



## **BOURNEMOUTH RUGBY CHAIRMANS REPORT 2021-22**

Here we are again!!!

It seems like we blink and another season has gone by, at least things are almost back to normal.

Firstly, I would like to thank everyone that has put in time and effort to see this amazing club carry on for another season, if it wasn't for all the Committee members, coaches, parents, players, managers, volunteers and generous sponsors we would not be able to put on rugby for so many.

Once again we have had to ensure we kept a close eye on the purse strings and our finance team have done a fantastic job there too, (as you will all have seen on the accounts report). With costs increasing all the time I am sure this will be mirrored in the coming season.

We have also had to change our kit supplier this season due to Playerlayer going into administration, so apologies for the inconvenience but I am pleased to say we will now be working once again with O'Neills and I can personally say that from 7 years working with them previously we will be staying for a while.

We had some ups and downs out on the pitch this season seeing some close fought games some just not going our way, success in both cup competitions with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> XV winning both their county cups and now a move to the East for our 1<sup>st</sup> XV next season and also we were successful after many years of trying getting the 2<sup>nd</sup> XV into the league structure ( also playing in the Hampshire leagues at level 7).

With the retirement of both Joe Rees and Alex Sutherland at the end of the season leaves some big boots to fill and thanks to both for their committed time with us and hope to see you around for a beer or two. Also the departing of the Big guy Andy Curtis who has along with his team kept our players together out on the pitch each week, Thanks Andy and good luck in your new venture.

Mike Pope will continue as Bournemouth Rugby senior Head Coach next season and along with his coaching team will endeavour to create some exciting rugby for you all to watch. I am sure Mike will introduce his new team within his report along with any new signings.

We have also had some great success within the Y&M, Touch and Wheelchair rugby sections, but I will leave it to them tell you and not steal any thunder.

Looking forward to seeing you all pitch side this coming season and please if you have any questions just ask.

Regards

Simon  
Chairman Bournemouth Rugby



## Senior Rugby

If we could sum up how we felt about last season in one word, we'd probably go with 'underachieved'.

Despite having to navigate our way through socially distanced session plans and small group training slots, we felt like we were in a good place, and why wouldn't you after a number of wins on the bounce.

However, as the season progressed it seemed as though our ability to close out tight games as we had done at the start of the season began to degenerate. Losing a number of games right at the death was hard to take as coaches and as players, but I think it's worth noting that we had a squad with a number of new faces and a coaching team that had only been together for a season and a half, with one season being the covid one. With that being said, I'm not one for excuses and I'm hoping that we've left no stone unturned in preparation for the upcoming season.

Finishing the season with 9 LBP (finishing within 7) showed that we were doing something right but couldn't quite get over the finish line when it mattered. With that being said, we feel as though we laid some really good foundations that we look to build upon this season.

I cannot fault the effort of the lads or the coaching group, but I know what this group is capable of and what they are aspiring to be which is why I know they would agree with me when I use the word 'underachieved'.

We've had a great opportunity to reflect on ourselves as coaches and feel as though the work that has gone in to pre-season has been positive, though of course we won't know that until we are a few games in.

There is still plenty to work on and we are constantly tweaking and refining what we think to be right, but I feel like we are going in the right direction and the lads seem to be in a good place too.

You will know that as a result of the restructure that took place by the RFU, we have been moved to Regional 1 South League. We are familiar with a few of the teams we will be facing this season, however, you could say that it's slightly uncharted waters...which personally I am extremely excited about. We have an opportunity to test ourselves against new opposition and really make a statement as newcomers to the league.

As always, we would like to thank you for your continued support and look forward to seeing and speaking to you pre/post games. Please feel free to come and grab a beer with me, the coaches/management or the players throughout the season. I would really like to use this season to build better connections between the senior rugby section and our supporters!

Mike Pope  
Head Coach



## Youth & Mini

The 2021-22 season in terms of rugby participation has certainly been an improvement upon previous seasons which have been more significantly impacted by COVID and the challenges that this brought with it. It has been a real pleasure seeing our young players, coaches, volunteers and parents engage more fully with the sport we all love this season with passion, enthusiasm and a real sense of making the most of the opportunities afforded to them.

The U6s have grown considerably in numbers across the season, and I have always enjoyed watching the fun and games executed brilliantly by the coaching team to ensure that 'fun' is the number one priority - and this shows in the impressive numbers of players involved and coming back each week.

The U7s have developed very well across the season and were able to enjoy their first competitive matches in the New Year – and have already impressed with their skills and capabilities. Well done to all involved in making this first competitive season for the players an enjoyable and successful one!

The U8s have also continued to build upon their previous season successes and have developed across the full spectrum of rugby skills whilst reinforcing the TREDs values in everything they do, culminating in a very fun filled Bournemouth Festival which was enjoyed by all teams that attended. I understand they are very much looking forward to transitioning into contact rugby this coming season.

The U9s have had an amazing season after a delayed transition into contact rugby, and the players have absolutely owned it! They have dominated most teams they have across, and the coaches have received excellent feedback from inside and outside the club who have been able to see the players in action. The players and coaches should certainly be proud of what they have achieved.

The U10s were able to deliver consistent performances against some tough opposition and have really developed both their contact and attacking skills. The diversity of training and scenarios prepared by the coaching team has continued to challenge and develop the players very well and we look forward to seeing them to continue to grow and perform next season, with the usual smiles on their faces that I see on a Sunday morning.

The U11s have developed an impressive sized squad in terms of both players and coaches, who have continued to work hard and enjoy both training and competitive fixtures. They were also unbeaten in the Land Rover Cup held at North Dorset at the end of the season which was enjoyed by all that attended – an amazing performance! Next season they are looking to play in both the D&W and Hants competitions and continue to provide exciting playing opportunities for the whole squad.

The U12s completed their season on a high - winning the D&W Cup competition in style at Melksham whilst not conceding a single try. They have been very consistent across the season and have delivered some very impressive and confident performances and are excited to move up into Youth rugby next season. Congratulations!



The U13s completed a very successful first season at youth level despite not being able to play U13s rules until the New Year. They have continued to impress with solid and consistent performances both within the Dorset Matrix and the D&W Cup Competition - within a particularly tough and physical age grade and I am sure they will continue to build up these achievements next season and beyond.

The U14s had a very successful 21/22 season. Their squad size has continued to grow to almost 50 by the end of the season which has allowed them to enter teams into both the D&W and Hampshire Cups - for which they were runners up in both competitions, losing narrowly to both eventual winners. A fantastic achievement!

The U16s have been able to put in some solid performances within a year that is always difficult to manage due to GCSE pressures, but they have maintained a core team that will undoubtedly add pace and skills to the Colts next season.

The Colts this season were made up of a fantastic group of players - a welcoming environment engendered by the Senior Colts ensured that the team gelled early in pre-season sessions and continued to grow bonds which significantly impacted the success of the season. Considering the pressure of modern life - particularly on those players in their last year of A Levels - the commitment from the players was unrivalled.

An excellent and committed coaching team of Jo Burns, Laith Sabih, Ian Moore, Jeff Allum, Olly Yeats, Dom Davies, Jack Palmer and Damian Carroll - with a balance of coaching experience and recent/current playing experience - provided a consistent, progressive coaching experience, all supported by the impressive logistical and managerial skills of Steve Duffield.

The Colts finished their season in winning style – becoming D&W Cup Winners in what was a very competent performance and one that I am sure will stay with those players for a long time. They were also crowned D&W Premier League Winners and made it to the third round of the National Cup. The squad contained no less than 13 County players and 4 regional players (South West).

I would like to thank the Senior Colts for all of their effort, dedication and loyalty to the club across the years as they come to an end to their youth rugby careers and transition into adult rugby – and wish them the very best for their future endeavors both on and off the pitch. A massive thank you also goes to the associated exiting manager and coaches - thank you for all of your hard work and dedication across the years – you should be extremely proud of what you have collectively achieved.

Finally, the Girls section has also had a solid season with three players selected to represent at County level and the U15s achieving 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Dyson 7s finals as part of a combined Bournemouth and North Dorset squad. I would like to thank Rob, Paige, Molly and Chris for all their support and guidance they have provided the Girls section across the last few years, and we wish them well in their new endeavors. We have a new Girls coaching team in place for next season – and the new coaches are excited to get started and develop and grow the BRFC Girls Section across the coming seasons and beyond.



I wanted to acknowledge the support the Y&M section receives from the coaches, managers, volunteers and parents. This is hugely appreciated, and we simply could not function without this support. Thank you from both myself, the club and the players. We are very much looking forward to next season and the opportunities that it will bring both on and off the pitch. I hope to see you all back up at the club at the start of September!

Yours in rugby,

Greg Pike  
Y&M Chairman

### **Wheelchair Rugby**

This year has been all about rebounding after Covid and building on the success of our GB Squad that were gold medal winners in the delayed Tokyo Paralympics, last September. We have been delighted to welcome new players and coaching support from a member, Julian Allen, who took part in the Invictus Games early in 2022.

It has been a busy year on court, as fixtures returned to our schedule.

The GBWR 5s Summer Series Premiership in 2021 was a gruelling test against many GB Team players and Development Squad attendees, who looked to get court time after Covid. Results didn't go our way so in 2022 we'll take part in the Championship league. Consulting with players, we see this as an opportunity to rebuild, regain confidence and test ourselves against different squads.

Our 4s squad was much depleted this year due to difficult classification rulings and illnesses but our diminished team fought valiantly in the Para league, Southern Division and gained great court experience.

The South West Development League saw our 5s squad again in action this summer and in the early rounds we fared well against our components from Brighton Buccaneers, Solent Sharks and the West Country Hawks. Our youth team also had an opportunity to play a scratch team from these 3 teams, giving them valuable experience in the absence of GBWR run festivals for the time being. We are hopeful for more opportunities for them in the year ahead.

Off the court we continue to be supported by our corporate partner Grinning Dog Records, for whose backing we are extremely grateful. In addition, Matt Banks from Cycle Paths in Poole has supported the team by provided much needed mechanic support for our aging rugby wheelchairs. Thank you Matt.

We thank our small but loyal band of volunteers, partners and friends, who support our squad at training and at competitions, without whom we wouldn't be able to function.

Becky Hill  
Chair, Wheelchair Rugby



## Touch Rugby

For the 2021/2022 season attendance has been good but more always welcome. Training has been led by Morag Chris Clarke (Raggy) who kindly took on the role of Head Coach. With numbers generally ranging from 10 to 16, this has resulted in the significant development of these regular players attending. A significant number of the squad will be attending the Senior Touch Nationals on the 10th and 11th September, with six of the squad playing for the SW Saxons and one playing for the Thames Valley Vikings, playing across different groups. Two of the squad also played for England early this month at the European Touch Championships with Kara Roberts playing in the mixed 30's group and Lee Thopson playing in the Men's 45 group, both winning gold medals.

The Lions Touch have also participated a couple of local tournaments earlier this season finishing 2nd in both in two of them. We have also just started a local league with Southampton Touch allowing both teams to get game time and are hoping to extend out to Southampton University when they start back in September.

Finally, we want to note our thanks to Jimmy O'Neil and Nye Davis who in July due to changes in their work had to move away from the area. We wish them all the very best.

James Flack  
Lions Touch Rugby