



It seems a bit strange writing this, but we are now just under a month away from the start of a brand-new rugby season. No restrictions, no adapted rules or social distancing. Fingers crossed; long may it continue. The last 18 months have been an extremely challenging time for everyone and it is a credit to all involved with our rugby club that we have managed to navigate through the ever-changing COVID rules and regulations and make it through to where we are now. It really does feel we are finally now getting back to some sort of normality and it was great seeing the clubhouse back to its old bustling self for the recent British and Irish Lions Test Matches.

Its because of our loyal membership that we have come through this last year and a half. The club by no means underestimates the importance of having our members stick with us through a very sticky time. Even through the dark days of lockdown we managed to do some really positive things with the Autumn International Challenge a particular high point. An event which raised a fair bit of money for our chosen charities Shooting Star Children's Hospices and Teddington Memorial Hospital as well as keeping up the morale of the club.

So, looking forward to a much more fulfilling season, Mini Rugby will be kicking off on Sunday 5th September. This season I'm delighted to announce the Minis have a new leadership team in Sam SEWARD (Minis Chair) and Sarah GREENBERG (Minis Vice Chair). Massive thanks to our outgoing Minis Chair, Keith BUSH who is now moving into the Junior section. I'm sure you will all give Sam and Sarah all the support you can in their new roles. The minis section is the foundation of our club and is hopefully where the children begin a lifelong relationship with the game of rugby and Teddington RFC.

The Junior section will again be looked after by Barry WILLIAMS. I know some of the junior age groups will be starting pre season training in August and will be looking forward to returning to full games against familiar opposition come September. To miss out on a whole season of competitive rugby at this age is really tough especially for last seasons outgoing Colts team, who were unable to fulfil a season which would normally be the high point of their junior career at Teddington RFC. Hopefully we'll see plenty of those boys returning to play for our senior teams.

James OLSEN will continue to expertly oversee the whole Youth section (Minis and Juniors) in his role of Youth Chairman. Keep an eye out for new season registration instructions in the near future. Best of luck to all.

In the women's section there are a few notable changes. Ali DONNELLY is stepping down as Director of Rugby, after doing a fantastic job over the last few seasons. We are fortunate to have a ready-made replacement in Stuart WILLIS who steps up from head coach into the DoR role. Stuart will be ably supported by coaches Andy SCOTT and Aimee LUTMAN. Penny CARR is the new women's chair for the coming season. Penny picks up the baton from Heather SMITH who has done a wonderful job over the past few seasons. This year the women will be competing in the highly competitive

Championship Level 2 division. This is a challenge I know the women will meet head on, so please come down and give your support when they kick off their campaign with their first league game on Sunday 26th September at Bushy Park.

One of the few highlights of last season was the emergence of our Junior Girls section. A special mention goes to Ben LANE who has done some great work in getting this off the ground. Getting some momentum going in this section has been something we have struggled with for a number of years now, but last season we had some real success in this area, with a number of sessions held and dozens of girls attending. If we continue the good work in this area, it could provide a real pathway into women's rugby in years to come.

In the Senior Men's section Paul MANLEY continues as DoR. Paul is one of the longer serving stalwarts of the club now and this will be his 7th season looking after the Senior Men. This season he will be supported by former 1st XV player Matt JONES who is taking up the role of 1st XV coach. It's great to see old players like Matt returning to the club and I'm sure both Paul and Matt will get the guys in great shape for their Surrey Division 1 league campaign this season. There is a change in our 1st XV captain with Jack MILLER taking over from Ben FULLER. Ben is relocating to Manchester and we wish him well. He's been a great leader for Teddington RFC for a number of seasons now. Good luck to Jack who will be joined in the leadership group by Club captains Brant PALIN and Josh PENBERTHY and 2nd XV captain James ETHERIDGE. Our physio and strength and conditioning coach Aileen KILSHAW is stepping back from the front line this season having just had a baby girl. Aileen's efforts keeping the players fit during lockdown cannot be under estimated and I'm sure the players will feel the benefit when the season finally begins. Elsewhere one of the main focus's this season will be working on a pathway into senior rugby from the juniors and hopefully ensuring many successful seasons ahead.

For the more mature rugby player the FAT STAGs will continue their successful collaboration with our great friends from OLD ISLEWORTHIANs RFC to form a combined VETS side. Paul GILHEANY continues to lead the FAT STAGs, so if you are over 35, enjoy your rugby on Friday evenings under floodlights with the emphasis firmly on the après side of things then you are more than welcome to join us.

Last but by no means least is our Touch rugby section. Established now for a number of years, Paul STRACHAN and Darren WEYMOUTH continue as our Touch Rugby managers. Sessions are held at Udney Park Road on Friday evenings. All ages and abilities are welcome. Please come along and join in if you are keen.

On the subject of Udney Park Road now is a good time to update everyone on the current situation. As you will remember Quantum (the land owners) notified the council earlier this year of their intention to sell the site. As a result, they triggered an 'Asset of Community Value' disposal process, which started a six-month window during which Community groups could bid for the site. That window is now coming to a close and I can confirm that Teddington RFC are part of a community bid, led by Jonathan DUNN (Thamesians RFC Chairman) which has now been submitted. We await feedback from the landowners on the community bid and we are keeping our fingers crossed that a solution can be found which will secure our long-term use of the site. As mentioned in a previous update, this will require a significant financial commitment from Teddington RFC, so please be aware of this as we move forward and support the clubs fundraising efforts in any way you can. Until any sale is agreed we still have a lease on the rugby pitch at Udney Park Road and so for now we continue to use the site as we have been doing. A big thanks goes to Simon CARTMELL who has done

a fantastic job firstly by liaising with the landowners to secure our current lease and for more recently working with the Community Bid to ensure Teddington RFC are well represented.

Hopefully this season will be packed with good rugby and a chance for the club to really reconnect again after the pandemic. There are already some notable dates for your diary, the first being the rearranged Family BBQ which has now been rescheduled to coincide with the Annual Welcome BBQ on Sunday 19th September. The women are also hosting their Inner Warrior day on the 19th September. This event is an ideal opportunity for new or returning players to get involved with some safe and fun filled rugby activities. Lots of other stuff going on that day as well, so please try and stay on after training and enjoy the refreshments. The day beforehand on Saturday 18th September we have the Annual Vice Presidents lunch at the club, before the 1st XV opening home league game of the season against Old Amplefordians. And after we missed last year, the 2022 Teddington RFC City Lunch is returning and has been pencilled in for Friday January 28th. For those who have been before, you'll know this is a hugely enjoyable afternoon and a big fund raiser for the club. Rob ALLEN is doing another sterling effort co-ordinating this event. We'll again have a big name from the world of rugby as our guest speaker, so watch this space and don't miss out on your chance to attend.

Its impossible to recognise everyone individually on this letter, but I need to make a special mention of a few individuals. Gareth CROSS, our Director of Rugby Operations and many other things, Mark HUMPHREYS, our Treasurer and keeper of the purse strings, Sam OLSEN, our Safeguarding Officer, Pete CHURCH, our Data Manager and Webmaster, Tony FISHER, our very own round the clock handyman and Pat PATRICK, our Hon Secretary and Disciplinary Officer. All these people as well as those mentioned above and the rest of our volunteers continue to donate huge amounts of their time to keep the club going. I mention the rest of our volunteers and there are an army of them. From age group managers, coaches, first aiders, to kit shop managers, community liaison officers, social secretaries, fixture secretaries, international ticket coordinators, bar and catering volunteers. Without the time that you give the club could not operate as it does today. Having said that we always need more volunteers to keep the club moving forward. Specifically, we could really do with a Sponsorship Manager and a Volunteer Coordinator. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you want to get more involved.

Looking forward to seeing you all in September. Here's to a fantastic season of rugby and the return of some traditional Antler's hospitality.

Simon Davis

Teddington RFC Chairman