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# **LEICESTERSHIRE RUGBY UNION**

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## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**At Oadby Wyggs RFC**

**President:  
Barbara Crellin**

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

**7.00 p.m.**



## **Annual Report: Season 2021 - 2022**

This report reviews the activities of Leicestershire Rugby Union Ltd. for the season 2021 – 2022.

### **Obituaries**

This season we have sadly lost a number of members, players, volunteers and committee members of which we paid respect to at the County Cup Finals at Welford Road on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. A copy of which is attached as an appendix to this report.

### **Administration and Governance**

The 2021-22 season has in many ways, been frantic and frenetic at times. With Covid still lurking at the door, many were still unsure as to whether the season would continue or that it would manage to go all the way without any stoppages. But it did.

I was not planning on stepping into the role of Hon Sec, but with Kevin Whitcombe's departure and no one secured to take up the role, I agreed to take it on but on the basis that if I wasn't happy or the Executive or members were unhappy, I would step down. As I am writing this, neither has been the case and I have put myself forward to continue in the role again for the 2022/23 season, but with the same caveat. I would like to thank Kevin for assisting with the odd query I may have had along the way as we have not been fortuitous to have any kind of shadowing period.

Attendance at the Executive Committee meetings has been:

|            |   |           |   |             |   |            |   |          |   |
|------------|---|-----------|---|-------------|---|------------|---|----------|---|
| G. Bates   | 4 | R. Bailey | 1 | D Toon      | 2 | J Brindley | 4 | P Howard | 4 |
| B Crellin  | 4 | S. Howard | 1 | S Green     | 4 | M Birr     | 4 | L Causon | 4 |
| C. Hayward | 2 | P. Shaw   | 2 | H. Wrighten | 4 |            |   |          |   |

At the start of the season we set an ongoing agenda point for the committee to review the constitution. This is still under review but sadly not as much progress has been made due to time commitments around new jobs for two members. However, Steve Mounfield who is on the working group, has put some time in which we will pick up next season. We aim to modernise the document with today's language and also address quorum numbers to ensure we reach voting capacity. Additionally, we have reviewed the process for nominating volunteers to be recognised as a Privileged Person and will implement that at the next Executive meeting post AGM.

Along with my colleagues, Dean Toon and Peter Howard, we have played an active part in the consultation with Leicester Tigers to establish their Women's team. Much time was put into this with various reports and club and RFU consultations required to facilitate. We look forward to the development of the female game in the county with the backing of Leicester Tigers.



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We still appear to struggle with members attending general meetings where a vote is required. The SGM to approve the accounts was poorly attended and a digital method of voting was engaged so we could achieve sign off. I hope this AGM will be suitably attended, particularly as it is the first face to face meeting since 2019.

We began this season with Simon Howard in the post of Diversity and Inclusion officer, but sadly due to his wife becoming seriously ill, he had to step down from the role. However, Ross Bailey has now taken up that post in addition to his Game Development role. Ross will have also completed the Leadership in Union course run by the RFU virtually this season and we welcome him to the team.

Pete Shaw also took the decision to step down from his role as Facilities and Funding manager for personal reasons but during his time on the Executive, he contributed greatly with his experience in the field and we hope he volunteer again at some point in the future.

The Leicestershire Rugby Union continues with its use of its head office at 47 Highmeres Road, Thurmaston, Leicester, LE4 9LZ. Although we have not used this space much in two years, we have negotiated a reduced rent which also allows us to use the space as storage and we held the last Executive meeting there.

The number of RFU Non-Voting Member clubs remains at 6 (including the University Clubs) with 28 RFU Voting Member clubs. There are now 24 clubs in Leicestershire that have become incorporated to give them some form of limited liability. It is hoped that those eligible clubs not currently incorporated will consider incorporating during the next twelve months to give their officers and members some protection against any legal action for negligence that may be taken against their clubs.

As Hon-Secretary of the Leicestershire Rugby Union may I extend my appreciation to all those volunteers serving on CB committees. As mentioned above, the season has at time felt frenetic while we all adjust and remember how to run and operate a rugby club. Well done and here's to hopefully a more settled 2022/23.

### **Chairman – Dean Toon**

On the Pitch - This last calendar year has seen our game back in its fullest form and focus was on return to rugby in all formats.

A full season was enjoyed by all the clubs and the LRU facilitated a full merit league programme, senior cup competitions, AGR Festivals and Cups Comps alongside a full age grade and senior representative programme.

The senior representative programme produced the county highlight with our ladies winning the Gill Burns Div 1 Final and congratulations to the players, coaching and management team, for this outstanding achievement.



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We have actively involved and supported Leicester Tigers with their ladies team and next season the county will facilitate a DPP for the girls game, funded by Sport England.

Operational Activity - The return to Rugby saw to the full extent the reliance on the CB, further to the RFU Community Game restructure in 2020/21. The Chair, Hon Sec and Council Rep, ably assisted by the exec, continue to be stretched with meetings and forums with RFU staff. This continues to

demand a great deal of time and I would like to place on record my thanks to my colleagues on the exec for sharing this workload.

Finance – This continues to occupy a great deal of time. As noted in my report last year, core funding from the RFU was limited to c£15k less any unused money from the Covid Support Fund. We expect this level of funding to continue into the foreseeable future. We were awarded two smaller pots of money which enabled us to host AGR Festivals, junior cups and maintain our long history of playing the colts and senior finals at Welford Road.

The representative programme was largely funded from grants received this year, grants carried over from the Covid Period, plus some sponsorship. Annual funding received to run the programme on current levels is wholly inadequate leaving some counties to withdraw at short notice after the competition format was announced mid-season. The RFU are acutely aware of the concern from the counties. The executive awaits developments in this area and a full financial report will be published ahead of the SGM.

I conclude by wishing everyone a safe summer, enjoy the break.

### **Age Grade Rugby – Liz Causon**

Age Grade Rugby saw a cautious start to the season with a year of rugby lost to Covid, the RFU decreed that from September to the 1st January 2022 that all age groups played to the year below. In addition whilst age grade is governed by Regulation 15, to assist clubs return to rugby Regulation 22 was adopted which enabled clubs to combine age groups in the Junior Age groups, which has been administered by the CB.

9 clubs sought permission to play 17 year olds' into the Adult game with 26 young people playing up into the adult game.

6 clubs played 23 players up in some cases due to not having the relevant age group in existence

8 clubs played 12 players down

5 clubs had combined age groups impacting 16 age groups; 12 of which took advantage of the Regulation 22 guidance. Community Game Update earlier this month announced that the parameters of Regulation 22 will remain in place for next season.

The enforced break from play had a detrimental effect on schools rugby and through connecting our local Active Partnership, the Leicester Tigers Plus team and three of our clubs were able to host rugby development festivals with hundreds of school children attending hopefully restoring the status quo in schools rugby.

The competitions and festivals team have worked hard to organise a comprehensive schedule of fixtures from January through to the end of the season. The results can be found on the LRU



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website. We were very pleased to be able to run our inaugural U13's girls festival in conjunction with our U11's festival enabling the girls completing their mixed rugby journey to see where their next steps will be.

Our thanks to all the clubs who hosted the festivals and the junior competitions which culminated with the Colts Final being played at Mattioli Woods Welford Road.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the wider LRU AGR personnel in Competitions, Festivals, Safeguarding and Discipline who have supported and helped navigate our Age Grade responsibilities through this season.

### **Leicestershire Schools Rugby Football Union- Phil Smith**

#### **Director of Rugby – Marc Birr**

This has been the most difficult season to plan for coming out of the unprecedented situation of the pandemic with not knowing at the start of the season if any representative rugby would take place in this season. There have been some significant difficulties in some areas of the programme which I will address further on in my report to the membership. On the other hand there have been some fantastic achievements by individuals and playing squads as well, which I will also share with the membership in my report.

Difficulties remain around the issue of funding and resource to deliver the different programmes especially around the championship squads.

The Role of DoR has become too big for one person to coordinate effectively for the membership, I have made a proposal to the executive to bring an assistant DoR in to assist myself. I have already found a volunteer in Graham Dawe, Graham understands the challenges that face us as he has held the post of Manager of the U18s and the U20s in the past 8 years. We plan to undergo a full review of all the programmes to maximise efficiencies and accountability for all the different programmes. Which will result in a report being produced for the executive committee to approve. This will contain a short, mid and long-term plan for the CB at representative level. We currently have all three championship squads playing in division one of their respective county championships for the first time ever, something I think the CB & membership should be very proud of that the clubs are producing players of this standard.

#### **Leicestershire Senior Men's Squad**

This has been the most difficult year for the squad as results have shown. I along with most of the membership were disappointed with this year's campaign. As reigning Division Two Champions and with other successful campaigns the RFU promoted Leicestershire up into division one of the county championships. A challenge that the management, coaching and the players were looking forward to testing themselves against the best. Unfortunately, as the end of the league season approached, one of our senior clubs still had a league fixture to play at the same time as the CB first championship fixture against Lancashire, which hampered selection. The Result doesn't



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reflect the game and the effort put in by the squad. The second half of the game was all Leicestershire which was recognised by the Lancashire President and Captain in the speeches after the game.

The next game against Cheshire at Hinckley RFC is one of the most difficult results I have experienced in my rugby career as a player, coach, and administrator. There is some detail that is not evident in the result itself. We had several injuries and unavailability's for this game. The Management work tirelessly to field the most competitive team possible. To the point of myself questioning if they were doing any work within the full-time working roles they had elsewhere. This effort didn't result in the way we hoped.

There are some bright sides to this campaign, we had 20 debutantes from 8 different clubs from around the CB.

Several of the senior injured players from previous seasons have already committed to next season. I hope to see Leicestershire line up in division one again with a full season of planning and the restructure of the leagues given us the opportunity to be competitive at this level.

I would like to thank Hinckley RFC for putting on a great day, all the players and management team for all their hard work they have put in, while it was not as successful as we have become use to within Leicestershire.

### Leicestershire Ladies

The ladies are the complete opposite to the senior men's team. The Ladies were also promoted up to Division One of the county championship and won the Gill Burns Cup at Twickenham with a stunning victory over Berkshire.

The campaign started away at Cumberland at Seghill RFC who were celebrating their centenary and put on a great show for the game. The ladies ran out comfortable winners. With a bonus point win against North Midlands in their next fixture would result in the Ladies making the final at Twickenham for the second campaign in succession.

The game against the North Midlands was made a little more difficult with unavailability's to key players, but the squad delivered the result in a hard fought game.

The final was a hard-fought affair but the ladies seem to always be in control and ran out winners 40-5. With 2 Hat Tricks from Danny Allen Solly and Sarah Smart.

I want to thank all the players, Coaches, and Managers on a great achievement in our first season in division one.

Also, big thank you to Leicester Forest RFC for picking up the game at short notice.



## Leicestershire under 20s

We saw a change of coaches and management within the U20s, with David Johnson coming in as Head Coach with Dave Weston, Mark Devaville, Jed chapple, and Chris Anderson as assistant coaches. Leon Brown also took on the U20s managers role as well as the Senior men's roll. The Leicestershire under 20s started the campaign with a home fixture at Leicester Forest against North Midlands which was a hard game but the U20s ran out winners 19-7. Setting up a top of the table showdown in division one against East Midlands at Long Buckby. Unfortunately, in a closely fought game which resulted in East Midlands coming out on top. This set up a very tough quarter final against Yorkshire who were the reigning Champions. The game was played a Doncaster Knights Ground which was a great experience for the squad. The result did not go the Leicestershire way but a number of the squad our available for next season.

I would like to thank all involved for all their hard work and effort in the campaign.

## Leicestershire Age Grade Squads

The U18s boys had a very successful year winning all their games and 12 players going forward to the Midlands. 5 players made the starting line-up against the North and two being picked for the virtual England U18s squad, as there was no full squad or games due to the pandemic.

U18s Girls showed that the game is developing in the CB with the standard of rugby showing significant improvement in the core skills of the players. The Girls played in 3 festivals and were competitive in all three of them. 12 players were selected to go forward to the Centre of Excellence at Loughborough Lightning.

U17 Boys had mixed fortunes this season winning one and losing the other two. The squad came up against a very good side in Eastern Counties, which was as good as side as I have seen at that age group. However, this is a development age group for next season U18s.

U16s Boys is now run by Leicester Tigers Under the DDP system, Leicestershire again did very well in the programme with 12 players being selected for the junior academy at Leicester Tigers.

U15 Girls also had a mix fortune in their campaign, playing 3 festivals, the best result for the girls was a very narrow lost to NLD at Lutterworth.

This age group is changing next season and will become the U16 Girls DDP with funding from Sport England and ran by the CB.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Coaches, Managers, committee members past and present, Parents and all the players for all the effort you have put in this season. Weather you were as successful as you would have liked or not, it has been my pleasure to share all the moments with you the good and the not so good and wish you all the best of luck in the coming season.

Marc Birr  
DoR Leicestershire Rugby Union.

## **RFU representative – Peter Howard**

I was delighted to have been re-elected unopposed to the role of RFU Council Member, in March, and I thank all clubs and members for their continued support. I endeavour to visit as many clubs as possible each season to watch the rugby and chat to committee and club members alike. If you would like me to attend on a specific day or for a particular event, please let me know and I will do my best to do so. A number of clubs have contacted me throughout the year for advice and assistance on various matters and to intervene at Twickenham on their behalf and I am always happy to try to assist. Please do not hesitate to pick up the phone or drop me an email and I will endeavour to respond as quickly as I can. In particular, in recent weeks, I have been acting on behalf of four County clubs in relation to the FCS outcomes.

This will be my last three years as an RFU Council Member because of the nine-year maximum service allowed. In March 2025, a new Council Member will need to be elected and I urge Clubs and members to begin to think about who might be interested and suitable. I will be happy to advise and discuss the role with anyone interested.

Whilst the RFU financial forecasts still give some cause for concern, especially since core funding for the CB next year remains static at around £15000, the Union's gradual emergence from the last couple of years of austerity is beginning. This emergence has been slowed, inevitably, by the current financial climate and by the huge rise in utility bills, early indications are that the stadium electricity bill alone will increase three-fold. The Q3 Finance Report shows an improved outturn from forecast with a £0.7m cost excess over revenue down from the £8m forecast.

I was delighted to see former Leicester player Nigel Gillingham elected at the RFU AGM two weeks ago, as RFU President for the forthcoming season. I wish him well for his year in office. Whilst formal RFU Council meetings have continued, they have been a mix of those held face to face, virtual and then hybrid meetings and plenty of work going on behind the scenes. There have been many more informal virtual meetings.

I have continued to attend Council meetings throughout the year, representing the interests of Leicestershire and its clubs; and I have also meetings of the other committees I sit on: Governance Standing Committee and the Diversity & Inclusion Implementation Group. I am pleased to report that I have been re-elected to both Governance and Diversity & Inclusion for another year. In addition, I attend Midlands meetings and LRU Executive Committee meetings, LRU Finance Committee meetings and such other LRU meetings as I am able to fit in. I also try to support the Leicestershire County sides as well as England Men, Women and u20s.

The RFU has appointed a working group looking at Player Return and increasing playing numbers in the adult men's game. This was highlighted as an area of concern in the community game both pre and post covid and the work has now concluded. The group has devised a four-point plan to improve participation:

- 1) Demand – There is a 'Back in the Game' campaign to drive participation through social media and the England Rugby platform. This will be targeted at social players and clubs will be made aware of the benefits of a flexible playing offer.
- 2) Supply – A video sharing 'Top Tips' from the game including using the 'Game On' principles where possible.
- 3) Constituency Body – There is a budget to support a return to rugby programme with the potential of clubs clustering together. The financial support could be used to fund external coaching and the organisation of festivals at constituency body level etc.





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4) Menu – A presentation of case studies and videos through the England Rugby website, Community Game Update and social channels to support clubs to recruit more players. Following this work, there will be a working group looking at the 15 a-side contact game of the future. This will include the possibility of implementing ‘Game On’ to ensure fixtures are completed.

Women’s Rugby World Cup (WRWC). In support of England’s bid to host the 2025 WRWC, the Government have allocated £14.5m of legacy funding to ensure the competition is the best yet.

I have had the pleasure of supporting County sides again this season, from junior age groups to senior women’s and men’s, both home and away. I had very enjoyable away trips with the Men in Lancashire and the Women in Northumberland (including a memorable overnight stop). The County Championship culminated in the women’s fantastic success at Twickenham last month, winning the Division One Gill Burns’ Competition in their first year of promotion. Berkshire were soundly defeated by an impressive 40 points to 5.

I continue to operate my free Bar in the Car at 6N and some Autumn international matches and have had the pleasure of meeting a large number of County club members in this way. The drinks and nibbles are free, and it is a great opportunity to meet and engage socially with folk from other clubs, so if you have the chance do join us, please.. I hope to be up and running for the Autumn Internationals and then again for the 6N matches in the New Year. Look out for the pre-event publicity nearer the time.

Most recently, I have been involved in efforts to encourage a potential Commercial Manager to come on board to assist in raising much needed sponsorship for the LRU and preparing a brief to the RFU to bid for a sum of Commonwealth Games enhanced funding. Going forward, for the next few years, money will continue to be tight, and we must tap all potential sources of funding to help support the CB volunteers in delivering for County Clubs

### **Midlands Leagues – Steve Mounfield**

This was another difficult season for many clubs, mainly due to the continuing Covid situation and also the reduction in playing numbers across the board. Many clubs at the lower levels have reported that there has been a drop off in numbers, the main cause has been players who may have felt they

had one or two more seasons in them, retiring rather than having to spend long and arduous hours getting back to match fitness as well as having found other things to do during lockdown.

The clubs at higher levels, Hinckley, Syston and the four clubs in Midlands 1 have fared better though, of these six, none of the Midlands 1 group won more than half of their games with Market Harborough topping the list with eleven wins and one draw from twenty-four games.

Midlands 2 clubs did better with Forest gaining promotion by topping their League and Market Bosworth and Vipers both winning twelve from twenty-two. The other side of the coin was Ashby, Coalville and Oakham, struggling badly winning only eleven games between them, with all three picking up points deductions as a result.

In Midlands 3 Burbage had a moderate season finishing mid table, as did Melton with eleven and twelve wins from twenty-two respectively. Birstall and Sileby had contrasting seasons, Birstall winning eighteen from twenty-two and gaining promotion while Sileby could only manage five wins in the same league.

Finally in Midlands 4, South Leicester ended the season with just one win from sixteen.

As everyone will know there has been a huge restructuring of Leagues during the closed season. This exercise has taken huge amounts of time, analysis and emails by Divisional staff across the country. I estimate having received or sent around three hundred emails on this between February and May. The outcome is not perfect and was never going to be given the complexity of the operation, but, as happened when leagues were first introduced, things will shake themselves out with promotions and relegations over the next couple of seasons.

### **Competitions – Kevin Hick**

After a difficult season returning after the missed year we did finally manage to complete the leagues and all four produced dominant winners. The cups were an even greater challenge but all were managed to be forced to a conclusion with the county cup final at Welford road and two excellent finals days hosted by Oakham and Melton.

For the forthcoming season a number of teams have dropped out but we will retain four leagues but with fewer teams in each league and aim to complete the league schedule in line with the RFU leagues by early March and finish the season with either premierships style play offs or “mini leagues” to create additional fixtures for the final couple of months of the season.

This change in structure by the RFU will hopefully enable the county cups to be completed more easily in the final couple of months. The county cup competitions will for the 22/23 season be managed by Sam Allardyce and I will look to offer support if and when required.

### **Leicester Society of Rugby Referee's – Mark Elliott**

#### **Discipline – Chris Hayward**

After an early finish to the 2019/20 season (by which time the Discipline Team had dealt with 28 senior cases from 20 clubs and 11 AGR cases from 7 clubs/2 schools) and very little activity in 2020/21... both seasons being impacted by the COVID pandemic, the 2021/22 season presented activity/cases from the beginning of the season and has continued to do so at a 'regular rate'.

Whilst the 2021/22 season has seen similar AGR figures to that of 2019/20 for (14 AGR cases from 8 clubs & 1 school case) senior cases have seen a significant increase to 49 senior rugby cases from 20 clubs. A more detailed summary is contained later in this report.

Now that the season has ended the Discipline team will review the figures and discuss with the RFU where appropriate so any relevant action/activity can be planned before the start of the 2022/23 season.



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It has also proven necessary, again, to hear cases at the end of the season with clubs answering to the charges brought pursuant to RFU Rule 5.12 (...conduct which is prejudicial to the interests of the Union of the Game) in that they had accrued five or more discipline cases through the season.

Clubs, particularly those appearing before the CB Panel for cases brought for 5 or more cases, continue to be reminded that Discipline is integral to the game, being one of Rugby's Core Values (TREDS); it is also part of rugby's 'journey' and needs to be constantly monitored - it is not a 'destination' that is reached at either the start or the end of the season or at any single point in between, it something which requires constant monitoring and consistent attention. Clubs have been reminded that they are seen as one club and not an adult section and an age-grade section. It is important that everyone in the club takes responsibility for ensuring all players uphold the Core Values at all times and where necessary it is a club responsibility to educate all teams in the club. To assist the panel continue to make themselves available to help and support clubs within the CB; we remain keen to be seen to advise and assist rather than simply discipline and impose sanctions where Rules and Regulations are infringed.

The number of Panel members remains at a good level with several new panellists joining for and in the 2021/22 season. Further, potential members have been identified/shown an interest for next season too. The Discipline team continue with its aim to develop, ensuring members remain relevant and are representative of evolving game.

Members of the LRU Discipline team attended a training evening hosted by the RFU Discipline team at Broadstreet RFC on Friday 17th September. This was the "Midlands" Session delivered by the RFU as part of series of nationwide training dates preparing for the new season.

Two notable changes within the CB Discipline team this season were, firstly, Dulcie Hardwick leaving after relocating from Leicestershire to Worcestershire. However, she continues her involvement with Discipline having transferred to the North Midlands Panel. As a player and qualified referee Dulcie's perspective added real value to our hearings and to the team generally. We would like to extend our thanks to Dulcie for her contribution over recent seasons and wish her well as her rugby journey continues.

The second change came in relation to the role of Discipline Secretary and CB Case Manager; Brian Hesford took up the role of Acting Discipline Secretary at the start of the 2020/21 season with a potential successor having been identified as the new Discipline Secretary. With the increased activity Brian worked closely with Geoff Brooks, who is affiliated to the South Leicester club, to integrate Geoff into the role. With Brian leading initially then handing the reigns to Geoff and shadowing him for a further period the transfer of the role of Leicestershire CB Discipline Secretary to Geoff has been very successful. Geoff is now fully up to speed and managing the role very professionally. With a solid rugby background supported by his career in policing Geoff is perfectly suited to the role. Brian continues as a panellist and covers the role of Secretary when Geoff is away on holiday/unavailable through business commitments, during the season.

To ensure consistence and continuity Chris Hayward has been Acting AGR Discipline Secretary for the season. We have a number of candidates who have declared an interest in the role and will be considering them and interviewing over the coming months with the intention of making a new appointment as soon as practicable.

Season summary:

52 senior rugby cases from 20 clubs

45 proven cases does not includes 4 cases, i.e the 4 cases brought under RFU Rule 5.12 (clubs who have accrued 5 or more Red Cards in the season)

7 not proven

13 AGR cases from 9 clubs, 1 school case



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12 proven cases  
1 not proven

Two cases are on-going but have police involvement which needs to be concluded before we can progress further, so remain active.

Senior Offence breakdown:

Punch/Strike with hand, arm, elbow or shoulder = 19  
Match Official Abuse = 8  
2 x yellow cards = 7  
Dangerous, high or tip tackle = 3  
5.12 = 3 (4 x cases for 5 Red cards or more not included in total)  
Stamping/Trampling = 2  
Strike with head = 1  
Charge into a ruck = 1  
9.27 other Enter field of play = 1

AGR Offence breakdown:

Punch/Strike with hand, arm, elbow or shoulder = 7  
Dangerous Ruck = 2  
Dangerous, high or tip tackle = 1  
Strike with head = 1  
Match Official Abuse x 1

Proven Cases By club

Anstey x 1  
Ashby AGR x 1  
Aylestone Athletic x 2  
Aylestone St. James x 1  
Belgrave x 2  
Burbage x 2  
Coalville x 5  
Hinckley x 2 + AGR x 1 (does not include 1st team, info request from RFU but not yet received)  
Leicester Forest x 2 + AGR x 3  
Leicester Lions x 1  
Loughborough x 2  
Lutterworth x 4 + AGR x 2  
Market Bosworth AGR x 2  
Market Harborough x 1  
Melton Mowbray x 2 + AGR x 1  
Oadby Wyggs x 4  
Old Newtownians x 2  
Sileby x 3  
South Leicester x 1  
Syston x 4 + AGR x 1  
Loughborough Uni x 1 (plus 1 not included in stats as missed RFU deadline)  
Vipers x 3 + AGR x 1  
School AGR x1

## **Safeguarding – Shona Green**

The first half of this season focussed mainly upon providing advice to clubs in relation to the Covid-19 guidance provided by the RFU. Whilst there were dedicated staff within the RFU, it was unclear who was to be responsible for this at a CB level and as such, this fell to various members of the committee. Reporting of Covid-19 cases to the RFU by local clubs were feedback to the CBSM.

Since January 2022 and the return to full contact, there have been a number of incidents across the county which have been escalated to the RFU and some have been dealt with at a CB level, either by the CBSM or the discipline committee. It was disappointing to see that a number of incidents involved parents or coaches on the side lines.

All but one club completed the safeguarding audit for this season which was extended due to challenges in returning to play post Covid-19. All but one club have indicated an increase in compliance within the annual safeguarding audit.

There has been a reduction in the scores provided on the audit in relation to how well clubs feels supported by the CBSM at 5 specific clubs. There are still two vacancies for safeguarding assistants within the CB to support the CBSM. Having these unfilled has been a challenge, especially as the CBSM has changed her substantive working post over the season. Recruitment to these roles will be the focus for the first part of the next season.

Play it safe courses have returned to face to face delivery and In Touch courses have remained online. It was pleasing to see so many safeguarding officers from local clubs in these courses. Disappointingly,

a number of clubs have not been consistently ensuring that individuals have completed their e-learning course prior to commencing Disclosure and Barring Checks (DBS) and this has been identified through the audit process by the RFU.

A combined AGR and safeguarding event was delivered at the start of the season and was generally, well attended. It was hoped that this would be replicated, at least one more time within the season but due to time constraints, this has not been possible. There are plans in place to increase these sessions for the next season.

The RFU are holding a safeguarding conference on the 25th and 26th June at Teddington, London. However, due to the cost of this conference and family commitments, the CBSM is unable to attend.

## **Volunteer Co-ordinator – Helen WRIGHTEN**

Due to the change of RFU Sponsor we saw the first Honda Volunteer of the Year Awards. Nominations were received for 13 awards. 8 awards were presented at the County Cup Finals on Tuesday 3rd May. The Leicestershire Volunteer of the Year chosen by Honda was Mike Harley from Market Harborough RFC. Mike will be invited to Twickenham in September along with all the other CB's where the overall winners will be announced.

Thank you to all Volunteers that make Rugby happen in Leicestershire.

## **Game Development and Diversity & Inclusion – Ross Bailey**

Having only been in post since January, much of this brief has been to observe and plan for the 2022/23 season. I have been awaiting access to GMS following a DBS check, which is now in progress, and that will enable an audit of club development volunteers along with ensuring every club has a D&I lead.

Areas for focus in 2022/23:

- Create strong development ties with correct officers at clubs seeking “clubs voice”
- Coach development road map
- Creation of D&I club charter
- Create education opportunities for clubs regarding D&I

## **Facilities and Funding - VACANT**

We anticipate this position will be filled imminently but can report that the RFU Facilities team are in full support as they are aware of the vacancy. They have provided us with the following clubs who have completed the Club Facility audit and urge those who have not yet completed it to do so before the end of July. It will assist with identifying areas where support could be provided.

Belgrave RFC  
Birstall RFC  
Oadby Wyggestonian RFC  
South Leicester RFC  
Hinckley RFC  
Syston RFC  
Leicester Forest RFC  
Market Bosworth RFC  
Anstey RFC  
Birstall RFC  
Ashby RFC  
Syston RFC  
Oakham RFC

## **Marketing and Media – Gail Bates**

Due to taking on the role of Hon Sec, publicity, marketing etc has perhaps fallen by the wayside a little. Although some support from subject specialists within the Executive having been given access to social media pages and that has helped, particularly with Age Grade information. I still seek to find support in this area, so any volunteers are welcome and I would be looking to hand over the press element in full.

Keeping up with posts in the last two months has been extremely difficult with me also starting a new job and the sheer volume of games and events happening has, at times, led to some mistakes, but we are all human!



We have continued to sell off old county kit and this has been received well. More will be added to the site in time and we may look to add supporters gear to bring in additional revenue.

Current Facebook page likes – 2820 (up by 500). Max reach of 29,868.  
Club FB Leicestershire – 885 members  
Current Twitter followers – 3349 (up by 100)  
Current Instagram Followers – 1168 (up by 500) Max reach 3,510  
Most viewed website post – Senior Mens County Cup Final – 712 hits

Our YouTube page has not had any new content this year due to lack of volunteers to film matches and get it uploaded. We were unable to live stream the county games ourselves, but were able to piggy back off Cheshire CB for that game. The CB are investigating the purchase of a Veo filming package to assist with filming games 'hands free'.

I continue to sit on the CB Comms group where we are given advance notification of things coming up, but again I have not always been able to attend these, but a group Whats App has been very helpful and it was good to put faces to names of RFU staff at Twickenham for the county finals.

## **Concluding Remarks**

As previously mentioned, this season has at times, been frantic and frenetic, but we look forward to a short break to recharge our batteries and plan for 2022/23 and hopefully a little more settled in terms of hopefully having kicked Covid into touch!

We have some interesting projects to look forward to in game development and with additional funding from the Commonwealth Games (TBC), we hope to be able to expand the rugby offering to more people and engage with those who may not have engaged before.

The financial situation remains challenging for not just the CB, but also clubs and individuals as we witness energy prices soaring. If you are offered support from the facilities group, I recommend you hear what they have to say.

The Executive Committee, Sub Committee Chairs and Team Managers would like to thank all those member clubs who have supported and assisted the Union during this season both in supplying players for our teams and for the use of their facilities. I would like to thank those clubs who have hosted County matches and congratulate them on their hospitality.

I invite a vote of thanks to our outgoing President, Barbara Crellin and to also congratulate her on her recently awarded MBE. Very well-deserved Barbara, who doesn't just work hard for rugby, but is also a volunteer Community First Responder. And thank you for three years in role over what will go on record as possibly the longest and most unusual period of office. We welcome into the role of President, John Brindley who brings a wealth of experience from his club, Syston RFC.

One final thank you to all the supporters at clubs and unsung heroes who keep our clubs going week in, week out.

Gail Bates



**LEICESTERSHIRE RUGBY**  
STRONG HERITAGE - STRONG FUTURE

Honorary Secretary  
Leicestershire Rugby Union Ltd  
22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022  
Revision 20<sup>th</sup> November 2022

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