	(£7,227)	
EC Women's XV Playing	£0	(£993)	
EC Girls U18's Playing	(£5,287)	(£2,967)	
EC Girls U15's Playing	(£390)	(£946)	
Coaching & Coach Development	(£554)	(£1,311)	
Referees & Referee Development	(£3,389)	(£2,114)	
Volunteers	(£4,028)	(£3,397)	
Clubs Development	(£82)	(£201)	
Club/Community Player Development	(£10,769)	(£8,956)	
Schools Development	£0	(£89)	
Facilities Development	(£1,277)	(£1,374)	
Community Rugby	(£3,442)	(£3,431)	
Safeguarding	(£772)	(£468)	
Discipline	(£607)	(£517)	
Promotions & Publicity	(£4,539)	(£6,178)	
Governance & Administration	(£30,018)	(£27,780)	
Innovation	(£3,305)	(£22,399)	
	(£112,784)	(£125,192)	
Corporation Tax	£241	£3,297	
(Deficit)	(£11,175)	(£12,286)	
Balance Sheet			
For the year ended 31 May 2015			
Accumulated Fund Account			
Balance as at 1 June	£154,524	£166,811	
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	(£11,175)	(£12,286)	
	£143,349	£154,524	
Represented By:			
Current Assets			
Stocks	£1,740	£1,471	
Debtors and Prepayments	£5,631	£18,012	
Bank and Cash in Hand	£214,521	£213,883	£233,367
	£221,892		
Less: Current Liabilities			
Sundry creditors and received in advance	£78,543	£78,843	
	£143,349	£154,524	

COMPETITIONS



Members of the committee:

John Mackay (Chairman), Roger Pierson (Secretary), Ian Forton (London Division Administrator), Eric Nye (League Secretary, EC North Leagues), Colin Garrod (League Secretary, EC South Leagues), Richard Craddock (League Secretary, EC West Leagues), Colin Edmond (Referees), Alasdair Bovaird, Ron Hatch (League Secretary, LNE3), Mike Stott (League Secretary LNE2).

Areas of Responsibility:

The Committee currently has responsibility for the composition, regulation and smooth running of Eastern Counties Men's Leagues 2-4 and the Senior County Cup. The Chairman is also the EC representative on the London Divisional Organising Committee which administers the RFU London and SE Divisional Leagues.

Work Undertaken During the Season:

The 2015/16 season was the second full season of operation of the revised Eastern Counties Leagues 2-4. These leagues were created following extensive consultation with clubs and consolidated a number of Merit Tables which had previously been separately administered on a Constituent County basis.

With the creation of these new leagues and the de-regulation of the old single EC2 league into three geographical leagues, Clubs' second and third teams had, for the first time, the opportunity to enter the English Clubs' Championship at Level 9 (EC1) although they are debarred by regulation from further promotion.

The first season had been a qualified success and feedback obtained from clubs at twice yearly consultation meetings was generally positive although, as always, there were ideas for improvement.

Season 2015/16 has seen a further improvement inasmuch as the number of games cancelled has fallen although there were some problems early in the season as a result of players in the lower level sides choosing to watch live RWC games rather than play.

There is always a dilemma at the lowest levels in that there is a mixture of clubs who are aspirational- often either lower teams of 'big' clubs or single team clubs- and those who are 'recreational players' who derive their enjoyment from having a run out with friends and old rivals and merely require a loose framework to give them regular games of rugby. We endeavour to accommodate both groups by 'light touch' regulation in the lowest leagues with more stringent rules for those who aspire to enter the RFU regulated leagues. We have encountered some problems with this approach as there are inevitably conflicts as teams progress from recreational to aspirational levels; we have and will continue to refine our Regulations in the light of the feedback we receive.

Promotion and relegation issues continue to be a major problem for the Committee as we are unable to resolve the situation in EC Leagues until we know, from the RFU, how many places are available for promotion into EC1. This can be affected not only by planned play-offs but by happenings at much higher levels in the league structure with clubs dropping out of the structure and others being reprieved from relegation as a result. This creates considerable frustration for clubs who, quite reasonably, wish to know if they have gained promotion, have to enter a play-off or will remain in their current league and find it difficult to understand why we cannot tell them.

The two teams entering EC1 next season will be Bury St Edmunds III and Colchester III which will raise issues of player registration given the current RFU limit of 100 players per club. This has been raised with London DOC and representations made to the RFU Competitions subcommittee.

During the season, the RFU Adult Competition Review was produced. Following extensive research, the authors had identified a wish by players for further regionalisation with reduced travelling time. Added to evidence that EC clubs were losing home fixtures due to clubs from other Counties failing to travel, the EC Management Committee unanimously agreed to consult clubs to see whether or not there was a wish to regionalise down to level 8 (LNE3).

London DOC had advised on the procedure to be followed and a simultaneous exercise was carried out in Essex CB whose level 8 clubs would also be affected. The required majority to move from the status quo was 2/3 of clubs entitled to vote (those in levels 7,8 and 9). To implement change, each CB had to achieve the 2/3 majority. In the event, although Essex CB voted for the change, the conditions were not met in EC so the proposal fell although, given the degree of support for it in Essex, it is likely to resurface in some form in the future.

With the composition of the EC leagues now decided, the Committee will, over the summer, consider the issues and suggestions raised in the League Consultation meeting and will produce fixture lists and make appropriate changes to the Regulations and playing conditions ready for the new season.

Looking ahead, clubs will be consulted to see if there is a wish for some form of competitive structure for the women's teams who are not yet ready to join the RFU leagues but who would welcome some regular fixtures against teams at a similar level of playing ability and team development.

On a personal note, I would like to give heartfelt thanks to the Committee Secretary, Roger Pierson, and members of the Committee who work very hard behind the scenes over the season to keep the League programme running smoothly.

John Mackay
Chairman of Competitions

CB CLUB/COMMUNITY PLAYER DEVELOPMENT GROUP (CCPD)



This has been a yet another busy season, with good progress on many fronts.

Age Grade Competition Review

The RFU published this much awaited document in February, giving us a new template on how clubs and CBs should administer Mini & Youth rugby in the future.

This included: -

- *The provision of new Rules of Play up to and including under 13s*
- *The generally welcome prohibition of results driven competition below under 14s*
- *The alignment of playing regulations at Clubs & Schools*
- *An updated competition structure from under 14s*
- *An alignment of playing calendar between Clubs & Schools from under 12s*
- Working with our partners at the RFU, we were the first CB to roll this out to clubs with a series of successful and well attended Roadshows in March this year.

Mini Rugby

We continue to support our clubs, by assisting them through the complexities of the *RFU Age Group Regulations and Guidance* – this season has seen a huge increase in queries regarding age group requirements, and this has consumed some considerable time and effort – but I do hope that we have been able to assist most clubs most of the time !The authorisation of Mini Festivals continues, and I trust that clubs’ and CB preparatory work here has resulted in well managed, well governed, and enjoyable festivals for our youngest players. In line with future RFU policy (see AGCR above) where results driven tournaments will be prohibited at Mini levels, we have tried hard this season to encourage clubs to run these as festivals where the development of all players, and having fun, is the greater priority than the winning of a trophy.

Youth Rugby

We continue to prepare a Youth Structured Season which aims to co-ordinate all Youth activity within Eastern Counties from CB teams, the County program through County Cups, Development Festivals, Sevens competitions etc., in order to avoid clashes; this enables all stake-holders to plan their various activities with confidence. Following the publication of the new Age Group Competition Review (see above), we had to quickly distil the new requirements and calendar into our plans for 16/17, and thus our annual Fixture Secretaries meeting was held a month later than normal, in March; once again 90% of clubs with full youth sections attended this year.

A huge thanks there to Darren Wright (Suffolk) Andy Jermy (Norfolk) and Chris Mepham (Cambs) for their work here. A small amount of competition is provided with County Cups. Each County ran its own Cup competitions from U13s through to U16s, including a Plate competition. We continued with our “Final of Finals” Sunday, where County Cup Winners, County Cup Runners-up, Plate Winners, and Plate Runners-Up at each age group played each other – 15 different events took place across Eastern Counties on 20th March.

Suffolk continued to run its highly successful Sevens at The Royal Hospital School; and its Development Festivals at U13s, U14s & U15s. Norfolk and Cambs both commenced their seasons with successful Tens event, and completed them with Sevens competitions.

We continue to support to a number of club run age group festivals: -

Stowmarket ran their Colts Festival in October (see below); Colchester ran their U14 & U15 Festivals in April, Diss ran their U13 & U14 Festivals in April, and Eastern Counties ran an U16 Festival at Ely. Ipswich ran their Road to Rio Sevens at all age groups from U13s through to Colts.

Colts Rugby

I believe that we have seen the resurgence of a culture of Colts rugby in Eastern Counties. Following the amalgamation of under 17s & under 18s two seasons ago. The well attended Stowmarket Festival in October gave the season a very encouraging “lift off”. No less than 24 teams from 22 clubs entered the Cup & Plate competitions this season, with 12 teams in each of the Cup and Plate – the largest number in recent history. There were some many close and competitive games in the pool round, and testimony to this is the fact that no club was unbeaten in the Cup, and only one unbeaten side in the Plate. 62 out of 66 games were played. In the Cup, there were 2 very close semi-finals with Bury beating Woodbridge 31-21, and Cambridge & Colchester sharing a 22-22 draw (with Cambridge progressing as the away side). Cambridge beat Bury 15-12 in an exciting final. In the Plate, Colchester Development beat Stowmarket, and N Walsham beat Saffron Walden in the semis, with N Walsham beating Colchester Development 26-24 in another close and exciting final. My thanks to Wilf Lambert for his excellent administration of the competition. The Eastern Counties Colts Sevens held at Stowmarket attracted a record 16 entries from 12 different clubs – Colchester won the Brian Borges Cup (beating Cambridge 26-17 in an outstanding final where the lead changed hands 4 times), with Braintree, Cambridge B and Stowmarket claiming the Plate, Shield & Thimble. And finally, the Ipswich Road to Rio Sevens Tournament attracted 14 participating teams.

Girls Rugby

We continued, this season, to run the girls’ “pitch up and play” cluster sessions through the season across the CB, in order to promote and develop girls’ activities within the CB, with particular emphasis on playing games. We are most encouraged by the number of girls from the U13 age band taking part.

In addition, 2 cluster groups centred around Diss, Beccles & Woodbridge, and Ipswich, Sudbury & Colchester entered the National Cups at U15 & U18. We are very grateful to Nicky Goddard for her continued organisation, ensuring that these continued. A huge thanks also for her support from Laura Hainey (Sudbury), Darren Wright (Ipswich) and Andy Wilesmith (Woodbridge).

The girls’ season finished with a massive and popular attendance at the Ipswich “Road to Rio” Sevens – where approx. 250 girls (in 20 plus sides) at U13, U15 & U18 enjoyed some great rugby, and all in the right spirit.

Ladies Rugby

We were pleased to support the inaugural West Norfolk Tens Festival, which was a great success with 100 ladies from 8 clubs.

Innovation Projects

University Returners' events: -

We all know that there is a huge drain from the game of players between the ages of 16 and 24, with many, many clubs running very successful youth sections, but losing players once they go to university. We were able to support four clubs, Holt, Woodbridge, Colchester and Ipswich who all run successful games during college holidays.

FE 10s: -

Our RFU Delivery Team successfully ran a series of 10s events across the CB aimed at providing rugby for Colleges & Schools for Further Education *RAF Air Cadet Touch Rugby Program*. Our RFU Delivery Team has organised a successful touch rugby program for 19 squadrons, and in addition linking all squadrons to clubs.

Ross Cowie
Chairman CCPD



RAF Air Cadet Touch Rugby Cup, held at Diss RFC

CB PLAYER PERFORMANCE PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT GROUP incl. CLUB EC & COACHING

DPP, Academy & CB Liaison Managers

Eastern Counties Rugby Union have been working closely with Northampton Saints & Leicester Tigers over the past season to build a strong relationship that supports the DPP, Academies, The individual Constituency Counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and our CB.



The Eastern Counties Developing Player Programme and Aspirational Player Pathway for 2015/16 and going forward in to 2016/17 is set out below: -

Eastern Counties Under 16s

In April 2015 RFU Council approved the recommendations of an U16s Pathway Strategic Review. As a result, the current U16 Divisional Programme will be replaced by an U16 Academy Programme. The Wellington International Festival will now involve 14 Regional Academy sides. Implementation of these and other recommendations will be managed locally by the Regional Academies.

The new format of the Wellington Festival reflects the guiding principles of this review, namely to promote: Broad numbers accessing talent development opportunities, more development, less selection, Age appropriate competition, professionally led development, Supported by talent coach development.

Following a consultation period with the professional clubs in our area CB U16's Rugby will continue within Eastern Counties as from January 2017 this is subject to any change from the RFU. EC U16s will consist of Northampton Saints & Leicester Tigers DPP & EPDG players that are being assessed for inclusion in the Squads to play at the Wellington Academy festival. U13s-U16s Constituency County Rugby will be replaced by the professional club DPP programme in the form of U13s-U16s Norfolk Tigers, Suffolk Saints and Cambridgeshire Saints. Eastern Counties

Under 17s

The U17s programme will benefit from the Academy EPGD U16 players not involved in the Wellington Academy Festival, these players will parachute into the EC U17s programme after Christmas where they will continue to be monitored by Eastern Counties RU, Northampton Saints & Leicester Tigers. The Academies will promote EC U17s Programme as a platform to playing a continued higher level of rugby and a possible stepping stone back into Academy rugby.

Eastern Counties Under 18s

Eastern Counties U18s programme will continue in its current format subject to any change from the RFU.

Eastern Counties Under 20s

Eastern Counties U20s programme will continue in its current format, as with the EC U17s Programme players that are released from the Academies in February each year will be encouraged by the Academies and our CB to step into the EC U20s Programme as a platform to playing a higher

level of rugby where again they will continue to be monitored by Northampton Saints & Leicester Tigers.

Special thanks to Dave Wilks & Tim Malone of Leicester Tigers and Simon Sinclair of Northampton Saints for their help and support to Eastern Counties Rugby throughout the season.

Chris Capps-Jenner
DPP, Academy & CB Liaison Manager



Coaching Chairman Report

The Eastern Counties Coaching Committee set out in its 2015.16 action plan several new coaching initiatives, at the forefront of these is the 'In club coaching support programme' a bursary has been set aside to deliver into clubs an L3 or L4 RFU coach educator to deliver three coaching sessions on the ground directly to the coaches in the club. These sessions are aimed at youth and senior coaches with a view to inspiring them to up skill via the RFU accredited coaching courses. So far Eastern Counties have reached out to four clubs across our CB some of these sessions will also run over the summer, EC have also bolted on to the 'in club sessions' a bursary that will 100% fund coaches taking up L1 & L2 courses. Next season will also see EC supporting multiple Rugby Ready and Scrum Factory courses within clubs along with ring fenced Bursaries for the Girls and Women's game.

On the 10th July will be holding our Annual Eastern Counties Coaching & Referee Conference at diss RFC. This is our 10th conference and this year we have an exciting line up of coaches and referees delivering a broad set of topics to the delegates. Dan Cottrell Bath Rugby & Rugby Coach Weekly - 'Methods and Madness' & 'Create energy, edge and excitement in session'. Tim Grimsey England Counties Coach, Bury St Edmunds RUFC and Northampton Saints will be teaming up with Matt Rozier Rugby Union National League 3 Referee who will be looking at the scrum and the 'ABC' club. Dave Wilks Leicester Tigers Academy Manager to talk about DPP, Nick Greenhall - Level 4 Coach, RFU Coach Educator 'Building an Attacking Structure' Q&A Pitch side, Andy Watson & Nigel Carrick - Premiership ARs 'A View from The Touchline' and we are very pleased to have top class representation from the RFU this year in the form of Darren Gourley, John Widdowson & Luke Haskins who will be covering a wide range of coaching and refereeing subjects.

Eastern Counties Coaching committee remain committed to supporting Coaching throughout Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

Thank you to all of our Coaching committee members for your support and enthusiasm.

Chris Capps-Jenner
Eastern Counties Coaching Chairman



EC U16s Head Coach Nick Pressling delivering an RFU L2 Coaching course at Eastern College

Eastern Counties U16s

Eastern Counties under 16s produced another successful season with a playing squad of 38 the competition for places was fierce, training was well attended and the behaviour of the players was exemplary. After an impressive 48-17 win in their opening fixture against NLD at West Norfolk RFC, EC U16s then moved base camp to Shelford RFC where they entertained a very strong Leicestershire Tigers side managed and Coached by Troy Thacker. There was very little between the sides for the first 30 minutes but the strength and depth of the Leicestershire Tigers side proved too much for the Eastern Counties U16s who eventually lost 17-45. East Midlands Saints were their next opponents, this game was scheduled to be played on the 14th February 2016 at the Leys School Cambridge, unfortunately due to player unavailability EC U16s were unable to field a full squad for this game and were kindly helped out by Simon Sinclair of Northampton Saints who raised a Northampton Saints/EC U16s side to Play against the East Midlands Saints team this fixture was supported by Eastern Counties RU.

Northampton Saints EC U16s 26 - Northampton Saints East Midlands -14.

Eastern Counties were well represented at The Wellington College Academy Festival within the Tigers and Saints squads. Unfortunately, our players missed out on selection for the England U16s match away to Wales.

Thank you to West Norfolk, Shelford and The Leys School Cambridge for hosting the fixtures and a special mention has to go to the coaching team of Nick Pressling, Mark Bolton, Simon Atkinson & Richard Mallet who have just a handful of coaching session to prepare the lads for the CB fixtures.

Chris Capps-Jenner
Eastern Counties U16s Manager



EC U16s Squad 2015/16

RFU National Under-20 Championship 2016

A new season with a new coaching set up ably led by lead coach Simon Kidney with his assistant coaches Ashleigh Stevenson-Leigh and Adam White with also a very young squad with few survivors from last years' successful campaign.

Eastern Counties 36 Kent 25 at Bury St Edmunds RFC

Counties got the start they wanted to this national competition, winning their opening group game in style against a determined Kent at Bury St Edmunds on Sunday. A first-half try from Alex Gray, playing on home turf, and four successful kicks from Robert Smith (Nottingham University) gave Counties a 16-10 interval lead. Tries from Cambridge pair Olly Venni and Jack Wade, and ten points from replacement Scott Lyle (Bury St Edmunds), stretched the lead to 36-20 five minutes from time, with Kent's third try too late to make a difference.

After a sluggish start, with Counties going behind to a 10th minute penalty from Frank Reynolds, the home side dominated much of the rest of the half, with good work from their front five the platform.

Smith kicked the first of his three penalties in the 19th minute to level the score, and then converted Gray's 27th minute try, which resulted from a spell of sustained pressure on the Kent line. Penalties in the 33rd and 38th minute made it 16-3 before Kent took advantage of a yellow card for Will Hudson (Bury St Edmunds) with Ben Dixon scoring in the corner from a lineout, Reynolds converting.

Counties started the second half slowly, Kent regaining the lead in the 55th minute through George Baker, Reynolds again adding the extras. But penalties from Lyle in the 57th and 59th minutes, plus a pick up and go try from Venni in the 62nd which Lyle converted, put Counties firmly back in charge at 29-17. And, in contrast to the scrappy first half, they began to play some flowing rugby. Reynolds reduced the arrears with a 69th minute penalty, but Counties kept the pressure on. Wade went over in the corner in the 75th minute, Lyle producing a superb kick to stretch the lead to 36-20. Counties then briefly eased up, Kent taking advantage to send Courtney Horey over in the corner two minutes later. But Counties then comfortably ran down the clock.



Photos from EC U20s vs Kent

Hertfordshire 35 Eastern Counties 5 at Tabard RFC

On a very cold day Counties travelled to Tabard with hope after a great win versus Kent. An early injury to Scott Lyle was very unfortunate and a rearranged side did not find its rhythm until the last minutes of the match.

With a seasoned front row from Old Albanians, all playing National 2 rugby, Herts dominated large spells of the match. Counties stuck to the task and Steven Douglas showed his tenacity to drive up the field and give Counties good field position only to see this wasted. Herts were showing their experience and scored, with a forward drive, a converted try.

Ollie Venni was putting his opposite number under pressure which meant that the Herts backs did not get quick ball although they had plenty of slow ball. Counties went down to 14 players when Olli Grey was penalised in the tackle. Herts kicked for the corner and in the resultant maul this led to a further converted try.

Counties struggled to win any first phase possession especially in the lineout and this frustrated the side meaning that metres gained were soon lost.

Herts backs with so much possession were developing confidence and were now cutting through the Counties side at will. Counties position was not helped when both props had to come off injured and Venni being yellow carded for killing the ball.

Possession was everything in this game but Counties fought back in the last minutes for Aaron Forrest to score after a quick penalty. Hertfordshire were far more the better side and showed a higher level of experience and skill throughout their team.

Eastern Counties 8 Surrey 33 at Thetford RFC

Injuries and unavailability's, meant that the squad was changed again with two West Norfolk players, John Nwaneri & Jake Huggett, came into the squad with Jake Duffield from North Walsham also becoming available.

Nwaneri made an early impression on the game gaining turnovers and showing good work in the tackle area leading to a penalty for Counties converted by Robert Smith.

Duffield controlled the midfield well and worked well with Ollie Grey to make some piercing runs into the Surrey half. Defensive pressure from Surrey led to an interception with Arron Phillips sprinting home from 55 metres for a converted try. Surrey now were getting into their stride and from good first phase possession were threatening the Counties lines constantly. A further try from an intelligent kick by Surrey scrum half, Luke Mason allowed for George Northwood to score under the posts, converted by Patrick Culligan.

Eastern Counties were defending well with Steven Douglas and Aubrey Grimes putting in some huge tackles. Ollie Venni was sniping but found support lacking on occasions and although Counties kept trying to attack Surrey score further tries from Alex Post and an interception from Northwood.

Counties never gave up and in a concerted effort Luke Reinemann score after an excellent run from Patrick Lawton.

Not the way that the season wanted to be finished but with many players available next season this leaves Counties with more experience for the forthcoming campaign.



EC U20s Squad 2015/16

Oliver Pescott-Frost (Bedford Blues), Aubrey Grimes (Bedford Blues), Luc Jeannot (Cambridge), Jack Ward (C) (Cambridge), Will Hudson (Bury St Edmunds), Alex Grey (Bury St Edmunds), Ollie Walker (Cambridge), Tuidriua Uri(Ipswich YM), Ollie Venni (Cambridge), Robert Smith (Nottingham University),Matthew Branfield (Bury St Edmunds), Scott Lyle (Bury St Edmunds), Steven Douglas (Shelford), Ben Murphy (Colchester), Jaid Wilshire (Colchester),Aaron Forrest (Bury St Edmunds), Luke Reinman (Bury St Edmunds), Xavier Valentine (Diss), Jacob Page (Diss), Ewan Lawton (Diss), Patrick Lawton (Diss), Joe Brock (Diss), Christian King (Bury St Edmunds), Ivan Karsten (Shelford), Jake Duffield (North Walsham), Will Shaw (Cambridge University), Leis Bunn (Norwich),John Nwaneri (West Norfolk), Sam Lindsay (Easton College), John Utting (Southwold), Robbie Murdoch (Shelford), Jake Huggett (West Norfolk)

Thanks go to the backroom staff for their time and commitment, who have spent many hours making the season happen and also for Bury St Edmunds RFC and Thetford RFC for being the venues for the matches.

Manager	David Masdin
Assistant Manager	Shaun Gardner
Coaches	Simon Kidney (Lead), Adam White & Ashleigh Stevenson-Leigh
Physio	Steph Dear
Logistics	Ray Norfolk -Clarke

Eastern Counties U15 Girls report 2015/16.

The sun shone down at Stowmarket for the U15 Girls trials and this year 26 girls turned up to get selected for the Eastern Counties side. This is a significant increase from last year when we had 16 girls. All were put through their paces and there was some good rugby played throughout. Each year the standard gets higher and it's a great reflection on what are clubs are doing. We run the U15s as more of a developing player programme, so agreed to select all 26.

This year's girls' festival came later into the CB season so enabled us to spend a bit longer with the squad



EC U15s Girls Squad 2015/16

The Reigate festival was definitely a learning curve for the girls but they did us all proud and came very close in a couple of games.

Next up was a strong Middlesex side at Diss rfc. The girls played really well but in the end lost 20-29

Next up were two away games, the first against Essex at Thurrock. The girls were on top form and beat a very good Essex side 17-27. We travelled to Crawley rfc for the final game of the season to play Sussex and again the girls played really well winning 20-31

And so we find ourselves at the end of another great season for the U15 Girls of Eastern Counties. From the nervousness of the trials way back in September and the steep learning curve of the Reigate festival in November to the last two great away games either side of Christmas, the girls have developed into a great squad and have really bonded as a team as well as friends. This strong bond was evident for all to see in the last 3 minutes of the Sussex game. There was no way they were going to let each other down and get on that bus having let it slip away. The shame for Andy and myself is that we lose some of the squad to the U18s but I have no doubt they will do us proud when they move up. As the new girls come into the U15s I know the remaining girls will take care of them and spread that great team spirit they have all been part of. well done to all the girls. We feel very proud of you all.

Darren Wright
Manager Girls U15

Eastern Counties Women's Rugby

Eastern Counties Women's Rugby Kicked off their 2015.16 season with a home fixture against Oxfordshire at Stowmarket RFC, with some player unavailability EC named a squad of 18 ladies to represent the CB in this RFU Plate Competition. The Oxfordshire side eventually ran out clear winners on the day. Much credit must go to the 18 x EC ladies who stepped up to play with just a few days' notice their determination and never give up attitude won over the large Stowmarket crowd. The away fixture against Hert's at Tabard RFC was always going to be a big ask bearing in mind three weeks earlier the Eastern Counties Ladies side had been disbanded. Unfortunately, this fixture was cancelled due to unavailability and illness. The final RFU fixture took place at Thetford RFC against unbeaten top of the league opposition Sussex, by this time real momentum had grown within the Ladies squad high numbers at training and 35 players available for selection. The EC squad of 23 took to field of play very much the underdogs for this fixture and immediately showed that they were more than a match for Sussex. EC lead 21-20 with just 25 minutes to play, considering the Sussex side had beaten Oxfordshire the same side that had beaten EC 50-5 two weeks earlier to run them so close is as a real measure to how far the EC ladies had developed over the 4 weeks they were together. The final score Eastern Counties - 21 Sussex – 30

Eastern Counties Women's Rugby is now in a good place with over 60 players having registered their intention to play and train for Eastern Counties Women's Rugby next season, the player base is a really exciting mix of talented development and premiership players. The really encouraging thing is the promise of support from several volunteers wishing to step up to help. Women's and Girls rugby will be a priority for Eastern Counties next season... The future looks bright for Eastern Counties Women's Rugby..

Thank you to Stowmarket RFC and Thetford RFC for hosting the fixtures. Special thanks goes to the coaching team of Andy Hargrave, Andy Marshall & Teresa Dunn. Thank you to Gary Lee who ran all the logistics for the fixtures and all the Women's head coaches at the clubs for their help and Cambridge University for spreading the word.

Chris Capps-Jenner



EC Senior Women's Squad 2015/16

COMMUNITY



Overview

Membership of the Club Development Committee currently comprises John Winders, Sam Carpenter, Mike Daniels, Dale Hoffman, John Langford, Barry Male, Chloe McMorran, Roger Pierson, Andrew Sarek and Andrew Wilesmith. It can also be recorded that the Committee has been very well supported by the Chairman John Phoenix with his attendance at meetings and general support.

The Committee has met four times during the season to review progress made towards achieving the objectives of the Action Plan and to consider other issues relating to the development of the community game in the Eastern Counties. In addition, many clubs in the CB were visited over the season by a Member of the Committee when advice on a wide range of topics was given. These visits help to provide a point of contact for a club when issues arise and it is known that clubs appreciate these on site contacts.

The strategic objectives of the Committee seek: -

- i) to secure more effective and efficient club management and governance;
- ii) to raise facility standards; and
- iii) To boost the numbers of active volunteers.

Action Plan

For the Committee the season began early this year when steps were taken during the summer months to encourage clubs to gather the benefits that were expected to accrue from the Rugby World Cup. The Trophy Tour was promoted at locations in Cambridge, Lowestoft, Ipswich and Colchester. The RFU's Area Manager and the Trophy Tour Team expressed their appreciation and offered their thanks for the CB's contribution.

A meaningful part of the Committee's role is to support the development and sustainability of all clubs in the CB. In this connection the Committee continuously assesses data obtained from club visits, the review of club accounts, playing performance records and information obtained from the GMS system. The objective is to secure the sustainability of all clubs and in particular those deemed to be at risk. Experience has shown that problems resulting from a lack of players or volunteers are common to a number of clubs and that these problems may become compounded when clubs do not look to the future. When issues arise Club Development reaches out to clubs with the objective of helping those struggling to address the problems they are facing.

The Committee also seeks to strengthen club development through improved links with their local communities and by encouraging good governance and improved management. Best practice is promoted through "Running Rugby" Workshops. The Committee was pleased to obtain the services of Dale Hoffman who has taken on the role of delivering these workshops. During the coming summer months it is intended to promote workshops on the topics of business planning and developing a

marketing strategy. These workshops will add to the knowledge available within clubs and help secure sustainability.

Volunteers

Andrew Wilesmith was welcomed onto the Committee at the beginning of the season as CB Volunteer Coordinator and the Action Plan was subsequently refocused on the recruitment and retention of volunteers. In addition, the volunteer reward policy has been rewritten. With fewer awards we now concentrate on our most worthy volunteers and the awards themselves are more varied and reflect the key drivers of our sport. It should be recorded that in the time available the Action Plan objectives have proved to be ambitious. For next season these objectives are being simplified zeroing in on a strategic approach designed to engage with the Club Volunteer Coordinators. Using this format, we are expecting positive progress to be made. The group firmly recognises that volunteers are the lifeblood of our game and that their recruitment, retention and recognition are vital if clubs are to flourish.

Funding & Facilities

The Funding and Facilities Sub-Committee, led by Andrew Sarek, has continued to be busy identifying opportunities for funding within the CB and establishing the readiness of Clubs to promote facility improvements. Importantly in this respect a CB four-year Facility Plan has been adopted which sets out priority areas for future investment in the Eastern Counties and this document will be of particular interest to all clubs. In addition, following the objectives of the annual delivery plan the group has: -

- i) Identified two clubs that would benefit from the goal post safety scheme;
- ii) Helped two clubs to improve their playing surfaces;
- iii) Helped 12 clubs furnish their pitches appropriately with support for corner and pitch flags
- iv) Supported 11 clubs to be a host venue to watch RWC games with financial support for the purchase of a TV; and
- v) By the end of the season two workshops will have been delivered, the first for groundsmen to help build a network of support and the second to promote energy efficiency.

Furthermore, following a resolution of the Sub-Committee 10 worthy clubs have been invited into a Natwest Rugby Force initiative that is designed to develop the sustainability of rugby clubs. It must be acknowledged that this Sub-Committee has played a significant role in promoting improvements in the quality of the experience at clubs for members and visitors alike.

Assesment

In drawing this note to a conclusion, in the spirit of cooperation, I must acknowledge the support that is being given to us by our RFU partners to help us achieve our objectives. I refer in particular to our Rugby Development Officers, our Community Rugby Coaches and the RFU's Area Facilities Manager. My assessment is that Rugby Clubs are becoming better at providing the rugby experience for their members and it is very satisfying to be part of a committed team that helps facilitate this process.

John Winders
Community Chairman

RFU COUNCIL



The season started with the Rugby World Cup which proved to be a huge success in terms of organisation even if England's on-field performance meant that they didn't make the knockout stages.

I was lucky enough to be involved with England Rugby 2015, the event organisers, advising them on how to best engage with rugby clubs to attract tournament volunteers. The results were Excellent with 20,000 people applying for the 6,000 positions in The Pack and those that got through were simply brilliant in making the tournament a memorable one for those who came to watch the games. At Twickenham I continue to sit on the Club Development sub-committee where I take a lead on volunteer recruitment, an area which I see as one of the most difficult in the game to do well. One of the tasks for my Working Group is to develop a pathway for volunteers. There are already recognised pathways for coaches and referees but nothing for volunteers so we are looking at recruitment, induction, support and mentoring for new volunteers at club level, and identification of future club leaders with a Leadership Academy run every other year to develop them. We intend to take this further by identifying future CB leaders providing them with higher level leadership training, which should mean that better equipped volunteers will eventually permeate through to the RFU Council and eventually the Board. There is a lot of work to do and this is seen as a long-term project. In all I have spent over 60 days on RFU business this season and I must thank my employers for allowing me to take the time off. However, my passion remains grass-roots rugby and I try to visit an Eastern Counties club to watch a game every spare Saturday during the season as well as taking in some Sunday and weekday evening games. In all, I have managed 21 visits to 17 clubs.

I have continued to communicate as much as I can with clubs with regular Council Member Briefings as well as through Twitter, Facebook and my blog at <http://asarek.wordpress.com>

This summer I will be spending my holiday in Canada following the England Counties squad on their tour which takes in Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto and you can be sure I will be reporting about my experiences on social media.

It seems that the close season gets shorter and shorter every year but I hope you manage to get a break from rugby until the start of the 2016/7 season when I look forward to visiting your club.

Andrew Sarek
RFU Council Member (Eastern Counties)

GOVERNANCE



Our Action Plan for 2015 – 16 contained the following:

- Implement any changes necessary consequent upon the Slaughter and May report - we've heard nothing from the RFU about this for some time – it may be somewhere in the long grass! We've had nothing to do under this heading.
- Address Succession Planning in the CB's Management Structure;
 - Henceforth non-committee posts – eg coaching director, will be reappointed annually.
 - In addition, in future officers and Mancom members will be asked, towards the end of every season not just whether they are prepared to continue for the next year (as at present) but how many years they anticipate being able to serve the CB. This will give us an early warning of possible vacancies to be addressed. This was aired at the April Retreat in Newmarket
- Improve Communication with Counties; this is a special concern issue in a CB such as ours, which serves three counties all of which have their own administration and management structures. We have tackled this firstly through ensuring that the county representation on Mancom is at an appropriate level and secondly through the Mancom/All Clubs meetings, one of which has taken place in each of the three counties. The success (or otherwise) of this initiative will be reviewed at the end of the season.
- Carry out a review of the Constitution. This has been an annual exercise and in the past changes have been brought to the AGM for ratification. Concern had been expressed that our constitution doesn't reflect what we actually do (we concluded that what we do is better and more efficient than what's in the constitution), and we considered whether rewriting our constitution from scratch would be a good idea. However, research has shown that it would be impossible to change our constitution radically without first changing the legal status of the CB, and that all significant changes have to be referred to the FCA, which can charge for each amendment.

Beyond the Action Plan the Governance Committee has taken on the role of arranging this year's AGM, following the resolution of the last AGM to separate it from the annual dinner. We are also responsible for International Ticket allocations; this year for the Six Nations we managed to gain more than our normal allocation of tickets for the CB to distribute.

Richard J Watson
Chair of Governance

SAFEGUARDING



This year has been one of transition. A thank you must go to Martin Pratley who stepped down at Christmas after steering the Safeguarding ship for the past few seasons, we wish him well. Another thank you goes to the County Safeguarding Managers (Sally Lloyd and Malcolm Bell) who have continued to offer support and guidance to the counties and the Club Safeguarding Officers.

After talking over the post, we have had to continue the work supporting our young players and the clubs, for which the RFU have kept us on our toes and assisted in this endeavour. With the good work of the CSM's and CSO's we have kept the incidents down, with good working practices, visit and club audits.

The Rugby World Cup has helped with increasing the number of young players and parents showing an interest in the game and we have had to work hard to ensure the safeguarding regime is robust and in place.

We have had a few areas to look at: -

- Playing up or down without the required consent or dispensation
- 'Poor Practice' by coaches and clubs
- Failure to report incidents

However, we are aiming to address all these throughout next season by bringing back the conferences for the CSO's and also open this up to coaches, to help instil into the clubs and game, the importance of safeguarding and the Core Values, along with information and guidance on Social Media, Medical and other topics.

The future of our game relies heavily on our young players as well as those who coach and referee them. Safeguarding allows this to be achieved by ensuring a safe environment for these to flourish as the game expands from Grassroots through to National and International level.

Let's make next season even more enjoyable for everyone and encourage best practice by all.

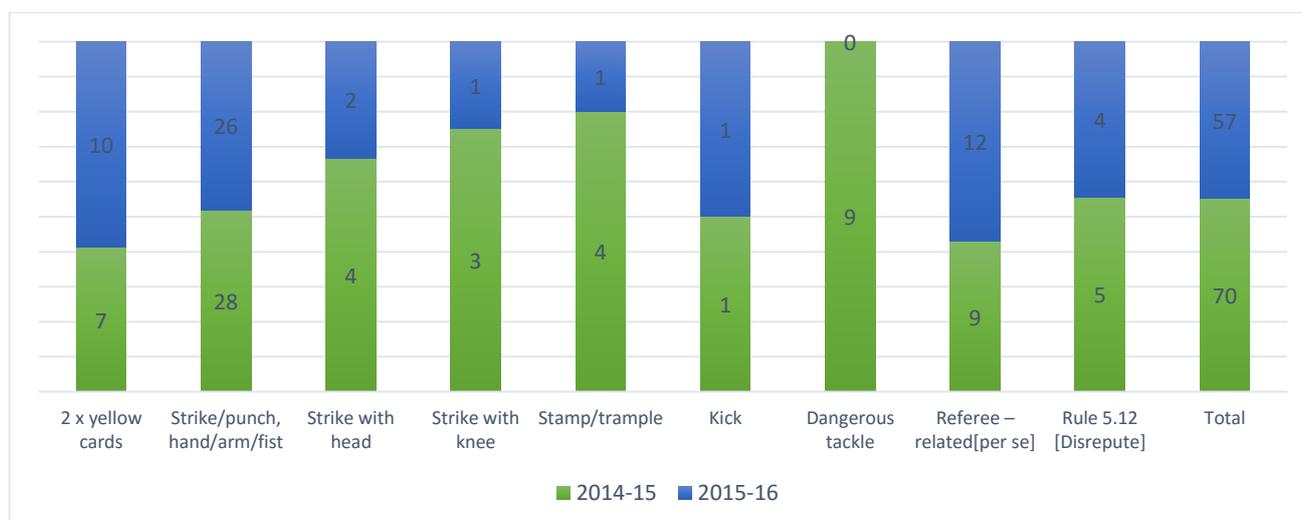
James Pepper
Safeguarding Manager

DISCIPLINE



The following is a breakdown of matters in respect of which sanctions have been imposed with the corresponding figures for last season.

For ease of comparison these are actual sentencing disposals. They do not include four unresolved matters. Two of these will be dealt with at CB level within the next couple of weeks, with the other two in the hands of Twickenham. There were four matters where there was no case to answer.



Although overall offending appears to be down, a substantial part of the reduction is accounted for in the swing from 9 to 0 for dangerous tackles. While it would be nice to think that EC players now tackle perfectly, the swing may more easily be explained by some improvement, a settling in of the profile given to such offending and an increase in the application of yellow cards. We don't have stats for single yellow cards, but double yellows are up.

Of continuing concern is the referee-related offending. Including one of the 5.12 cases on the basis that it concerned to referee abuse, the number is up from 9 to 12 and as a percentage of total offending from approximately 13% to 23%.

The enhanced penalties announced in December will continue until we are satisfied that the pattern of such offending has been satisfactorily reduced. We will review the position at the end of next season.

8 clubs had 3 cases before us. These included clubs with relatively large playing populations. Clubs are considered for sanction at 5 red cards, so we have no stand-out repeat offenders. That said, at 3 we tend to send out a warning against further accumulation.

We had a recent experience with the approach to sanction by a club from another CB. Suffice it to say that our own clubs compare very favourably. Prompt reporting is well improved, and our clubs take on board guidance from our Honorary Secretary, David Broughton.

Club conduct before us remains, without exception, exemplary. But until we have the referee issue sorted out, the report is 'some areas of improvement, but could do better'.

Declan Gallagher
Chairman Disciplinary Panel

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS



Sponsorship



This year saw the end of a three-year sponsorship agreement with Greene King, however I am delighted to report that Greene King IPA have agreed to continue to support Eastern Counties Rugby Union as main sponsor, agreeing a multi-year deal which runs until 2019.

In addition, we have also agreed a sponsorship deal with Musk's of Newmarket who produce sausages by royal appointment. Musk's are supporting the EC Ladies and Girls teams. As part of the sponsorship package Musk's are offering a special discounted rate to EC member clubs, we understand that a number of clubs have already taken up their kind offer and have been enjoying the famous sausages at club events.



125th Anniversary Programme

A number of events were planned and have taken place over the season to celebrate Eastern Counties 125 years in Rugby namely:

- President's Lunch

This was attended by 7 past presidents and took place ahead of an EC U20s fixture against Kent, in which ECU20s were victorious, with a winning margin of 36 to 25.

- 125th Anniversary EC Senior XV game vs Essex

Colchester RFC hosted this game on behalf of Eastern Counties, due to the packed club fixture schedule this took place mid-week, Eastern Counties Senior XV put in a fine performance to beat Essex 64 to 7

- 125th Anniversary Dinner

This is the culmination of the 125th celebrations and takes place on the 1st July at the Athenaeum in Bury St Edmonds. The dinner is a sell-out, no doubt largely due to the presence of England, Lions and Eastern Counties legend Jason Leonard OBE who will be guest speaker at the dinner.

**Special thanks to Robert Temple, who has to be congratulated for all his efforts in organising the 125th programme of events.*

Website Activity (main EC Website)

Since October 2014 when Google Analytics was enabled on the website there have been more than half a million page view of the ecurugby.com website. As expected activity continues to peak at the weekend, with the vast majority of access being to the league results. December the number of visits reduced and most likely as a result of fewer league games being scheduled at this time.

Whilst there has been a reduction over time of the total number of visitors, conversely those visiting are spending longer on the website and viewing more pages.

By far the most popular pages are the league tables and league results, which as you can see from the graph above result in peaks of activity on Saturday evening and during Sunday following league games.

Below is a graph of Website activity April 2015 – May 2016: -



Figure 1 - Website Activity

Social Media (EC Facebook and Twitter feeds)

Social media engagement continues to grow steadily, with Facebook likes now at 1102, with Twitter followers continue to be added at an average of 1 per day with the latest count at 1446.

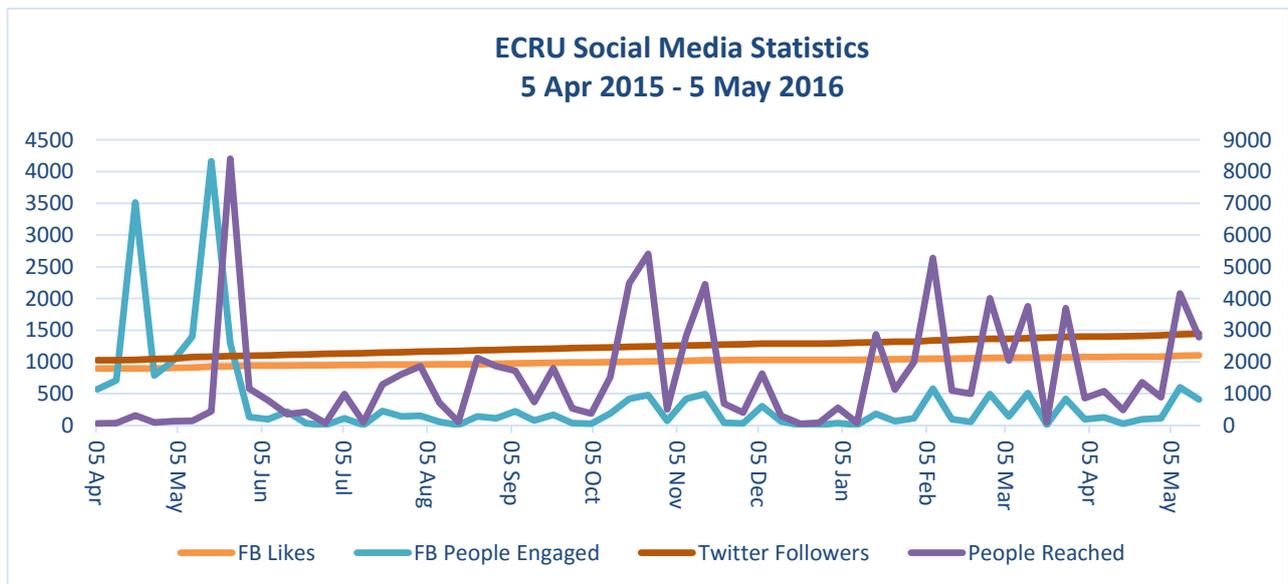


Figure 2 - Social Media Statistics

Russ Clarke
Chairman – Marketing & Communications

RDOs



At the start of 2015-16, the development team were engaged with the Rugby World Cup Trophy Tour. Working in conjunction with Eastern Counties, four venues over two days hosted the Webb Ellis Trophy. One of the highlights of the tour was the Red Devils parachuting into Colchester RFC.

This season has seen a change in the development staff, Jonathan Pearce has moved onto pastures new in the West County. Chloe McMorrان has taken up the helm of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Rugby Development Officer. Chloe comes in with a wealth of knowledge with over 10 years of experience working in Sports Development, including a stint at Suffolk Sport.

Education

There are now 26 schools partnered with 17 different clubs engaged with the All Schools Programme across the CB. The programme has evolved past the initial three-year investment from the RFU, into Chapter 2. This is where the hub club sustains the rugby activity to build solid school links, to maintain the transition of players to the hub club. Currently there are nine schools that are working through Chapter 2 All Schools.



The 2016/17 season will see a further three schools across Eastern Counties welcomed onto the programme, taking the total number of schools participating to 38.

Running alongside All School the Local Delivery Team have a number of targeted work programmes running in schools, colleges and universities, to support the RFU rugby development's core purpose 'Strengthening our member clubs and growing the game in the communities around them.'

Broadening Reach School/College: Focused delivery to recruit regular players and transition them into clubs. At this moment in time there are 17 schools and colleges within the Broadening Reach programme with a further five due to start from September 2016.

Holding on College: Focused delivery to retain regular players in their transition through education and into clubs. Across the CB there are five active colleges engaged with this.

Club Support

The local delivery team continue to support clubs within Eastern Counties based on development needs and using the 6 key drivers: -

- Recruiting new players
- Retaining & developing current players
- Recruit & retain high quality coaches, referees & volunteers
- Effective & efficient facilities
- Effective & efficient governance
- Integration with the local community

The Holding on Club programme is a two-year intervention providing focused delivery in order to retain players in their transition from junior to adult rugby. Out of the 12 initial clubs, several have come to the end, but there will be another four that we will be working with. The season has seen five clubs gain RFU club accreditation (Haverhill & District RFC, Diss RFC, Norwich Union RFC, Dereham RFC and North Walsham RFC) with several other clubs working towards the accreditation status.



Norwich Union RFC (left) and Haverhill RFC (right), receiving commemorative plaques, following accreditation

Working in conjunction with the county sports partnerships, Active Norfolk & Suffolk Sport will see the 5th Annual RAF Sportivate Touch Cup held at Diss RFC on 8th May. We wish you all the best in the coming season.

Chloe McMorrان Suffolk and Cambs RDO
Sam Carpenter Norfolk RDO

REFEREES



It has been a year of change at ECRURF. The management of the Federation was completely reorganised following the AGM last July. Day to day management is now undertaken by the Cabinet, which is comprised of a voting representative from each of the three Societies, the Chairman and the President of the Federation. The full Management Committee now meets just a couple of times a year to act as a think tank to review performance and to discuss and develop new ideas. These new arrangements have streamlined the management of the Federation and ensured that the Societies have direct control over its day to day work.

Relations with ECCB have never been better. (This is despite the frustrations that arise because Cambs Society is not in the EC Federation and Herts Society is not in the ECCB). There is now a much greater level of co-operation and cross fertilisation of ideas between our respective organisations. Cambs Society has developed close relationships with school and club referees in their County and as a result, all 15-a-side games at both youth and senior level, are refereed through their Society. Norfolk and Suffolk are looking at ways that this can be introduced in their Counties. All the Societies are keen to attract new referees at all levels including those who wish to referee occasionally at youth level.

Hertfordshire have brought many talented, experienced individuals, together with some challenging ideas to the Federation. Officials from all three Counties have benefited from the wider referee exchange opportunities that the enlarged Federation has presented. The new Federation held its first combined training course in February. I'm pleased to say that referees and advisors from Herts, Norfolk, Suffolk and guests from Cambs Society attended what proved to be a lively, thought provoking day.

All three Societies now have thriving referee development squads and as a result a record number of young referees are being considered for promotion to the Federation and beyond.

It is proving more challenging to attract female referees into the game. The Federation has funding to support lady referees of all ages and abilities, whether they want to do the occasional game on a Sunday or work to get to the very top. Hopefully, the growth in the number of girls and ladies playing rugby in EC will lead to greater numbers taking up the whistle in the future. The Federation plans to work closely with ECCB to attract more females to referee in the coming season.

The new Level 2 training course has a much larger practical content than its predecessor and is proving to be very effective. Unfortunately, it is continuing to prove difficult to lay on courses at times and places which are convenient for candidates. As a result, courses continue to be cancelled due to a lack of numbers. The Federation is working closely with ECCB to find ways to overcome these problems so that everyone who wants to do a course can do so promptly at a time and place to suit them.

Lastly, I mustn't forget the referee coaches and assessors who turn out every week, come rain or shine, to train and support our referees. I am pleased to say that we have a growing, experienced and dedicated team of advisors in EC who are just as vital to the game as the guys and girls who blow the whistle.

John Bissell
EC Federation Chairman

NORFOLK

Norfolk Modernization achieving results.

Norfolk are well into their modernisation with our reorganization plans being forwarded to our AGM. Our structure will mirror Eastern counties to ensure we can help implement strategies and initiatives more effectively and also influence thinking from a bottom up club perspective on the use of finite funding and resources within Norfolk and Eastern Counties.

The Management committee has doubled in size within the last year with very effective and hardworking volunteers. We expect nearly one third of our team to be female for the coming season which reflects the increasing influence of women within rugby going forward.

One of our roles is to promote Rugby within our County. Our Woodfordes big Rugby Day was a great success. Not only was it a first holding seven cup finals on one day at one club but the first Women's cup, Touch cup and Third XV cup. We estimate approximately 2000 supporter's players, guests and sponsors attended throughout the day which was covered for the first time by Local TV with extensive live and recorded radio and media coverage. Apart, we also had a great celebration of Norfolk rugby and brought the county Rugby community together.

At the beginning of the season we set ourselves nine ambitious objectives as follows: -

- 1) Build a comprehensive three-year plan that dovetails with RFU and Eastern Counties plans but selects and prioritises Norfolk's needs.
- 2) Develop and structure a management team that meets the deliverable needs of the RFU, Eastern counties and Norfolk.
- 3) Improve the Norfolk image within Norfolk's Rugby community, clubs and Eastern Counties.
- 4) Monitor Norfolk clubs and assist and advise their management, if invited on best practise administration and development.
- 5) Provide and support county development rugby within schools and clubs, in partnership with the Norfolk youth academy and also provide representative rugby at a senior level.
- 6) Support and strengthen club coaching and refereeing development.
- 7) Promote, administer and control Norfolk competitions.
- 8) Identify and support RFU and Eastern counties initiatives on player recruitment and transition between youth and senior rugby.
- 9) Increase Norfolk associate membership and revenue for reinvestment into our rugby community and to hold one year's annual costs in financial reserves.

We are well into our three-year plan to deliver all of the above. I guess we are 70% along the journey. We highlight three performance areas, firstly the improving Norfolk's image as per 3) and albeit against Eastern counties initial wishes we have again representative rugby at youth level, re-introduced, albeit via the academies where they will play in Norfolk shirts and receive ties when representing their county against Suffolk and Cambridgeshire as per 5) and finally the push me pull you approach by Norfolk and Sam carpenter our RDO to achieve full accreditation for all Norfolk clubs by the autumn of this year.

Over all a very successful season. Our Associate membership is growing again after years of decline and Norfolk won the tri county championship and our balance sheet is strong. There has been so much good that has happened in all areas including coaching and youth development and we continue to work closer with our schools to develop strategies to improve club/school links. To balance our successes, more work is needed on referee development as we do not have enough referees and they are not getting any younger.

We thank all those who have contributed to the management of Norfolk this season from our RDO, Eastern counties and our Norfolk volunteers.

Martin Crook
President and Vice Chairman. Norfolk RFU

SUFFOLK



Our premier competition the Chadacre Cup saw an entertaining final between Stowmarket and Woodbridge. The hosts (and holders) were the favourites but Woodbridge were the better side on the day and worthy winners. Earlier in the season Harwich and Dovercourt had just been too powerful for an enterprising Mistley team to win the Suffolk plate. The Suffolk Shield was retained by Bury Wolves when unfortunately, Colchester Ravens had to withdraw. This competition for our senior second XVs has been useful, but now superseded by the Zoo Leagues. We have therefore decided to propose its suspension at the Suffolk AGM.

We lost both games in the Inter-County Cup. Despite challenging player availability those who wore the Suffolk shirt enjoyed the experience and will be back next year. A huge thank you to Nigel Brown and his team of coaches and physios.

The Youth season started with the RHS Youth 7s which was again a resounding success. A Ross Cowie and his extensive team of volunteers once again organized an exemplary day. Out thanks to them all. As ever thanks to Royal Hospital School for allowing us to use their facilities.

The County Youth Competitions results were as follows:

U13: Cup Winners Colchester, Runners Up Bury St Edmunds, Plate Winners Hadleigh, Runners Up Woodbridge, U14: Cup Winners Bury St Edmunds, Runners Up Southwold, Plate Winners Colchester Runners Up Woodbridge

U15: Cup Winners Woodbridge Runners Up Colchester, Plate Winners Bury St Edmunds Runners Up Hadleigh

U16: Cup Winners Colchester Runners Up Woodbridge, Plate Winners Bury St Edmunds Plate Runner Up Hadleigh

Suffolk Development Festivals took place at U13, U14 and U15 These festivals provide a stage for players from bigger clubs who normally struggle to get a game or sit on the bench week after week

and for smaller clubs, developing their youth section. A huge thank you to Darren Wright for a very successful season running youth rugby for Suffolk.

In the RFU Leagues Suffolk teams performed with distinction from National 2 South to EC4S where Southwold II and Bury St Edmunds IV were promoted. Also of note Sudbury won a playoff and are now in London 1. Promotion and relegation in the Eastern Counties Leagues below EC1 is anything but simple...so I haven't tempted fortune since as we go to press uncertainty remains!

In the Ladies game, unfortunately this season we were unsuccessful in establishing an Inter-County cup but have high hopes for next season. Southwold Swallows followed up on last year with back to back promotions. Next season they will be playing in the National Leagues.

Monthly Volunteering Recognition Awards continued. Finally, it was a great pleasure to be a guest when Colchester celebrated their 90th Anniversary.

Rob Temple
Suffolk Rugby Union Representative

CAMBRIDGESHIRE



The focus of Cambridgeshire RFU in the 2015-16 season has been on the promotion of this great game of ours through the network of community clubs across the county – whether for adult players ambitious to excel, their more socially-minded contemporaries or to the youngsters that will form the future players of those clubs.

A major effort to promote rugby in the run-up to the 2015 World Cup took place over the summer ... A major presence at the Big Weekend in Cambridge was somewhat frustrated by poor weather on the day, but the following weekend's involvement in South Cambridgeshire's Parklife proved much more rewarding, with many participants in the activities taking up the offer of information about their local clubs.

On the field, Cambridge have returned to National League 1 following a short absence as they won their league with a series of convincing wins, while Shelford consolidated their position in National League 3 and will be looking to push for promotion in 2017. Other clubs to win promotion were Saffron Walden and Ely – clear champions of London 2 North East and Eastern Counties 1 respectively. Cantabrigians had a strong season in London 2 NE, while only a last match defeat for Wisbech saw them pipped for a spot in the promotion play-offs by Wymondham. Early season struggles by Newmarket were overcome sufficiently to banish any thoughts of relegation. In the local leagues, March and Mildenhall found life hard in Eastern Counties 2 West, while Sawston were worthy champions of Eastern Counties 3 West. Cottenham-based Renegades received a World Cup trophy from Sir Clive Woodward – the Smallest Rugby Clubs World Cup was staged in London for clubs with one team and without their own pitch – while Cambourne and Wendens Ambo played out their season alongside the junior sides of more senior clubs.

A highlight of the county year was the County Cup Final being held under lights at the University Rugby Ground at Grange Road with a compelling match before a large crowd seeing Saffron Walden defeat a Shelford side to win the cup for the ninth time, but the first since 1987. An experiment that seems worth repeating.

And the success of the county finals day now seems assured with this year's hosts – Cambourne Exiles – celebrating their tenth anniversary and staging four cup finals flawlessly on 16 April: congratulations are due to Cambridge Exiles, Haverhill, Wisbech IIs and Newmarket Development for their victories.

Youth rugby has had a successful year – with a series of mini events ensuring that our new rules of play are bedding in well and participation levels are growing. Similarly, successful events at youth level included tens to start the season, sevens to finish and county cups through the season. We have demonstrated that you do not need a pedantic and bureaucratic approach to hold events successfully, and so long as clubs are able to rise to the occasion by adopting an appropriate approach that places rugby's core values and the experience of the players at the heart of what they do, we will be able to continue in that vein.

And ladies and girls' rugby continues to be among the fastest growing areas of the game: clubs might struggle to achieve critical mass to enable them to run a team by themselves but clusters, turn up and play events and the full engagement with the local student population show real promise of success. Shelford Ladies have not been able to match the league-winning success of previous years, but they remain the only Cambridgeshire club to field an adult ladies side on a regular basis.

Overall, the county has continued to seek a clear role for itself that adds value to the experience of clubs and players without adding to the administrative burden. This is not without its challenges, but the reward is to be found in seeing thousands of players enjoying hundreds of games across the season.

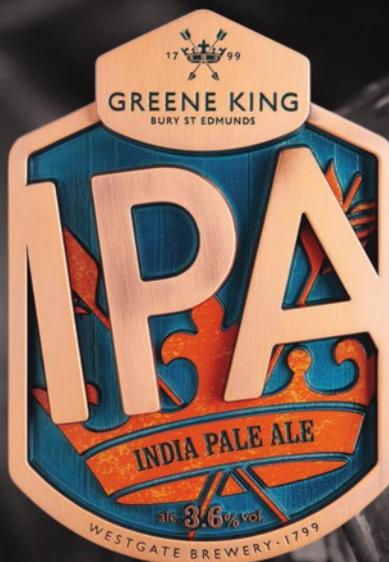
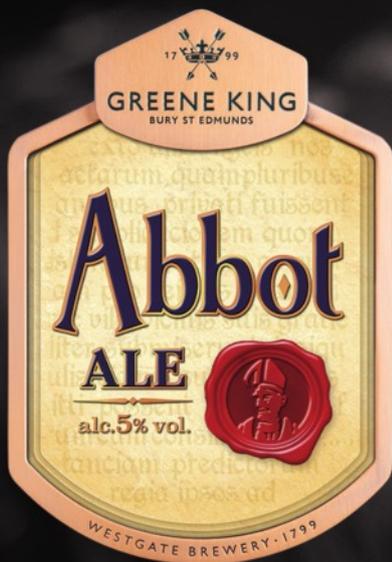
Alasdair Bovaird
Cambridgeshire Rugby Union Representative



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