



Bucks RFU 2023

Chair's Report Buckinghamshire RFU 2023

Well yet another varied and interesting year of rugby! Where does one begin?

Having read the other Executive members reflective and comprehensive reports, I do not intend to repeat their words, **OTHER** than to say well done to all the players that have represented our County this past season. It is without doubt the best spread of club players engaging in representative rugby we have ever seen!

I join the rest of the County Executive in thanking every single member of the County team's management structure, for their magnificent efforts on behalf of all the players.

A special mention to our Ladies squad – Probably the 2nd best community team in the Country!

Thank you to all those that joined us at our inaugural Clubs conference a couple of months ago. It really was fantastic to see the positive attitude from our clubs on how our future can be secured and developed as we continue in these less than certain times.

We have also witnessed both the best and worst of the RFU yet again this year. On the one hand we saw clubs receiving not too insignificant amounts of money for various club-based improvement projects. On the other hand, we saw both the RFU and the Councils efforts at overseeing the introduction of the new tackle height regulations. As we now all know - complete chaos ensued!

Personally, I find it hard to believe that some high earning individuals on the RFU board have still not been publicly held responsible for this debacle. I know that our own Council member has been trying to obtain the thought processes that led us as a game to such consternation and frustration.

Our Club Chairs meetings continue to happen and having spoken to other County Chairs, they are very jealous of what we have all achieved and I expect it to be replicated by others very soon! So my thanks to all Chairs for their time and contributions. We have learnt that if we want rugby to flourish in the County, we **all** need to be part of the process.

We are all aware of the significant issues at both ends of the community game, one being the lack of access to our school children to try and influence youth recruitment, and the other is number of older male players falling out of "love" with the game post pandemic. I can only promise that we will continue to work with you all and the RFU to try and address these valid concerns and help with solutions where possible. We are supporting various locally based initiatives (see DOR report) to see if they will support growth in these areas. My thanks to those individuals concerned.

I would like to join others in praising Beaconsfield RFC for reaching and winning the Pappa John's cup at their level, well done all. I would also like to congratulate Buckingham Swans on being promoted to the highest level of the true community game. A tremendous achievement and now the work begins I suspect!

Once again, I would like to thank all our Club Chairs and their Executives for all the time and effort they put into their clubs, it, for the most part, goes unnoticed by the membership, which to be fair is a testament to how well you all do.

A special thank you to the retiring Chair at Bletchley RFUC, Tony Rice who after many years as the Club Chair has, I believe, gone back to coaching juniors! Thanks for all your support and advice Tony. And as Tony departs, I would like to welcome our 3rd lady club Chair, Verity Robinson to our cohort.

My final (I promise) thank you is reserved for my Executive committee and their efforts to support all our clubs, large or small. The team ensure that we are here to support the individual club and the game as a whole. Again, most of this goes on unseen, **but I see it** and I remain in awe of your drive and efforts on behalf of the clubs. Karen Wild, our volunteer coordinator, has taken the decision to step back from the Exec. in order to concentrate on her role as Slough club chair. Karen, please accept our thanks for your involvement in our evolution over the last few years and we wish you well back at your club!

To the clubs, I want you all to know, that we at County have no other purpose than to support you in whatever way we can. We have all learnt post pandemic, that money will not cure all our issues, however our collective will, just might. Our intention moving forward is to take a leadership role to ensure all our clubs reach their full potential and flourish.

I know it has been a difficult couple of years as our political masters (and there has been a few of them recently!) try to get a grip on a whole host of issues that are affecting us all in various ways, it also affects your clubs, so please continue to support them where you can, and if you have the time to become a volunteer. PLEASE do it!

Wishing you all a great summer and a winning start to the new season ahead. Good luck all

Take care

Neale Baker

Proud Chair, Buckinghamshire RFU



Player centric – Club focused