

GRFU Overview 2022/23

GRFU Chair - Simon Collyer-Bristow

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming all the audience. He reiterated the President's earlier words that this had been another difficult season for everyone in the second season post-Covid but that in his opinion the overall objectives from 21/22 season – returning to the playing of rugby across the board and re-building atmosphere within clubs – had been further achieved.

The Chair then ran through some Highs and Lows of the 22/23 Season.

HIGHS: CLUB SUCCESSES - In essence this had been achieved via the Leagues and Papa Johns' Cup and a big "Well Done" to all the specific GRFU Clubs and all their players for making this happen. In the national RFU Leagues: Dings, Clifton, Gloucester-Hartpury Women and Bristol Bears Women; in regional RFU Leagues: Matson, Longlevens and Cheltenham Tigers Women; in the Men's Cups: Longlevens, Bream, North Bristol, Old Patesians and Gloucester OBs and in the Women's Cups: Cheltenham Tigers, Drybrook, Dings and Avonmouth OBs -

REPRESENTATIVE RUGBY – GRFU had returned to participating across the board with the U18 and U17 Boys having had unbeaten seasons. The U20s, Men and Women had all competed well bearing in mind this has been a return to GRFU participating and preparations for next season are underway. A "thank You" to all the Coaches and Team Managers and of course the players.

8 AGE GRADE FESTIVALS + DEVELOPMENT LEAGUES – The County Festivals from U7-12 and the U13 Girls Festival had again been played in 7 different club venues. 36 clubs had fielded a total of 250 teams this season. A big "Thank You" to Lesley Gomer and Sandy Silk with their continuing administration of this highly successful operation + the host clubs. A new U15 Development League had joined the existing Colts Development League providing competitive rugby for all developing ie; non-elite players. Thanks to Kris Murphy and Leigh Payne as Administrators.

GROWTH IN WOMEN & GIRLS' RUGBY – This area of the game continues to grow across the County and country. There is no doubting the extra dimension that W&G rugby brings to involved clubs and the GRFU and RFU will continue to invest in this area. There is a clear demonstration of growth, amalgamation/clustering, "can do" attitude and bringing new playing members and volunteers into clubs. "Thank you" to Nathan Smallcombe and all others involved in this growth area.

SUPPORT FOR CLUBS THAT "DO" – GRFU prioritised their limited Targeted Delivery Funds (from RFU) investment into the Community game and had spent

about £10,000 on various targeted projects and areas. A big “Thank you” to Andrea Grant, and the relevant delivery bodies and RFU staff especially Nicola McCombe and Ash Stephens for all their work in these key areas.

LOWS: ADULT MEN PLAYING NUMBERS & CRY-OFFS – No doubting that some clubs and especially 2nd/3rd Mens teams are struggling. Large number of cry-offs and some poor and selfish attitudes being shown. An unwillingness to adopt “Game On”. All clubs would have to work hard to overcome the playing shortages and hopefully with smaller District League size things would pick-up.

REFEREE SHORTAGES – This continues to be addressed by the RFU, GRFU and both Referee Societies with club referees being encouraged to take-up the whistle and courses being organised. It is definitely linked to below.

DECLINE IN CORE VALUES & MATCH OFFICIAL ABUSE – There is no doubting that the RFU’s Core Values – Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship – had again slipped in 22/23 Season. It is incumbent on all parties to restore the Core Values starting within clubs. The GRFU Discipline Committee under Chair, Dave Guyan, held Roadshows for Club Officials, DoRs and Coaches at the beginning of the season with the aim to educate as well as sanction.

DROP IN VOLUNTEER NUMBERS – There are less volunteers doing more tasks. Incumbent on all to switch it to more volunteers doing less tasks. This goes in line with all clubs valuing and recognising their volunteers.

“GUIDANCE” FROM TWICKENHAM – Important that lessons are learnt from the new Papa Johns’ Cup and it’s negatives as well as positives. The new Tackle Height proposals and way it was delivered to the Game had not been the RFU’s “finest hour”.

GRFU RESTRUCTURE – This had not gone as smoothly and quickly as hoped for. Empowerment needs to be fully given/taken. The recruitment of a new Treasurer had been fraught and negatively impacted on County Office. Hopefully next season will see things sorted.

GRFU Main Objectives 2023/24

The Chair then briefly laid out the 4 major objectives the County had targeted for the 23/24 Season.

ADULT MEN'S RUGBY – Continue to encourage the playing of social rugby below 1st XV RFU Leagues via the GRFU District Leagues and friendlies. A big “Thank You” to Stuart Gilbraith, GRFU Chair of Competitions, with re-formatting both the lower-level RFU Leagues and GRFU District Leagues.

BUILD-UP VOLUNTEER NUMBERS – The onus is on all our clubs and the CB to recruit more volunteers within their organisations. Double the number of volunteers and you halve the work-load for everyone. More = Less. And clubs need to “value their volunteers” – everybody likes to be recognised for their contributions, large and small. Thank you from the County to **all** volunteers and to Adrian Siddorn for acting as CB Lead.

GIRLS' RUGBY – Continue to help the growth in all parts of this area of the Game – especially with the RWC25 happening in England (and hopefully locally).

ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF THE GAME – Whether this be Touch Rugby, Walking Rugby or Mixed Ability Rugby (MAR) played as such or as an introduction for traditional rugby, the CB know that these areas can grow clubs, provide new sources of revenue and new players/volunteers .

“Goodbyes and Thank You”

The Chair finished his report with some farewells and thanks to GRFU Volunteers whom had left during and at the end of this season.

ON-FIELD – Tom Nurse and Mark Nicholson

A special “thank you” was given to David Parry-Jones and Dave Guyan + County Office for their continual administration in the difficult RFU-delegated areas of Discipline, Safeguarding and Rugby Safe. Recruitment is currently happening.

The Chair’s final thanks were given to his “right and left-hand lady”, Andrea Grant, who, whilst he was flapping around in the water as Chair, serenely glided through the water as County Administrator and acted as the initial welcoming face of the County.