



December 2022

To all Teddington Antlers

Christmas always marks the midpoint of the rugby season, and there's still a lot to look forward to over the next few months, but it's worth having a look back on the successes we've had this term as it's been an exciting time for Teddington RFC.

Firstly, it's been great to get back playing rugby week in, week out. Notwithstanding a few recent disruptions due to the weather, we've had uninterrupted action from September, something I think no-one takes for granted anymore after the last couple of years we have had.

On the field, we have had healthy playing numbers across all sections of the club. The minis have consistently entered more teams than most other clubs at festivals, with the club's policy of inclusivity and 'rugby for all' at the forefront of everything we do. A good barometer of the future health of the club is the number of new youngsters in our U6's and this year we have a bumper age group with over 60 players regularly training and playing. Mini Rugby is the foundation of Teddington RFC and Sam SEWARD and the rest of the Minis team have done a great job in assuring the club is in such rude health in this regard. Into the Juniors and the playing numbers again remain strong, with teams regularly competing in matches at all age groups. Again, the emphasis in the Juniors is providing 'rugby for all' but it's also with a great deal of pride that we now have a record number of players involved with the DPP (Developing Player Program) at London Irish, we have had numerous players represented at county level and we have also been represented recently at regional and international level – a fantastic achievement for a local community club. The junior section has been expertly steered again by Barry WILLIAMS and this year we have also appointed for the first time a Junior Section Director of Rugby, Charlie SWERLING. The Junior DoR is now part of the wider coaching framework of the club, which will help us provide a pathway for all our junior players over the coming seasons, whatever their playing aspirations. At the top of the junior section and a critical part of that player pathway is the Teddington RFC Colts. Again, guided by Josh PENBERTHY, the Colts have had another strong start to the season, often putting out two teams on a Sunday and already claiming their first silverware after winning the Surrey Waterfall Cup in November.

Our Junior Girls continue to go from strength to strength with numbers increasing again this season. Ben LANE, Scott CLIFFORD and the rest of the team have done a fantastic job to keep this section growing and providing rugby for the increasing number of young girls who want to play the game. The highlight of the season so far was Teddington RFC hosting a fantastic school invitational touch rugby tournament for girls in November. Teddington Senior Women have had a tough time over the past few years as they get to grips with the nationwide

downturn in general adult rugby participation, coupled with the contrary increase in local women's teams. However, the women have reset, worked hard and recruited well over the last couple of months and there have been some notable improvements in the performances on the pitch. With new head coach Simon ROWLAND and new women's club captain Clare CHAMBERLAIN at the helm there is lots to look forward to in 2023 and beyond.

The Senior Men are probably in their best health in over 10 years, as we continue to buck the trend of dwindling numbers in adult men's rugby. Both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> XV's have played competitive matches most Saturdays since September; we even managed to field a 3<sup>rd</sup> XV once this season. New head coach Matt SEARLE has done a fantastic job in recruiting new players and integrating them with our existing squad and Paul MANLEY continues to oversee things as Men's Director of Rugby. The 1<sup>st</sup> XV currently sit on top of the RFU Counties 2 Surrey league, having won all 11 games and played some fantastic rugby along the way. The 2<sup>nd</sup> XV are 3<sup>rd</sup> in their Surrey Conference merit table and are well placed to secure a play-off spot at the end of the season. Probably the most encouraging thing is that we are seeing more and more home grown junior players progressing into the seniors, which is one of the key objectives for the club over the coming years. We are all looking forward to the rest of the season with real optimism as this group of players continue to develop and grow.

Finally, our Touch Rugby continues to run on a Friday evening over at Hampton on the 3G. Touch rugby provides a non-contact version of the game where the emphasis is truly on having fun and keeping fit and active. For the more competitive there are also local touch rugby tournaments which we enter. Paul STRACHAN and Daren WEYMOUTH continue to do a great job running this section and encourage men and women of all abilities to get involved. The first session back after Xmas is on the 6<sup>th</sup> January at 7pm – a great way to work off the Xmas excesses.

Outside of the rugby, the club has managed to secure 4 long term sponsorship deals. We are delighted to welcome on board The New Victoria Hospital, Savills (Property Agents), The Beech House (local pub and restaurant) and Exodus Travels, all of whom have made considerable financial commitments to the club over the next 3 seasons. Support from sponsors like these are vital to maintain and grow our club. This season we have been able to invest in several new areas including the procurement of new hydrogen powered portable training floodlights which have reduced our emissions as well as lowering light and sound pollution. We have also invested in the Return2Play Head Injury and Concussion Care service, which gives all Teddington RFC players involved in contact rugby access to concussion experts to ensure their return to the playing field is managed in the safest way possible. We are also currently in the process of upgrading the outbuilding and rear compound of the clubhouse to incorporate a weights and cardio gym which will be available to our older age groups and senior men and women in 2023.

There has been some positive news away from Bushy Park, with our use of the Udney Park Road site as a training base and third playing pitch now being confirmed following the sale of the site by AHH. The new owner has confirmed TRFC's continued use through to the end of our current lease. More importantly they have committed to community sport being played on the site and have engaged with local clubs and societies to develop plans that meet the long term needs for rugby, football and other major participation sports. We have established a good dialogue with the owner, his agents and the appointed architectural consultants, and have provided input regarding the development of the site. As a result of major vandalism to the pavilion, the owner is looking at short term security options, but our access to the external

toilet will remain and plans are being developed to bring the ground floor changing facilities back into use as a matter of urgency. Watch this space for further updates!

In November we attracted the attention from the wider professional rugby world, when we were lucky enough to have a visit from 4 of the All Blacks team who took on England at Twickenham the following day. The NZ players coached and chatted to a group of local school children at our clubhouse and recorded some messages of support for our teams as well. Fantastic to see players at the top of the professional game connecting with grassroots rugby.

Looking to the future and there is plenty to look forward to. Just after Xmas on the 29<sup>th</sup> December we have the annual festive U23 game at our local friends and rivals Twickenham RFC. Then into the New Year and it's not long until our 5<sup>th</sup> City Lunch on the 20<sup>th</sup> January; John RICHARDS and Rob ALLEN are organizing this event, which is now firmly established in the TRFC social calendar and a central annual fundraiser for the club. This year our guest speaker will be ex-England captain Chris ROBSHAW. Beyond that we'll again be hosting the Middlesex Under 7 Minis Festivals in March, followed by the mammoth task of taking 230 minis and parents on tour to Dorset in April. We are also very excited to be hosting an End of Season Ball, of which more information will be available very soon. This will be the first time in 3 years that we have held such an event and it should be a great opportunity for the whole club to come together and celebrate our successes on and off the pitch.

As always, the people mentioned above are just the tip of the iceberg, in terms of the machine that keeps our club rolling from week to week throughout the season. There is a huge army of volunteers who give up their spare time to ensure things run smoothly; coaches, team captains, first-aiders, administrators, coordinators, physios, safeguarding officers, social secretaries and many more. Without you all and your passion for our club, we wouldn't be in the strong position it is in today. The future is looking bright for Teddington RFC.

Finally, I hope you all have a Wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year and see you down the club in 2023.

Simon Davis  
Teddington RFC Chairman

