

Surrey Spotlight #6

Sept 2024

HELPING OUR CLUBS TO PROSPER
AND THRIVE



IN THIS EDITION

- Honda Volunteer Awards**
- Meet the Surrey Medics**
- Top Hints & Tips**
- Key Points from the AGM**
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Surrey Women

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Chat from the Chair

As I complete my period of tenure as Chair of Surrey Rugby I wanted to thank the large number of volunteers and friends who have supported Surrey Rugby, and myself as Chair, over the last five years.



Most obviously these thanks start with the Executive and Management Committee of Surrey Rugby. These people are all volunteers and commit vast amounts of time, effort and energy to the game they love and have been inspirational in leading the CB through some difficult and challenging times, including the Covid 19 pandemic and the subsequent disruption to our clubs, revenue streams and player engagement. Thankfully we have ridden this storm and our playing engagement – especially through innovative use of “Game On” options and in new formats of the game - have seen a strong return to pre-pandemic levels.

Our innovative use of online marketing, volunteer engagement and communications, led by Joanna Gordon, has revolutionised this area of activity. We have been proud to recognise the efforts of so many volunteers and our communications to and from clubs has never been stronger.

I have been privileged to work with Tyrone Lawless as Deputy Chair (and now Chair) whose boundless energy and enthusiasm has led our competitions activity, outstanding commercial sponsorship and many other aspects of game development. His sterling efforts are recognised not only within the CB but on a wider stage through Divisional and RFU-wide involvement. Tyrone will be an excellent Chair for Surrey and will undoubtedly go on to higher and wider RFU involvement in future years. Meanwhile we must bottle his enthusiasm and sell it!

Our finances have been marshalled by Bruno Plaskow ably supported by Caroline and Jo Fisher. Suffice to say that we are in rude financial health despite providing record support to our clubs and volunteers.

At the same time Bruno has led the successful adoption of the Surrey Rugby Football Union Charitable Trust which has provided support to a wide range of deserving cases throughout the County and will continue to do so in future years.

David Doonan has not only distinguished himself as a committed and proactive President throughout the season but additionally stepped up to the mark as Interim Hon Secretary, drawing on his vast experience with Barnes RFC, when the situation demanded. We send David every best wish as he recovers from recent surgery.

It is invidious to offer thanks and risk offending someone by omission. I apologise therefore to all the other Chairs, Committee Members and key volunteers who have made Surrey such a success story over the last five years and who are not mentioned by name. This in no way belittles their personal commitment and contribution to our activity and I hope they will accept a “blanket thank you” along with our sponsors, Esher and Cobham Rugby clubs and the many others whose work makes Surrey the envy of other counties.

John Pownall
Surrey Rugby Chair - 2019-2024

rep rugby

Surrey Women



The 2024 season for Surrey Women proved a successful one, with a first trip to Twickenham in several years under a new coaching team. Ken Dowding took over the role of Head Coach, with the former London Irish and Bath prop being supported once again by Ali Davis and Stuart Jackson. They were joined by Jayne Meadows as Backs Coach, and the medical team of Hannah Thompson and Rebecca Gregory.

The season got underway with trials held over a three-week period in the depths of winter at Guildford RFC and the Metropolitan Police grounds at Imber Court. They were well attended as always, with an average of over 20 players attending each session. Following these trials, training commenced in March for the senior squad, and Kieran Berry was chosen as the county captain for the season.

The Gill Burns Cup campaign kicked off at Maidenhead RFC against Berkshire. In sweltering conditions on a 4G pitch, the much-changed nature of the squad was shown with twelve players making their county debuts. A cagey opening period burst into life just before the interval. Having fallen behind to a long-range penalty, Surrey took the lead with a try from Georgia Pearson, following a quick tap penalty by Samm Hart, who converted to put Surrey 7-3 up at the break. It was a lead they didn't relinquish, as first Rachel Higgins, and then Joanne Evans, finished off moves set up by Jayne Meadows. Hart completed the scoring with a try of her own and a successful conversion to give Surrey a 24-3 victory and get their season off to the perfect start.

The following weekend, Surrey hosted a double-header with the men's team at Camberley RFC. The fixture was against Buckinghamshire, the team who denied Surrey in the final group game the previous season. After an attritional opening period, Surrey opened the scoring after a piece of opportunism from Jade Hubbard. Her interception and pass sent Lucy Hoad away to score. Meadows kicked the conversion to give Surrey a seven-point lead at the break. It was Meadows who added the next points, as she side-stepped the opposition defence to dive in under the posts. Bree Hill converted to put the hosts two scores clear. Buckinghamshire eventually scored late on, but the Surrey defence, marshalled by the excellent Berry, held on to set up a chance to progress to Twickenham.

The final group game was away to Kent, at Medway RFC. Another game played in warm conditions. It was Surrey who started the game on the back-foot, but despite an early yellow card, Surrey's defence held strong and gradually they gained a foothold in proceedings. They took the lead midway through the half, with Meadows receiving the ball in centre-field, and disappearing through a gap with a deft drop of the shoulder and giving Surrey an advantage they didn't let go of. It was a score that Meadows was to repeat just before half-time, another dummy giving her space to get through the Kent defence. Bree Hill converted to give the visitors a twelve-point lead at the break. The second period was a lesson in how to see a game out, with Surrey scoring further tries through Georgia Pearson and Beth Evans. Hill converted a further try and despite an effort from the hosts, Surrey comfortably held on to win 24-5 and set up the date at Twickenham.

rep rugby

Surrey Women



The final at HQ was against the Gill Burns Cup holders, a well-supported Yorkshire side, whose men's team had lost a thrilling final to Kent earlier in the afternoon. Arriving through the main gates, the Surrey squad made the most of their day out, mingling with family and friends. When the action got underway, it was clear that Yorkshire weren't willing to give up their title readily. Following a massive downpour that made handling for both sides difficult, Yorkshire started to get a grip on the game, with their forwards carrying well and stretching the Surrey defence, all this despite losing their captain and her replacement within the opening ten minutes. Once Yorkshire did score, it was through their full-back, with the forwards providing the platform. A further two tries followed before the interval, interspersed by a Surrey yellow card. Yorkshire were now rampant, and courageous defence from Surrey kept them out for a while, before finally conceding. Yorkshire were now out of sight, but the spirit shown by the Surrey players manifested in a try for substitute Ellie Grove. Yorkshire had the final score, to complete a deserved 37-5 victory.

There was one final, happy postscript to the day, with second row Spencer Hastings being proposed to on the pitch at full time by her boyfriend, Ross Brooker. Congratulations to both (Spencer did say yes!).

As one season ends, another is already in the planning. To be part of the journey next season, register your interest at <https://surreyrugby.co.uk/surrey-teams/men-women/womens-1st-xv>

Jacqui McGreal
Women's Manager
Surrey Senior County Women



game development

Update

We received £10,000 from the RFU to support Game Development priorities of recruiting and retaining Coaches and Referees whilst delivering CPD sessions tailored at improving the quality throughout the county.

Highlights of Game Development Delivery were:

COACHING

- *124 coaches attended CPD workshops throughout the season focussing on: Principles of Attack - Principles of Defence -Tackle Height - Breakdown & counter attack - Sessions held across multiple surrey clubs for both players and coaches
- Twelve referees supported for the ERCA course and mentored throughout the season
- Eight x CPD sessions were delivered at values festivals and waterfall finals with over 150 youth coaches in attendance
- Further sessions delivered in the summer focussing on 7s skills and Strength & Conditioning pre-season planning with 36 coaches in attendance
- Scrum half and kicking master class sessions delivered alongside Middlesex with over 50 coaches in attendance
- Six coaches supported on the advanced coaching award with mentors to support
- All Representative coaches supported with additional coaching CPD to further develop a team surrey philosophy
- CB engagement session held alongside RFU to clubs Coaching Coordinators CCC's focussing on training plans and areas of priority

REFEREE SUPPORT

- Four x Introduction to Referee courses delivered aimed at Young Match Officials
- Worked with the London Society to deliver seven Take Up The Whistle courses across the clubs with 120 in attendance receiving shirts and further support
- Twelve people were supported with ERRA course and mentored throughout the season
- Club network meetings held across the clubs focussing on the new laws and tackle height law changes
- Four online forums delivered to club referees focussing on Law Change discussions.
- Additional CPD and workshops delivered at values festivals and finals days
- Surrey YMO's officiated at the Quins finals at the stoop
- CB engagement session held alongside RFU to Club Referee Coordinators (CRC's) focussing on training plans and areas of priority
- A further £10,000 target funding grant was received to focus on 18-23 transition and a conference was held in July with 25 coaches attending
- Three CPD sessions were held throughout the season with high level trainers to improve the skill set

*Over 80 matches were played throughout the season as part of this format with over 350 under 22s in attendance over the Christmas and Easter period with a competitive playing offer.



CPD COACHING AT ESHER RFC

the game

Top Hints & Tips

1) Communications & GMS Golden Roles

It's crucial that your Club GMS Golden Roles are up to date. Starting from September 1st 2024, the County Office and the RFU will be communicating through the emails linked to these roles. Ensure your Club Data Officer maintains these records accurately to stay informed.

2) 17-Year-Olds Playing Adult Rugby

If a 17-year-old wishes to play adult rugby, specific RFU regulations must be followed, including completing club and player approval forms. This approval is valid for 12 months or until the player turns 18. Approval forms can be found [HERE](#)

3) Tours, Camps, & Overnight Stays

Please ensure Surrey RFU approval is secured for all tours, overnight stays, rugby camps, and club festivals. Failure to obtain approval may invalidate your RFU insurance.

4) Rugbysafe

Ensure your club's First Aid Risk Assessment and Medical Emergency Action Plan are up-to-date. Two new CPD courses are available for club First Aiders, offering essential training for managing pitchside injuries and post-injury return to play.

5) Safeguarding

Club Safeguarding Self-Audit Now Live: All clubs offering Age-Grade activities or with 17-year-olds playing up to adult rugby must complete the mandatory GMS Club Safeguarding Self-Audit. This audit is to be completed by the CSO, Assistant CSO, or an officer with Level 2 permission or higher. To access the audit, go to the GMS questionnaire tab under the Organisation Profile Module. For more details, refer to [Regulation 21, point 21.1.6].

6) Discipline Reporting

All discipline cases must be reported within 48 hours to the Discipline Committee. Late reporting of Red Cards may result in fines, which must be settled before the player can resume play. Contact information available [HERE](#).

7) Permission to host a Festival or Tournament

A reminder that clubs and schools must ask for CB permission to host a festival or tournament that includes more than 3 teams. The committee will review the requests alongside the Risk Assessment and Age Grade calendar.

8) Playing Up or Down an Age Group or Clustering

As per regulation 15, all clubs must get individual player permission from the CB for players to play and train up or down an age group or to combine age groups. Each application will be individually reviewed against set Regulation 15 criteria and player wellbeing.

9) Financial Accounts

All clubs must submit their end of year finance accounts to the treasurer of Surrey Rugby as per RFU regulation.

10) First Aid Vouchers

Surrey Rugby have First Aid vouchers to allocate to clubs and individuals to ensure clubs meet pitchside medical requirements. If you wish to apply for a voucher please contact Surrey Rugby via our Rugby Safe Lead, link [HERE](#).

11) Refs and Coach Courses & CPD Sessions

Surrey Rugby will be running several Referee and Coaching Courses throughout the season and will also be allocating RFU vouchers for attendance on RFU courses. Please check the [Game Development](#) section on the SurreyRugby website for more details.

12) Player Registration

Thank you to all the volunteers working hard on Adult and Age Grade registration. All players must be registered to play this season.



the club

Raynes Park RFC

Is this Raynes Park player the oldest regular player in the RFU leagues?

Raynes Park's Russ Price continues to play weekly (and weakly! – his own words) at Counties 5 Surrey level, at the age of 65. Having begun his Rugby-playing career upon entry to King Edward VI Grammar School, Stratford-upon-Avon, he played representative Rugby at all age levels throughout his school career, ultimately at 1st XV in Lower- and Upper-6th forms.

1st XV Rugby at Stratford-upon-Avon RFC and Warwick University RFC followed.

Moving to south-west London in 1984, Russ found himself at Raynes Park RFC where he has played his rugby ever since, and where he has been Secretary (with a 3-season hiatus) since 1988.

In season 2022-23 he played in all but one of Raynes Park's league fixtures, and put in a full 80-minute shift in their victory over Merton in the Surrey Waterfall series final – the first ever 15-a-side trophy win in the club's history.



Notable milestones reached whilst at Raynes Park:
Played continuously for 50 years.
Played at least one 1st XV game at age 60 (and 61, 62, 63, 64 and 65)

If he is fortunate enough still to be able to play during next season, it will be his 40th anniversary season at Raynes Park, and he will have played Rugby continuously for 55 years.

Russ puts his longevity on the field down to his personal dietician – Mr Arthur Guinness, and his two personal fitness coaches – Messrs Benson & Hedges.

Is Russ the oldest regular player in the RFU leagues?

the county

Key points from the AGM

Surrey Rugby's AGM was held on Zoom and saw quite a few changes amongst the Committee. Chair John Pownall stepped down from his role after five years and moved to become President. Jo Fisher (Chobham) was elected as Vice-President - and will be holding the role of President during the Women's World Cup year. David Doonan (Barnes) had a very active year as President, as he also assumed the role of temporary Honorary Secretary. That role now falls to Graham Shaw (Met Police).



TYRONE LAWLESS
Chair

Our new Chair is Tyrone Lawless (Esher), with new Vice Chair Steve Heard (Cobham), moving in to fill the space Ty vacated.

Joanna Gordon (Esher) is the new Chair of Club Development and Jools Goringe (Chobham) the new Chair of Youth Development. Darrell Spencer (Esher) is new Chair of Minis.

Gavin Bolton (Met Police) has moved to Head of Governance, and John Simmonds (Esher) is DOR of Junior Rep Rugby. Bric Tyson (Guildford) takes on the roles of Senior Competitions and RFU ROC Member. Pandy Patel (Sutton & Epsom) is Chair of Junior Boys and Sue Gardner (Guildford) Chair of Women's Growth. Holly Falconer-Leeds (Haslemere) is the new Rugby Safe Lead, with Sarah Hall (Esher) as Discipline Secretary. Bios for some are in this edition of the newsletter, with more to follow in subsequent issues.

Many thanks to all those committed volunteers who took on roles and did an fantastic job. Surrey Rugby is in an excellent position financially and organisationally, playing lots of rugby and enjoying improved connections.

Congratulations to those elected to the role of Vice President for Surrey Rugby. This prestigious, honorary role is given to those members of Surrey clubs to have shown outstanding service to their club over a significant period of time. The recipients this year were: Tapuwa Chabata - Egham Hollowegians, William Fawcett - Old Cranleighans, Richard Fenech -Barnes, Mark Fisher - Chobham, Iain Greg -Egham Hollowegians, Kevin Kearney - Weybridge Vandals, Richard Pennington - Chobham, Andrew Pickering - Barnes, Andrew Thumwood - Merton, Bric Tyson - Guildford & Surrey Rugby, Bonney Venning - Richmond Chris Williams - Barnes, Jeremy Isaacs - Reeds Weybridge.

A message from the new Chair

A Big Welcome to the 2024-25 season!

As the new rugby season begins, we are working hard to support our clubs and volunteers in delivering great rugby experiences to our players, coaches and communities. We've introduced NEW systems to reduce the administrative burden on volunteers and hope to implement more changes and improvements as the season progresses. As we gear up for another exciting year of rugby, we've compiled essential updates and reminders to help your club hit the ground running. Read, share across your rugby members and let the season commence!

I would personally like to thank John Pownal for the dedication and professionalism he put in as Chair during these last five years, in steadying the ship through Covid and leading the Committee and CB Committee Volunteers supporting our clubs to prosper and thrive through support with on the field and off the field activities. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working alongside John as Vice Chair and look forward to leading our CB together with the new committee - supporting our clubs, players and other stakeholders now John has handed over the baton. The new structure, list of committee members and pillars documents can be found on our website.



Our Strategic Priorities for the season are:

1) Rugby Development

Continue to support the adult male game recovery, focussing on transition from Colts into Seniors ensuring the playing offer reflects the local needs, whilst retaining players and providing playing opportunities for Vets and non-traditional rugby offering such as Tag/ Touch and Walking Rugby.

2) Referees

Recruit, retain and further develop Referees working alongside the Referees Society, with particular focus on Young Match Officials.

3) Coaching

Recruit, retain and further develop club Coaches and ensure our CPD offering is varied and flexible, whilst providing mentors to support their development.

4) Rugby Participation & Growth

Support the growth and development of the Women's and Girl's game on and off the pitch in the lead up to the home World Cup.

5) Representative Pathways

- Ensure our Representative Pathway and framework provides high quality coaching, and playing experience for all qualifying players within the county
- Form strong cohesive links with the Academy and Divisional Pathway partners to ensure multiple entry and exit points for players to be given full opportunity to reach their potential and be kept in the game

6) Governance & Finance

Support our clubs off the pitch with communication, guidance, advice and sharing best practice on: Governance, Financial Management & Performance, Regulations, Discipline, Safeguarding, Audits, Risk Assessments and being Rugby Safe compliant.

A message from the new Chair

7) Club Development

Help our clubs to prosper and thrive with support, advice and sharing best practice on club facilities, grounds, purchasing equipment, club sustainability, volunteer recognition and growing club leaders.

8) Age Grade & Education

- Provide Rugby activity, competitions and regulation guidance for Minis & Junior Boys and Girls ensuring our offering reflects the playing philosophy and Age Grade Codes of Practice
- Work alongside our educational partners to ensure the playing offer is proportionate to players needs and steer the clubs and schools to be aligned to the Age Grade Calendar requirements
- Improve Clubs/Schools/ Academies relationships by increasing liaison opportunities

9) Diverse and Inclusive

Ensure that rugby union in Surrey reflects the whole community. Ensure our values, philosophy ethos and culture are reflected in everything we do as a CB and support clubs to deliver this.

- Support clubs to be more welcoming, diverse and inclusive
- Support clubs to be more reflective of their local community
- Develop a Diversity and Inclusion Charter in partnership with our clubs and stakeholders.
- Promote the games values, ethos and playing philosophy of the RFU and constantly promote the code of conduct charter across our CB stakeholders.

10) CB leadership & Succession Planning

- Lead the Constituency Body in a way that delivers for today and enhances the future and support clubs to be sustainable for the future
- Support and further develop our committee members with career professional development opportunities
- Ensure we have a transparent and fair recruiting process to recruit, retain and develop a committee and volunteers that reflect the localised community throughout the CB.

This strategy is for everyone involved in rugby union in Surrey and we need your help in bringing it to life and in making these plans into actions that support and develop rugby across the CB.

We'd love to hear how you're putting our strategic priorities to work by supporting and developing Rugby Union for the enjoyment of everyone and we promise to provide you with regular updates on the progress we are making towards these season's priorities and our strategic pillars.

We're really pleased to share our three year strategic plan with you. Working with over 150 different representatives from our clubs, schools and community, including our coaches, our players, our match officials, our County administrators and RFU staff, we've developed the Six Pillars strategy that gives clear purpose and structure to all of our activity.

Have a fantastic season and I look forward to seeing you around the grounds and at Surrey events as do my fellow committee members.

Thanks
Tyrone Lawless



the people



Meet your Surrey Team



GRAHAM SHAW
Honorary Secretary

My professional background for the last 20 years has been in IT, Product and Transformation roles having worked for Diageo, the Financial Conduct Authority and most recently Kimberly Clark. Alongside this I have also been a Trustee of Sherborne in the Community for 10 years supporting young people in London and enabling Depaul UK to deliver their services from the charity's building near London Bridge.

After playing at school, my involvement in rugby within Surrey started by coaching my kids at Warlingham RFC as well as the occasional playing appearance and representing the Women's and Girls section on the club committee. After retiring from playing due to injury, I focussed on coaching in multiple environments. Initially coaching within the Surrey boys DPP program before it stopped, I then took a role with Harlequins DPP at Brighton and Cobham. In parallel I started coaching with the Surrey girls program and have developed on to be the Lead of the U18 County program and U16 PDG Foundation. More recently I've become the head coach of the Met Police RFC and started coaching with the Scotland Qualified program.



STEVE HEARD
Vice Chair

Steve's history with Cobham RFC started when his son joined the Minis section. He quickly took the lead, with a group of other parents, to take the age group forward. As under 15s they took 33 boys accompanied to South Africa which was a unique and fantastic experience for all concerned. As his son joined the second team, Steve moved to run that.

During this period Steve also became Youth Chair, during which time they won the National Under 17 Cup, in a memorable day at Franklin's Gardens Leicester.

Steve became Cobham RFC and Cobham Rugby & Sports Association Chair 12 years ago. The later involves managing the commercial activities of the Club and developing the grounds for all the sports hosted there. During this time Cobham installed the AGP. The RFU have been delighted with the venture and many other clubs have asked about how the process worked.

Steve plays tennis and golf and watches a lot of rugby, cricket, athletics and soccer. He believes passionately that all forms of sport activity are good, particularly for children to learn and develop life skills.



BRIC TYSON
Senior Competitions

Bric originates from Australia where he played representative age group rugby for Sydney and New South Wales before leaving for Asia and a career in financial markets.

In Asia, besides working and enjoying the culture he played club rugby and gained caps for All Japan Exiles and Hong Kong.

His journey brought him to England where he played for Esher and Surrey in the County Championships.

A move to Guildford Rugby Club saw him into the role of 1st team layer and coach in addition to being part of the County coaching team leading the Championship and Mighty Oakes teams.

With his playing days over, he turned his hand to administration and was Club President of Guildford RFC for 5 years, until stepping down in 2023. Bric also plays an active role in coaching the girls teams at Guildford.

Joining the senior committee at Surrey Rugby, Bric will Chair Senior Competitions and be the Surrey Rugby ROC representative to the RFU.



the club

Kingston RFC

Founded in 1887 Kingston RFC is a modern, amateur rugby club with thriving Mini and Junior sections and two Senior Men's teams. Despite a difficult season this year, the club has recently gained promotion into the seventh tier of the RFU league system.

One of the stalwarts at Kingston RFC is Jon Tyler. Having first started his rugby journey in Gloucestershire aged 10 at school, Jon joined the Colts at Kingston RFC in 1971/72 before heading off to University in Coventry, then lived in Birmingham for four years. It was during that pre-university period that he recalls his mother receiving a phone call from the Club Captain at Kingston RFC asking whether she would allow her son to play for the 1stXV as they needed a substitute Scrum Half for their Surrey Cup semi final. That was his first outing for the Senior Men's, aged 16.

Fast forward 53 years and Jon again received a phone call, this time asking him to sit on the bench for the 1st XV as a substitute prop due to injuries and unavailability. Within 10 minutes Jon was brought onto the pitch due to an injury and played 70 minutes against Twickenham RFC, with his son Tom as his Hooker.

Jon has been a great servant to not only our club but also The House of Commons and Lords where he has represented them on tours to USA, Argentina, Australia, France and Japan to name a few. During that time he has had the honour of playing in charity matches at Twickenham on several occasions.





the awards

Honda Awards 2023-24

Your CB committee finished off the season by visiting the remaining clubs of the final recipients of Honda Awards for 2023-24, and presenting their certificates. Over this season we have visited a record-breaking 57 clubs, presenting 107 certificates. The whole committee really enjoyed the experience and appreciated the hospitality offered to us when we visited. So important to get out and about, meeting clubs, players and committee members around the county.



Stefan Skrzynski at Bec Old Boys



Ian Lambert, Jack Caniff & Michael Thumwood at Merton RFC



Pete Codd at Kingston RFC



Angus Phillipson at Battersea Ironsides



Ben Lawrence at Old Haileyburians



the awards

Honda Awards 2023-24



Russell Price at Raynes Park RFC



Simon Lawes at Old Cranleighans RFC



Harri Lowther at Racal Decca RFC



Streatham & Croydon



Chris Northwood at Lightwater RFC

The committee looks forward to visiting many clubs again next season to hand out well-deserved awards from this seasons' Honda Awards, and also learn more about what's going on at each club and where we might be able to help.



the club

It never rains but it pours



Weybridge Vandals home ground for nearly 90 years has been on Desborough Island which is the largest island on the Thames idyllically situated between Weybridge and Walton.

Unfortunately in early January the impact of Storm Henk and the heavy rainfall it brought resulted in serious flooding around Desborough island and all the clubs pitches were flooded.

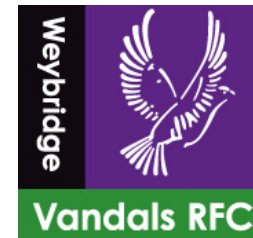
Thanks to a small army of club volunteers everything of value was lifted off the ground so the vast majority of flood damage was restricted to the pitches.

Vandals President wrote to the RFU operations Director Steve Grainger who arranged a site visit from RFU ground/pitch specialists and facilities manager Rick Bruin. The club also had visits from ECB ground specialists. An action plan was put in place to make All the clubs pitches safe to play on once the flood water had subsided and get rugby back being played as soon as possible. Unfortunately the flood was followed by a big freeze and turned the pitches into a giant frozen lake attracting ice skaters and curlers to the club.

The club was closed for rugby for 3 three weeks but thanks to the hard work of volunteers and the clubs' ground crew the club was able to fulfil its 1st XV league fixture against KCS at the end of January and re-open for mini and junior rugby that same weekend which made all the hard work worthwhile.

Unfortunately there was a high and unbudgeted cost of making the pitches safe to play on. The well publicised state of the Thames river water meant that all the club's pitches had to be scrapped and sprayed with an antibacterial sanitizer.

The club is in ongoing discussions with the RFU and Sports England over grant support to cover some of these costs. The club also suffered a significant loss in trading income from having to close and is pursuing local authority flood relief grant support.



the club

Weybridge Vandals RFC

“Wholesale flooding is a traumatic experience to go through that I wouldn’t wish on any sports club” said club President Kevin Kearney “but it also showed the best in the local rugby community. As a club we were incredibly grateful to local clubs who supported our Mini and junior sections during this period notably our friends at Esher RFC who hosted our minis during our club closure period. We were also grateful to Staines RFC who provided a venue for our senior teams to train at in contrast to one of our league rivals who showed zero empathy for what we were going through as a club and even tried to claim points because of our decision to postpone our fixture whilst our ground was under water.”

Adversity reveals character and Kearney is very proud of the character the club has shown in adversity “Despite the trauma of the flooding we experienced the club has still had a positive season finishing 3rd in Surrey/Sussex Counties 1 despite not being able to use our flood damaged training pitch since December. Our mini and Juniors continue to thrive. We successfully hosted a large mini festival in March and our Island Rocks floodlit mini festival in April. Whilst it was very unwelcome at the time I believe our forced closure in January has made everyone appreciate more than ever what an amazing club we have”.

Kevin Kearney
Weybridge Vandals President





the awards

Honda Awards 2024-25

The next year of Honda Volunteer Awards was kicked off with our annual event celebrating all nominated volunteers. It was held at Cobham RFC and was a fantastic evening. After welcome drinks on a lovely summer's evening, we moved upstairs for awards, raffle prizes and an excellent buffet. Due to such large numbers of nominees, we have pulled out any nominated for their volunteer role within Surrey Rugby (in large rep rugby) and will host an event for those nominees in early September. Congratulation to all those nominated and we look forward to rewarding as many as possible throughout the upcoming season.



Some of the finalists with Surrey President Dave Doonan

From all the nominations, Surrey Rugby put forward five to the RFU. The RFU then choose two to attend a black tie dinner along with all the nominations from every county.

Our nominees this year were Caroline Pitt (Old Rutlishians) Duncan Heyes (Guildford), Sarah Macey & Nic Churchill (Cranleigh) and Pandy Patel (Sutton & Epsom).

The RFU chose Caroline Pitt and Nic Churchill as their finalists.

Here are some photos of the evening, but more are available via our online [GALLERIES](#)



the awards

Surrey Awards 2024-25

The end of Season Awards Evening was a fabulous evening as usual! The full range of awards -90 team and individual in total - were handed out speedily, hosted by John Inverdale. This was followed up with a delicious barbeque on a sunny evening at Esher. Here are a selection of photos of the night, more are available via our online [GALLERIES](#).

Many congratulations to all those teams and individuals who won an award. It was fantastic to see so many of you there on the night, with friends and family supporting.



It was a packed out venue at Esher!



YMO Male & Female Awards went to Morgan Softley (Old Rutlishians) and Natalie Gregory (Chobham)



Women's NC1 South East (South) - Guildford Gazelles



Surrey Counties 2 - Old Rutlishians RFC



Peter Vernon Shield Winner U18 Girls - Hati Sutherland



Enjoying the barbeque and a cold drink on one of the few hot days in early summer



the awards

Surrey Rugby Honda Awards

With so many nominations in the Honda Awards this year, we decided to pull out anybody nominated for their role for Surrey Rugby - rather than for their club - and hosted them separately at an evening at Old Cranleighans, where the Surrey Rugby office is located.

It was great to get together with 'Team Surrey' ahead of the next season. Congratulation to all those nominated and for everything you do for rugby within Surrey.



Surrey President Dave Doonan with Nick Atkins, Head Coach of Surrey Rugby Youth



with Jools Goringe, Chair of Youth Rugby & Pathway



with John Simmonds, Coach Development Officer



with Andy Dickin, Graham Shaw, Rob Agnew and Hannah Thompson, Surrey Girls Coaches



with Jo Fisher and Jacqui McGreal, rep rugby team managers



with Harry Callum, Darrell King & Giles Morgan, Surrey Boys Coaches

the game

England Deaf Rugby

One of Surrey Rugby's Women's Team players - Samm Hart - will be heading to South Africa on an international tour with the England Women's Deaf Rugby Union team.

A Biological Sciences student at the University of Brighton, as well as representing her county Samm is also part of Brighton's Panthers rugby team and plays in the Rugby Women's Championship for Richmond Rugby Club.

She was a late selection for a self-funded place in the 27-woman squad, which goes on tour in August, after she replaced an injured player.

The tour is self-funded so Samm set up a crowdfunding page to raise the £2k needed. Surrey Rugby was delighted to be able to support this incredible achievement through its charity arm, with a sizable donation towards the costs.

Samm said "This tour will involve my debut for my country and add international caps to my playing history. It will be a great opportunity to develop my rugby community and skills to a higher level and fully integrate myself into my new team. The tour will consist of full XV matches and, as a team, we will be delivering some charity projects during our downtime. This is a great opportunity and honour to play for my country, and I can't begin to describe what it personally means to me. There will be ceremonies to celebrate the tournament while we are out there, and surprises and treats along the way. I am really looking forward to this tour, and I am incredibly grateful for all the support I have received to enable me participate."

On returning from her tour, playing Bryanston, Daspoort, Ferndale and Sizwile - Samm said, "Going on tour was one the best experiences of my life. Memories and friends were made that will stay with me forever. It was such an honour to play in the rose. Thanks to all that made this possible."



the people

Meet the Surrey Medics



COLETTE GOVEIA



CALLUM STONE



JANE MILTON



ANNA GIOACPAZZI



IZZY FISHER

You may well have seen some of the team pitch-side but here is an opportunity to put names to faces for our full Surrey Medics team, invaluable caring for all players week-in, week-out, come rain or shine.

Surrey's Head of Medical for many years - Hugh Scott - decided to step down after many brilliant years of service and, in May, I took over. This exciting role allows me to collaborate with various teams and players at different stages of their careers, and to work closely with incredible medical professionals experienced in diverse fields.

Each member of our medical team is assigned to an age group or team to ensure continuity with players, coaches, management, and parents, whilst also being available to assist each other as needed. When injuries occur, we provide the highest level of immediate care and follow up with players or their parents to offer the best advice for rehabilitation, whether within our county campaign or with their club or private medical teams. For short-term injuries, we assess and decide on the safest and most appropriate return-to-play options.

Izzy Fisher



HANNAH THOMPSON



DON HOWDEN



DEAN TOOBY



REBECCA GREGORY

rep rugby

Surrey Under 18 Girls

Sixty-seven players were nominated by clubs and schools to be assessed for the Surrey U18 Girls Squad at the end of October 2023. For the first time, CBs were not allowed to select players who were part of the England Rugby Centre of Excellence or those who had been selected for the England pathway.

This gave players, who may not otherwise have an opportunity to play for Surrey, the chance to shine. Thirty-seven players were selected for the squad representing ten different clubs and including 2 players who were nominated by their school and did not play club rugby.

The first match on 26th November 2023 was against Middlesex at Grasshoppers RFC. The majority of the Surrey U18 Girls Squad of 2022/23 had moved up to adult rugby or been selected to play at a higher level, so it was a new squad who had only been together for two training sessions, who took the field against Middlesex, traditionally strong opponents.



It was the Surrey players who absolutely dominated the match, strong forwards play releasing the fast backs to score 50 unanswered points before half time. With the match won, Surrey took the opportunity to reduce the number of players and try girls in different positions during the second half friendly. As always Middlesex were great hosts after the match and the girls enjoyed a meal together and player of the match presentations.

The second match against Hertfordshire, on the 17th December, was a much closer affair. Hosted by Surrey at Guildford RFC, the Surrey team seemed tired - not surprising this close to the Christmas break - and it was a hard fought match, won by Surrey with a last minute try 27 - 22. A very relieved Surrey team hosted Hertfordshire for a post-match meal and presentations.

Unfortunately, the opposition for the final County fixture on 14th January pulled out, having been beaten well by Middlesex they were concerned that Surrey were too strong for their squad. Despite many phone calls and messages to other County Managers, no replacement opposition was available, so the Surrey squad finished their season with a fun internal match at Esher RFC. All players participated, and it gave the coaches a last opportunity to see the players in action before nominations were made to the new U18 Girls England Player Development Group.

All in all, a great season and it is always a pleasure to see the girls come together from different clubs and schools and gel so well, both on and off the pitch.

Thank you to the coaching team, Graham Shaw, Hannah Thompson, Andy Dickin and Callum Tilleray for your time, enthusiasm and expertise and to the medical team of Colette Goveia and Callum Stone for looking after the players so well.

Jo Fisher, U18 Girls Manager



the support Your CB out and about



the support Your CB out and about

As well as visiting clubs to present Honda volunteer awards to those who couldn't make it to the Awards Evening we've been getting around the county to as many clubs as possible. We have visited a record number of clubs this season!



Dave Doonan & Keith Heal with Egham RFC supporters Matthew Griffin (Chair), Tim Smith and Hugh Blackman



Awarding a Surrey VP to Penny McCarthy of Old Emanuel RFC



The Surrey Committee out in force to help on U22 Finals Day at Esher



President Dave Doonan at the Wimbledon vs Barnes lunch



Nick & Sharon Bush, Alan Maylon & Michael Jelley from Chipstead RFC



With Berkshire CB at the U20 Men's game



At London Irish enjoying their pre-match hospitality



Large contingent at the recent Surrey Awards Evening at Esher



Law Society RFC President James Fitzsimmons



Phil Topley, President of Raynes Park RFC



Surrey Chair with one of Farnham's Active refs as part of the Young Match Official program



Keith Heal with the two Jo's running the Honda Volunteer Evening at Cobham

youth rugby

Overview of the season

The Youth Rugby management team, lead by Jools Goringe and Pandy Patel, once again managed to arrange for the finals of the Youth Season to be held at The Stoop, which was very well received by all the teams involved. Many thanks to the Harlequins for hosting and making these games such amazing memories, helping inspire our young players to train harder and peruse their rugby dreams.



U14 Girls Winners - Chobham



U15 Boys Winners - Wimbledon



U16 Girls Winners - Guildfordians/Streatham-Croydon



U16 Boys Winners - Warlingham



U18 Girls Winners - Old Reigatians



U18 Boys Winners - Rosslyn Park

the club

Harry Pitts and Cardiac Risk in the Young

On 30th July last year one of London Irish Amateur RFC's under 14 age group players, Harry Pitts, suddenly passed away in his sleep.

Harry had been part of London Irish since he was 5 years old and was one of the nicest and kindest lads who loved the sport he was great at. He is dearly missed.

While Harry's tragic sudden death is unexplained, every week, at least 12 fit and healthy young people die of undiagnosed heart conditions.



HARRY PITTS

Harry's parents Clare and Ben decided to do something to reduce this number through a cardiac screening programme, coordinated by Cardiac Risk in the Young, CRY, <https://www.c-r-y.org.uk/> who seek to prevent young sudden cardiac deaths through awareness, screening and research, and who support affected families.

CRY believes all young people aged 14-35 should have the opportunity to be screened. Cardiac incidents can take place at any time. They are not limited to high-intensity sport - they may occur just jogging across the park or when asleep at night. The screening programme is not just for people who play sport.

The Under 14 age group players and parents, led by Head Coach Chris Higgins and with the support of London Irish Amateur RFC, embarked upon a fund-raising initiative to raise £8,500 to host a screening event to enable 100 of Harry's friends and children of his friends and families to get screened. The Under 14 players and coaches undertook a 10 Kilometre sponsored walk on 7th January in memory of Harry.

A GoFundMe page was set up and in three weeks almost £12,000 was raised to enable the screening programme to take place.

The group pledged that any money raised in excess of £8,500 will be split between CRY and local charity Momentum Children's charity <https://www.momentumcharity.org/> who support bereaved families and families whose children have serious illnesses.

The London Irish Under 14s thank everyone who contributed to the fundraising initiative.

the people

rep rugby

Surrey Under 20's



Meet your Surrey Team



SARAH HALL
Discipline Secretary

Sarah joined the Surrey Disciplinary Committee in 2023, assuming the role of Assistant Disciplinary Secretary. With a robust background in rugby administration and a deep-seated passion for the sport, she brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her current position.

Sarah has been an integral part of Esher's RFC disciplinary team, and is also heavily involved with youth rugby at the club.

Professionally, Sarah serves as a Cloud Technology Lead at Oracle Cloud Computing Services.

Her passion for rugby was ignited during her school years, when she represented London Welsh.

In her new role Sarah is committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity and fairness in disciplinary proceedings, thereby contributing to the overall growth and development of the sport.



DARRELL SPENCER
Chair of Mini Rugby

Darrell has been with Esher RFC since 2017 when his son started playing in the Minis U5s and Darrell began coaching. In 2018 he took on - and continues with - the Team Manager role.

In 2021, Darrell became Minis Fixture Secretary at Esher and held the position for 3 years. He continues to be a cornerstone of the Club community.

Completing several Rugby Football Union (RFU) courses has equipped Darrell with coaching techniques and a thorough understanding of player development, safety, and well-being.

Darrell's passion for rugby now extends beyond Esher Rugby Club to the wider Surrey rugby community as he has taken on the role of Chair of Mini Rugby. He can now actively share his knowledge and enthusiasm, contributing to the growth and development of the sport across the county where he hopes to help foster a strong rugby culture and support the development of young players throughout the region.



HOLLY FALCONER-LEEDS
Rugby Safe Lead

Holly's involvement with rugby began five years ago when she joined Haslemere Community Rugby Club. She started out as first aid for the senior team before undertaking Rugby Safe Lead for the last three years.

Holly continues to cover first aid for the Seniors and Colts for Haslemere, keeping her weekends full and travelling around the county!

Outside of rugby Holly has worked in special educational needs for over ten years and is now Headteacher of a small specialist setting in Surrey. She has undertaken education consultancy across the county to help other schools improve systemic processes.

She really enjoys ensuring the club has good first aid provision and offers support to those new first aiders.

Holly is delighted to join the Surrey Rugby team as Rugby Safe Lead for the county.



As we enter a new County Championship season we reflect on last year with high expectations for the coming season. Last year Surrey U20s fielded a young side, which we hope will work in our favour this year and help us to improve on last year's results of one win and two losses. Our 2023/24 squad was about 30 players, however during the season we faced many unfortunate injuries exacerbated by the fact that several of our players also had club and university representative commitments in other competitions. So this year the coaching team are keen to increase the squad numbers to about forty.

Surrey U20s recently kick-started their 2024/25 County Championship season with two initial U19 transition sessions. Invitations will then be sent out to all eligible players for two assessment days in October / November. If you don't think the County has your details and you would like to be coached by the highly qualified U20 coaching team, then please register your interest with the manager Andy Drummond: andydrummond200@hotmail.co.uk. As you can see the planning for the season has got off to a good start.



U20 COACHING TEAM
Gary Stennet, Dave Saunders, Chris Cloughley & Andy Drummond





the people

Volunteer Rewards

With only two internationals at home this season, it wasn't possible to reward too many people, but we did our best. At the Wales Game we invited Kate Phillimore & Kirsty Povey of Weybridge Vandals along with Eirc & Laura Tyson of Surrey rugby. They went to the Honda hospitality tent pre-game and had great seats for the match.

Ben Lawrence of Old Haileyburians and Simon Laws of Old Cranleighans were invited to sample the amazing Twickenham hopsitality, hosted by RFU Rep John Crate

Surrey Rugby Mini Chair Ryan Reino and Surrey Rugby Coach Barry Nolan enjoyed pre and post match comfort in the CB Bar.



Kate Phillimore & Kirsty Povey Bric & Laura Tyson



Ben Lawrence and Simon Laws with John Crate



Ryan Reino and Barry Nolan with guests in the CB Bar



In the Honda hospitality tent before the game



the people

Volunteer Rewards

For the Ireland game Ref Peter O'Keefe enjoyed the Honda hospitality tent alongside Adam Rowe and Mark Stevenson of Warlingham. Tommy Burkett and Sarah Hall from Surrey Rugby joined them. They all had great seats to watch the amazing game as it unfolded.

RFU Rep John Crate hosted our Surrey President Dave Doonan and Honda Nominees Rhys Parkinson and Jason Williams of Woking RFC.

Prior to the game at Twickenham, the England and Ireland Baabaas played at the Stoop. We took along Surrey Rugby Youth Chair Jools Goringe and Surrey Treasurer Bruno Plastow to host ref Fabs Maffi and guests of sponsors Sporting Class Quins Cup.

Graham Shaw, Tommy Burkett, Fabs Maffi and Joanna Gordon enjoyed a great day at Twickneham for the Surrey Schools Finals.



Peter O'Keefe , Adam Rowe, Mark Stevenson, Tommy Burkett and Sarah Hall in the hospitality tent



John Crate with Dave Doonan, Rhys Parkinson and Jason Williams



Jools Goringe and Bruno Plaskow hosting guests for the Quins Cup



The Surrey Schools Finals at Twickenham

rep rugby

Surrey Men



With Surrey Men playing up into Division 1 of the Bill Beaumont County Championship, this season's campaign got off to a good start at Wimbledon RFC with over 38 players turning up from over 10 different Surrey clubs for the first training session. This season the competition was expected to be challenging with Cornwall up first, followed by Hampshire and reigning champions, Kent.

Cornwall - packed with national league players - came up to Esher for the opening game and won well against a very challenging Surrey County. With Pete McCain heading the charge and James Smith calling the shots behind the set piece, the score - 55-0 - slightly flattered Cornwall, with Surrey being held up twice over the line. Adam Hakiman at Captain, playing centre, had a strong game, working hard to break the Cornish line.

With many changes for the Hampshire game at Camberley things were always going to be tough for new Captain Ben Harrison, with several key players missing from the back line. Max Keen at 7, scored Surrey's only try in a tough 7-65 loss. With several social events and non availability Surrey had to pull out of their final game away to Kent.

There is definitely an appetite for Senior County Rugby in Surrey, it is just finding that level where we can compete and make the county proud again.

Rod Jermy
Head Coach



offers

At the Stoop

Watch England Stars of the Future

With the start of the rugby season fast approaching, why not see England's brightest young talent and other top Premiership stars take on Australia.

England A will take on Australia A on Sunday 17th November at the The Twickenham Stoop - 2:00 PM K.O.

England A's last fixture featured capped players Fin Baxter, Charlie Ewels, Harry Randall, Tom Pearson, as well as Cadan Murley, Oscar Beard and Sam Riley from Harlequins.

And come match day, the atmosphere at the Stoop will be electric. For tickets visit: [www.stoop.com](#)

- Buy now !



sponsor spotlight

Structura/Enigma



Structura are proud partners of Surrey Rugby, supporting local grassroots rugby activity and development and have been linked with Surrey Rugby since 2019.

For over 30 years we've specialised in the delivery of commercial glazing renovation throughout the UK and Ireland.

Today, we are an 80+ strong, multicultural team working from three sites in the South of England and supported by founding directors who represent an important constant from our start-up days to the present.

Through our own standards of excellence and ISO accreditation, we've been trusted with the refurbishment of some of the highest-profile landmarks in the UK. These include the Grade I Listed National Gallery as well as countless Grade II listed properties such as The Royal Academy of Arts, the BT Tower and Devonshire Square in London, Eastbourne's Congress Theatre and Bath Spa University's School of Art & Design.

Whilst we are proud of our growth, our awards, our Net Zero ambitions and other areas of continual progress within the business, our family values remain firmly unchanged, ensuring we act with integrity and sincerity in every project. We're every bit as invested in the success of our work as you.



Manny Patel - CEO



Enigma Security Solutions is a leading national security company. They have been sponsors of Surrey Rugby since 2020 and have focussed on growing the youth participation and player pathway from academy through to representative rugby. We specialise in delivering a highly personalised and focused range of security services both internationally and throughout the United Kingdom.

Our guarding services business has a reputation for high-quality customer service, putting our clients first, and providing bespoke solutions. Our dedicated CCTV division is the largest provider of trained, permanent staff to Public Space CCTV Control Rooms throughout the UK, working hand in hand with a variety of Police Forces and Local Authorities nationally.

We are extremely proud of the track record that Enigma holds in providing a professional service to a diverse client base, and experience of interacting with the Police Force and Emergency services to maintain a safe and secure working and living environments for all.

Want to be involved?

If you're interested in sponsoring Surrey Rugby and supporting game development, competition offerings or a Representative Team we have a combination of Sponsorship Packages to support all sizes of businesses. Find out more on our website [SPONSORSHIP](#) or get in touch with Tyrone Lawless, Sponsorship Manager, via gamedevelopment@surreyrugby.co.uk.

the offers

Surrey Rugby Partners

We have been working with various companies to bring interesting deals to our membership. We hope you'll find something of interest and save a bit of money, or potentially earn some income for your club. If you know of any other relevant companies that might like to work with us, please put them in touch with Joanna at comms@surreyrugby.co.uk



Ruggarobe - the perfect sports coats for both participants and spectators on the sidelines. 10% discount to a Surrey Rugby Club member. [Click to find out more.](#)

My Club - offering very competitive pricing for your club kit. Already supplying several clubs in Surrey. 10% of all sales supports grassroots rugby in the county. [Click to find out more.](#)



The KitBox - [click to find out more](#) about discount off beautiful handpainted rugby keepsakes in your club or county colours - and earn commission for your club.

BillyTong - buy award-winning biltong at reduced prices and other great deals. [Click here to check out the special deals](#) available to Surrey Rugby members.



Braaifellas - [click to find out more](#) about having your south African favourites catered or deliver for your special occasion

GazeboGazebo - Get a discount off rentals when you mention you're a Surrey Rugby member. [Clicking here to find out more](#)



the sponsors

Thank you!



Surrey Rugby is not for profit and exists to support 30,000 players, 5,300 coaches, 2,300 referees, countless volunteers and parents of Youth - all of whom contribute to making our community rugby what it is.

That's over 70,000 members across our affiliated clubs!

We are very grateful for the fantastic support of our current sponsors - without whom we could not help our clubs to Prosper and Thrive.

the connections

Have your say

Hopefully you've enjoyed this edition of Surrey Spotlight. We'd love to hear from you! Have you got a story you'd like to share about your club, your players, your volunteers, or details about upcoming festivals or courses you're running?

Have something instant you'd like us to share on social media? Got coaching roles to fill? Email comms@surreyrugby.co.uk or tag us at [@surreyrugby](https://twitter.com/surreyrugby) so we're sure to see it. We get an average of 70k views of our social media channels and website each month.

Get in touch

Contact Surrey Spotlight Editor Joanna Gordon via comms@surreyrugby.org or on 077202-44555

Stay in touch

Make sure you keep up-to-date with what's happening in rugby within Surrey, find out first about any courses running and any festivals taking place - by following us on social media! We're the most followed county in the country on Instagram!

FOLLOW US:



Photos

Many of the photos in the newsletter are taken by our photographer John Kilby. John is happy to send you hi res digital versions of any of his photos - free of charge! Get in touch via [PHOTOGRAPHER](#).

Lots of the Women and Girls photos are taken by Gail Fogarty Photography. You can view all images taken, and buy the high resolution photos very reasonably, via the Events section of her client gallery at www.gailfogarty.co.uk. The password is Surrey RFU.