

GRFU Overview 2021/22

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 a difficult season for everyone post-Covid but that in his opinion the initial objectives from a year ago – returning to the playing of rugby across the board and re-building atmosphere within clubs – had been achieved.

The Chair then ran through some Highs and Lows of the 21/22 Season.

HIGHS: RETURN TO RUGBY & ON-FIELD ACTIVITIES - In essence this had been achieved and a big "Thank You" to all GRFU Clubs, Schools, Colleges and Universities and in particular all their Administrators for making this happen.

AGE-GRADE REPRESENTATIVE – GRFU squads had fared well in 21/22 with the U18s Boys winning 2 of their 3 matches and losing the other narrowly; the U17s Boys had an unbeaten season winning all 3 of their matches; the U18s Girls had won all their matches across the different formats played, drawing just one; and the U15 Girls had won all their matches across the different formats played. "Thank You" to Tom Read, GRFU Chair of Age Grade Representative, all the Coaches and Team Managers and of course the players.

RETURN OF COMBINATION CUPS – Whilst sometimes a difficult administrative task all 5 of the Combinations had played their Cup competitions and successful Finals Days had occurred with good crowds. Whilst there are RFU Cups being re-introduced in 22/23 the Chair opined that in his opinion Combination rivalries and community rugby were vital for the health of the game in the County. "Well done" to all 5 Combination Cup administrators.

7 AGE-GRADE FESTIVALS – The County Festivals from U7-12 and a new U13 Girls Festival had returned this season being played in 7 different club venues and involving up to 4,500 players. A big "Thank You" to Lesley Gomer and Sandy Silk with their continuing administration of this highly successful operation + the host clubs.

GROWTH IN WOMEN & GIRLS' RUGBY – This area of the game continues to grow across the County and country. Notable successes for Cheltenham North U15s and Cheltenham Tigers Women in the National Cup and Women's Championship. There is no doubting the extra dimension that W&G rugby brings to involved clubs and the RFU will continue to invest in this area. "Thank you" to Matt Parcel, GRFU Chair of W&G, and all others involved in this area.

OFFER OF FIRST AID & REFEREE COURSES – GRFU prioritised their investment into the Community game – at the expense of senior Representative Rugby – and had spent about £30,000 on various Targeted Delivery, Rugby Re-Boot and Back in the

Game courses, webinars, club cluster meetings, workshops and pitch-up events. These had mainly been focussed on First Aid courses (mandatory in 22/23 for Age Grade), Coaching and entry-level Refereeing. 35 courses had accommodated 500 candidates to date with 66 more “bookings” to be taken up, 5 referee courses this month and 6 Play it Safe courses planned. A big “Thank you” to Andrea Grant, Tom Nurse and the relevant RFU staff for all their work in this area.

LOWS: PLAYING NUMBERS & CRY-OFFS – Whilst fully understanding the Covid-effect much of the malaise was down to societal changes and attitude. All clubs would have to work hard to overcome the playing shortages and there were positive signs that with the restructuring of Leagues and smaller League size/less travel that things would pick-up.

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

DECLINE IN CORE VALUES – Whether this is societal or a Covid-effect is debatable but there is no doubting that the RFU’s Core Values – Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship – had slipped in 21/22 Season. It is incumbent on all parties to restore the Core Values starting within clubs.

GROWTH IN MATCH OFFICIAL ABUSE – Continuing from above the GRFU Discipline Committee under new Chair, Dave Guyan, will be holding Roadshows for Club Officials, DoRs and Coaches at the beginning of the 22/23 season. The aim will be to educate first rather than just sanction. Hopefully this malaise on the game will be stopped with both top-down and bottom-up teachings.

NO ADULT REPRESENTATIVE RUGBY – There was no doubting that this had been the GRFU’s hardest decision in 21/22. The reasons were entirely financial for Adult Men and U20s whilst the Women’s late withdrawal was based on playing numbers/strength and associated welfare concerns. This area is being addressed by GRFU – whilst the RFU are consulting with all Counties – and the full intention is that GRFU will participate in all 3 competitions in 22/23.

GRFU Main Objectives 2022/23

The Chair then briefly laid out the 5 major objectives the County had targeted for the 22/23 Season.

CB REVIEW, RE-STRUCTURE & RE-BOOT – As it says on the tin and essentially to re-configure to where the game is in 2022 and where the RFU and RFU Funding now sit. There have been major changes and GRFU need to operate accordingly whilst also easing the burden on it's volunteers.

COMPETITIONS BED-IN – The changes have been sent to clubs and the GRFU estimate that it will take a season or two for things to settle-down. A big "Thank You" to Stuart Gilbraith, GRFU Chair of Competitions, who despite outside interference has down a great job for all our clubs and teams with both RFU Leagues and GRFU District Leagues.

ADDRESS DISCIPLINE ISSUES – As previously mentioned and this will be a joint exercise between the County and the clubs. All must work together, assist the authorities and everyone remember their responsibilities.

FINANCE, FUNDING & SPONSORSHIP – Monies from various bodies, whether RFU, Sport England, Charitable Funds or private/public companies will still be available. The process for application will be based on GRFU suggesting credible ideas and plans along with costings. If they fit the criteria money will be available – same applies to all our clubs.

BUILD-UP VOLUNTEER NUMBERS – The onus is on all our clubs and the CB to recruit more volunteers. 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.

“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.

APPOINTMENTS – Tony Fielding, Tricia Perris, Jeff Tyler and John Edwards

FACILITIES & INT. TICKETS – Tony Swash

REPRESENTATIVE RUGBY – Tom Read

COMPETITIONS – Karen Macey

AGE-GRADE – Connor Thompson

CHELTENHAM COMBINATION/COMPETITIONS – Peter Shortell

DISCIPLINE – Glenda McWalter + Mark Elton who steps down as Chairman but remains as a panellist.

A special “thank you” were given to David Parry-Jones, Rich Berry and Tom Nurse (and team) for their continual administration in the difficult RFU-delegated areas of Discipline, Safeguarding and Rugby Safe.

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.