



## **Olney Rugby Football Club**

### **Playing Reports 2018 -2019**

#### **Senior Section**

by John Robinson, interim DOR

#### **First Team**

Overall the 2018/19 season has been a successful one, winning the league with only two defeats all season. The new coaching team of Dan Seal and Brendan Burke, who joined Olney in summer 2018, have had a positive effect on the team and overall standards of play. The team have seen a number of new players join the squad from outside the club as well as younger players returning from University and progressing up from the Colts.

Going into the 2019/20 season further recruitment is required to strengthen the squad to compete in the next league. Both Dan and Brendan have confirmed their commitment to the Club to coach the team for next season. In addition, Steve Micklewright has agreed to be First Team Manager for next season.

#### **Second Team**

The team have had a successful season, winning their merit league. Thanks go to Martin Chalky and Craig Smith for their dedication and hard work in organising and managing the team. There has been some difficulty over the season regarding consistency of available players for matches and therefore further recruitment is required to provide a larger squad for next season. Martin Chalky and Gareth Benyon have agreed to coach the team for the 2019/20 season.

#### **Third Team**

With good numbers consistently throughout the season, the Thirds have also had a successful season, finishing near the top of their league. The team have been able to attract different players through playing a couple of Friday night fixtures. Thank you to Geoff Janes for his continued hard work in supporting the team and Geoff has agreed to be Coach/Team Manager for the Thirds next season.

#### **Other points**

Thank you to all the main committee and the Club for their continued support with special mention to our Chairman Paul James who has delivered everything the playing committee has ever asked for. Finally, Mark Lay has agreed to take on the role of Director of Rugby for the 2019/20 season and I wish him every success for the upcoming season.

#### **Ladies Section**

by Jen Micklewright, Ladies Captain

Another successful season for the Ladies saw us finish 3rd in the National Challenge Midlands 1 league, just 2 points behind 2nd place. Though it was a tough season which, saw our girls constantly struggling to put out a full team, we managed to secure 9 wins out of our 13 fixtures and play expansive, impressive rugby even with less than 15. All credit goes to our small squad of players who never gave up even when times were tough. Thanks must go to our dedicated coaches Kenny Thomas and Adam Manley and to the committee for continuing to support us through thick and thin.

## Colts

by Mark Lay, Head Colts Coach

It has been another successful season for the colts not just in terms of results with The Olney Colts winning the East Midlands U18 League One for the first time in the clubs history, but it has been an excellent year for succession planning with a number of Colts gaining senior rugby this season.

Colts captain Tomas Godfrey regularly playing up for the first team in the front row. Jacob De Maine and Tyrique Oladiran also enjoyed first team appearances in the back line.

This season saw several Colts playing for 2's and 3's and in one particular winning game away at Wellingborough the club were able to field a blend of experienced senior players and 7 current Colts.

In the last game of the season against a strong Syston side, The Colts squad included six U16s players and provided them with game time in a hard fought 19-17 win, which demonstrates potential for next season. Reassuringly Olney RFC had 33 registered players this season which at a time when a number of other Colts clubs have sadly folded shows that the passion for the game is still alive locally.

What has continually impressed the coaches is the squad's ability to always step up to the challenge in front of them against a variance of sides irrespective of their reputation. The win against one of the premier colts clubs Old Albanians symbolised this. It would have been easy to have been overawed at their ground on their first team pitch in front of a local crowd but the Colts showed their passion and pride in their shirt and came away with a memorable and well deserved 19-13 win in the National Colts Cup.

The Colts were later bizarrely knocked out in the last 16 of the National Colts Cup after drawing 19 each with Old Northamptonians. Under the rules ONs went through as winners on away advantage.

Other season highlights include:

Beating Kettering, Bedford, Towcester, Buckingham, Peterborough and Ampthill in League 1.

The final Colts playing statistics were:

Played 22 Lost 3 Drawn 1 Won 18 which is amazing and full credit to the squad for an outstanding season.

At the Colts awards this year there were 4 Trophies presented:

Players Player – Harvey Dunn (Second Row)

Coaches Player – Aaquil Attah (Wing)

Most Improved – Owen Davies (Back Row)

Colt of the year – Harvey Dunn (Second Row)

A huge thank you to our sponsors Desmond Smail and Cawleys for their continued fantastic support. Thank you to all the appreciative words and support from our Chairman Paul James and President Tom Salisbury throughout the season.

Thank you to all the Colts Coaches and to Alec Tebby for his dedication and support behind the scenes. Massive thank you to Kath Middleditch for all her enthusiasm in marketing the Colts.

It is all change next season as the coaching team are stepping down.

Head Coach Mark Lay is stepping down after 4 years in charge to take on the clubs Director of Rugby Role.

Coaches Gareth Benyon & Justin Mcloughlin are stepping down after 2 years with the Colts and a number of years in the mini and junior section.

The club is currently in discussion with potential new coaches for next season.

Well done to all the players for a fantastic season and we look forward to seeing you back playing for Olney next season.

## **Mini & Junior Section**

by David Wright, M&J Chairman

I pleased to report another excellent season of rugby in the Minis & Juniors section.

Olney teams have travelled far and wide, ably dealt with varying age grade rules in different home nations (when touring). The strength and depth throughout the section is proven by oppositions' constant desire to "beat Olney".

And across all age groups, players, parents, coaches and volunteers alike, Olney RFC proudly upholds the core rugby values of Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship.

### **Rugby**

With results not recorded in the younger age groups, in accordance with RFU guidelines teams are no longer streamed. These blended teams all performed exceptionally well, often delivering unbeaten performances in rugby festivals, tournaments and friendlies alike.

While U12s and above can start to compete in waterfall tournaments, organised fixtures do not start until U14. And I'm pleased to report that Olney U14s performed exceptionally well in the East Midlands Cup, scoring over 200 points in five rounds, while conceding just 15, while going on to become East Midlands Champions.

With more than 40 Olney M&J players across age groups being selected for Saints DPP, more than any other club in the region, there's no doubt we're building a great future for the club and rugby in general.

### **Numbers**

The total number of players across the section is still just in excess of 400. While this is very positive, especially when compared to other clubs, our numbers are slightly down against previous years. Most teams start their journey through the age groups with about 30 players which provides a good base. However, the new U6 intake only has 15 players. Historically we have not needed to promote the club to generate interest, this may need to change to ensure future strength, depth and continuity.

### **Volunteers**

We are blessed with many hundreds of volunteers without whom the section would not function. Within the region of 6,000 hot dogs and 4,000 curries made and paid for each season by the profits from the volunteer run BBQ, this contribution is immense.

This is on top of all the work done by coaches, first aiders, administrators, tour organisers etc, etc. and of course parents getting the children to-and-from fixtures.

And after a number of years of service, roles including Chairman, Fixtures Secretary, Registration Secretary and Food Purchasing all need replacing - I'm please to confirm that all of these positions have all now been filled.

I wish Dan Cooke and his new team of helpers all the best for next season and beyond.

### **Girls Rugby**

I am particularly pleased that the re-introduction of girl's rugby has been a great success. Will Morris and his team of helpers launched the section from scratch at the start of last season with a handful of players. Growth in the section is such that for next season the club will be able to offer U13 and U15 girls' rugby.

The team's efforts have been highlighted by Will being nominated for the RFU Volunteer of the Year awards.

My five years as Minis plus M&Js Chairman have been thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding, I'd recommend it to anyone. And I'm very pleased that under Dan's direction along with his new team, the section will undoubtedly continue to flourish in terms of rugby while upholding the passion and values of Olney RFC.