



Buckinghamshire RFU DOR Report 2022/23

A season of invitational county rugby comes to a close, its sometimes not that obvious until you put pen to paper and bring everyone's efforts together do we see the fruits of everyone's labour, when I read back, what you are about to go on and read, how proud I was, and am, of all the achievement's individuals, teams and squads have made this season, maybe we have helped players achieve personal goals, helped them win first county games and ultimately play on the hallowed turf at HQ, but whatever it be I hope through rugby, Buckinghamshire rugby, we have provided the positive environment everyone wanted be part of making friendships and memories that will last a lifetime. Firstly though, before I talk about the achievements and accolades none of this would have happened without the dedication of the many volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure rugby is played and enjoyed at county level, a personal thankyou to Lynne, Mike, Gareth and all the managers, coaches and admin that have turned up come rain or shine to make it happen, your knowledge, commitment and dedication is remarkable, thank you.

This season saw a very successful first year with the girls U16 ERDPP, the team that worked extremely hard to make this happen, headed up by Lynne Edhouse, managed by Dan Lock and a very capable team of coaches led by Principle coach Rocky Clarke, lead coach Alban Barnes and assistant coaches Steph Neville, Josie Murray, Steve Edhouse, Alex Jaycocks, Ben Knight and physio Ash Ni Bhrolchain. A squad of over 40 girls was created and maintained through the ten sessions held during the season focussing on the first aspect of talent development, the explore phase.

Three playing opportunities were planned and executed focusing on player development against Berkshire, Middlesex and Oxfordshire with eight girls being put forward for C of E consideration.

We will continue to evolve the programme, targeting a larger pool of players with specialist coaching sessions, as well as additional aspects such as S&C, health and nutrition, awareness of exercising during periods of training etc.

A successful schools programme was set up by Pete Tebbutt, Buckingham RFC supported by Buckinghamshire RFU making massive positive steps in encouraging more schools and girls to participate, we will look to continue supporting the great initiative going into next season.

Bucks girls rugby charity was set up by Dan Lock to promote and grow girls rugby in the county, delivering additional benefits of keeping individuals engaged in sport and regular fitness.

However, it wasn't all plain sailing - the girls U18's season was a more challenging one with the age year change, a squad of 26 players was formed and selected for 3 playing opportunities. The weather at the time of the age grade calendar impacted on playing time, with one match being cancelled and sadly impossible to reschedule. The opposition was also impacted with girls at Oxford ACE college preventing playing club rugby, resulting in teams being heavily impacted at all clubs. Clubs in turn had to join together to get playing opportunities.

We anticipate ongoing challenges during next season (limited U16's coming up will and the ongoing ACE college) however to counter this and looking ahead we will introduce initiatives to ensure a more fulfilling season, continuing the development of all girls and plan some non-playing joint sessions (of S&C) and personal learning again with the DPP group.

It was a real pleasure to see Lynne Edhouse Chair of girl's rugby presented with a Bucks RFU county honours cap for her services to rugby withing the county. Thankyou Lynne for all you do for the game from the many players who have benefited from your commitment and dedication.

The boys U18 programme has proven incredibly successful, with five players selected for the South West Divisional squad. It was a testament to the hard work and talent nurtured within the program, as well as the dedication of the coaching staff. The U17 team have recently started their season; their first match was against Berkshire. Both teams displayed exceptional skills and determination. The match ended in a 30-30 draw, highlighting the competitiveness and quality of the U17 squad.

In May Buckinghamshire RFU organised a very successful four-way festival for the U17 team. This festival brought together teams from Hertfordshire, Eastern Counties, and East Midlands, followed by a match against Oxfordshire later in the month. Thankyou Mike, Steve, Jeremy and coaches for working on making this such a success, we hope to repeat the experience next season.

Following requests from the clubs, a structured fixture program was introduced for the under 14s and under 15s. This initiative proved to be highly successful, providing a platform for these age groups to compete regularly and further develop their skills. The positive response has led to the expansion of the program to include the under 13 age group as well, ensuring that a comprehensive pathway was established for young players to progress and excel. The Bucks Cup & Plate competition was once again a testament to the high standards of youth rugby. The competition showcased the immense talent and dedication of the young players involved. A special thank you to Buckingham RFC and Drifters RFC for hosting the finals and providing an exciting and memorable atmosphere for the teams and spectators.

The success of the U18 program and the introduction of structured fixtures for younger age groups reflected the commitment of the rugby community to nurturing and promoting youth talent. The coaching staff, volunteers, and clubs' efforts were instrumental in creating an environment where young players could thrive and reach their full potential.

A very disappointing season for the men U20's who had to withdraw from the county competition in April due to player availability, this was the age group impacted by Covid and the camaraderie from previous years diminished, with many moving to university the strength and depth was not evident to ensure we had a competitive squad, much to work on going into next season, however on a brighter note four on of the squad went on to play senior men's county rugby which was both pleasing and rewarding to see, I hope all players enjoyed their experience.

The senior men's squad experienced a slow start to the county campaign with successes in papa John's cup and club end of season awards clashing at the start of May. However, it was fantastic to see Buckinghamshire clubs, Aylesbury and Beaconsfield, achieve great success in the competition with Beaconsfield going on to win their final at the StoneX stadium, well done both clubs. However through engaging positively with all our clubs to build a competitive squad we saw ten of our clubs within the county represented at training sessions with nine clubs representing the county on matchday's including Princess Risborough RFC, Olney RFC and Buckingham RFC, which was fantastic, the tournament culminated with a win in our only home fixture at Beaconsfield against Surrey, the atmosphere in the changing room post game was electric and reflected the hard work all players, coaches Tom and Andy and manager Richard had put in to make it happen, thank you everyone involved.

Post-game it was a proud moment when Kaz Olayinka and Aled Lewis were awarded their Bucks RFU county honours caps, congratulations to you both.

The senior ladies, well what a season for the senior ladies under the expert guidance of head coach Rocky Clarke and manager Vicky Boorman, three convincing wins in their cup round matches, beating strong competition from Berkshire, Gloucestershire and Surrey, the last game was a double header

playing after the senior men at Beaconsfield RFC. A first double header win in county history! These wins took the squad to Twickenham at the end of May, it was a fantastic day with many supporters turning up to wish the team success, unfortunately the final game wasn't to be against a very strong and well organised Lancashire squad. Thankyou ladies and all involved, in addition to Rocky and Vicky, Sarah, Mikey, Nick, Ronnie and Ash for all your sterling efforts making us all extremely proud of your achievements and evidencing there is everything to play for when representing Buckinghamshire RFU.

Our top try scorer this season was Lauren Head, but with thirteen players scoring try's reflects the strength and depth in the squad, and a total of four county clubs were represented in the squad at Twickenham.

Another proud moment in post-game celebrations at Beaconsfield RFC were for four players to also be awarded their Bucks RFU county honours caps, the players were Danielle Grammenos, Amy Kayley, Becci Andrews and Lauren Head. The last county honours cap was awarded in a memorable and special environment post the Gill Burns Division One final at Twickenham being presented by the president of RFU for women Gill Burns to Nikitta Wehrle, congratulations to you all, well done.

Thankyou

Andrew Blake
Director of Rugby Bucks RFU Ltd



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