



PORTARLINGTON RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB | Christmas Update 2021

A Welcome from Paul Mannion - Director of Rugby

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to our players, coaches, volunteers and members. Another challenging year for all, but we have sport and Rugby back and I think all of us are very relieved to be out on our pitches again.

I would like to thank our Youths Co Ordinator, Adrian, Minis Co-ordinator, Barry, CCRO Paidi and all our coaches, for all their work with the kids and youths of the town and surrounding areas. Of special note this year would be our girls minis teams who are back up and running with big numbers and this is ensuring we deliver on some of key rugby commitments in 2021.

Barry our Minis Co Ordinator has launched an inclusion team project for 2022 and this is something he and the club hope can be successful and something we can be immensely proud off. Barry's proactive and innovative approach to all things rugby and sport is simply brilliant.

A special note to our U18 girls team (PORT DARA) who just won the Leinster Cup final, these are a very special bunch of girls. Well done Cormac and team!

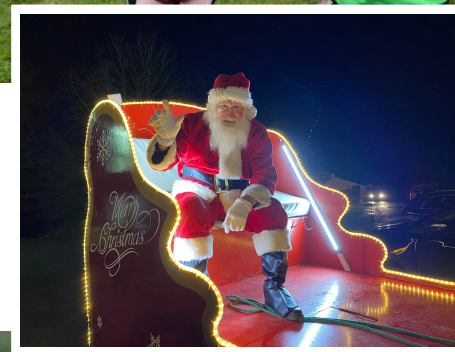
We now have 2 senior men's teams back playing and this was another key objective at the start of the season. We have 2 strong management groups for each and our number one objective is to get out of Division 3 this year.

Ground and facility development is another one of our key objectives and we will continue to build on this in 2022 - having delivered an Indoor training room, new dugouts, a new shed for lawn mower, walking track improvements and clubhouse renovation in 2021.

Let's hope we can continue to provide life memories for all the kids , youths and adults playing in Lea and that we build on the momentum over the last few years. A huge thanks to everyone for playing their part through paying memberships and sponsorships etc. that keep the lights on and the doors open.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year !

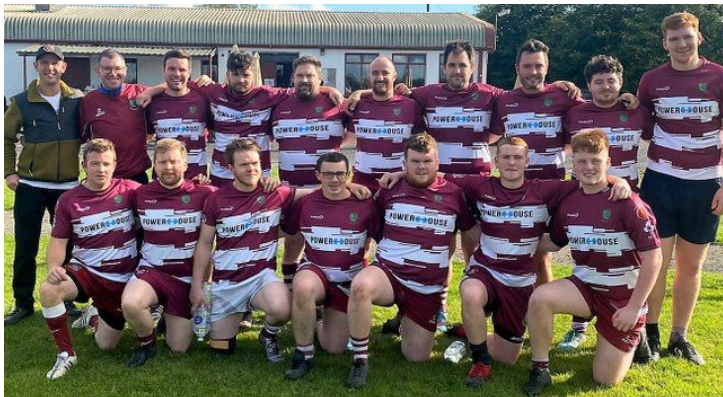
Paul





Senior Men's Team Updates - For the first time in almost 10 years Portarlington has 2 senior men's teams, both in contention for silverware in their respective leagues.

Portarlington 1st IV finish up 2021 with a slender lead at the top of Division 3, but with 2 games in hand on their closest rivals the mood in the camp is extremely positive and focused. Ross Doyle and his coaching team, Ronan Mannion (backs) and Mark Petriw (forwards) has the team playing an open, expansive game that is proving difficult to handle for most teams in this division. It's not all flare from the backs though, as there is significant bulk and power in the forwards pack to rival any opposition in the Leinster league. A formidable scrum and well functioning lineout provide the backs with clean ball to attack from. Promotion is on everyone's mind but the main focus is always the next match. Senior men's 1st IV train on a Tuesday and Friday night at 8 PM and play matches on Sunday afternoons.



For the first time in 6 years we are now fielding a 2nd IV, playing in the Metro league and are currently sitting 2nd in the table at the half-way stage. The focus of the Senior management and coaching team has always been to provide rugby to everyone that wants to play, young or old, new or experienced, we felt that entering Metro 10 was a good platform for this. It is proving a great success with old stalwarts from days past toting out alongside people 20 years and more their junior. It's also a great opportunity for people new to rugby to gain valuable experience before stepping up to J1 level. Let's hope Niall Gallagher and his management team of David Honan and Francis Finn keep up the good showing and fight for silverware. Training for 2nd IV is also on a Tuesday and Friday night with matches being played on a Saturday afternoon. All new players are always welcome.

Looking forward to a successful 2nd half of the season and hopefully bring back some long overdue silverware!

Andy Wilkinson,
Senior Team Manager

Club Developments - The club facilities continue to be improved with team shelters being erected on the first pitch with the same being planned for the second pitch. Maintenance work took place over the summer on the pitches with annual maintenance plans in place. New equipment was purchased and this has helped with pitch marking accuracy and they are looking great. The walking track was resurfaced during the summer and continues to be a big hit.

The shed was extended to provide a dedicated workshop and freeing up space for the new indoor gym / training area – this is available for all members. The covered area outside the clubhouse is planned to be improved and extended which will add to the outdoor seating area installed over the summer

Plans are progressing to install improved training lights on the second pitch while a working group is in place looking at match lights for the first pitch. Railings along the second pitch are planned for next summer as is an extended & improved covered area outside the clubhouse. The plan to extend the dressing room and shower facilities is still on the active list as grant funding options are being investigated to enable this to progress.

David Hainsworth,
Chairman



The U18.5 Boys - The team began their pre-season with a core group of 10-12 players and have seen that grow to 20 players by Christmas break. The boys were drawn in Group 3 of Phase 1 of the Leinster league. While there has been a lot of fixtures postponed, the boys managed to play 4 leagues games and win all 4 against Kilkenny, Longford, Arklow and Cill Dara. These results means the boys topped the Phase 1 table and are looking forward to the restructured leagues and Cup competition in the New Year. Led by Joint Captains Jack McCann and Liam McCarthy, the team is built on a strong defence and a high work ethic. We would like to Thank Graham Stacey of Stacey Decor for his recent sponsorship towards new training Jerseys for the team.

Darragh Brereton,
U18.5 Coach



Huge Christmas thanks to our Sponsors

We are delighted to have a number of new sponsors this year and we look to build on these new relationships and establish new ones in the weeks and months to come. If you, or somebody you know, are interested in being sponsors contact any member of the committee – options to suit all budgets.

Under 16 Boys - Our Under 16s team for 2006 and 2007 born players train twice a week, on Tuesday and Thursday nights at 7pm. Having suffered through a tough time in Phase 1 of the Leinster League and Area League games the U16s recently picked up their first win in a challenge match with the Newbridge College TY C team. The players now look forward to Phase 2 of the Leinster League after Christmas and a finale to this challenge series. Also the 2007 players will work towards trials for the North Midlands Development Squad which will take place towards the end of the season. Numbers are very tight so anything that could assist with that would be greatly appreciated! New and returning players always welcome!

Paidi Mahon,
CCRO



PortDara Leinster Champions!! PortDara U18s defeat Wicklow in Leinster Cup Final



Bank of Ireland Leinster Girls U14: U16 and U18 finals were played at IT Carlow on Saturday 18 December 2021.

With six finals to be played in the Cup and Plate the day began with the U14s at 11.00 [Mullingar v Sharks and Arklow v Dundalk] with the other age grade finals being played at 13.00 [Naas v Wicklow and Enniscorthy v Navan] and 15.00 [PortDara v Wicklow and Dundalk v Navan]. A large rolling support attended the games, giving huge encouragement and support to all the teams. Among the spectators were several representatives from both the IRFU and Leinster Rugby including Des Kavanagh [President of the IRFU] and John Walsh, Debbie Carty and Robert Deacon [President, Senior VP and immediate past President Leinster Rugby] in attendance throughout the day enjoying a feast of high quality underage Girls Rugby.

The U18 final was a repeat of the 2019 Final when Wicklow stood supreme. On this occasion PortDara came with intent and displayed their skills and determination to avenge that result. This game kept the supporters on their toes throughout. PortDara opened the scoring on 19 minutes when Hannah Wilson touched down for a try converted by Amy Ashdown. Wicklow responded with their own converted try on 25 minutes. Just before the break Mairead Scully taking advantage of some powerful work by the pack nipped in from close range to make the score 12 v 7 at the break. The second half was a mirror image of the first with PortDara opening the scoring when Alanna Fitzpatrick showed blistering pace to beat the Wicklow defence to score out wide. Wicklow again responded strongly scoring the next try to make the game 17 v 12 with only 8 minutes of the half gone. The next score would be critical so when Hannah Wilson scored her second try on 20 minutes the PortDara supporters began to believe they could avenge the 2019 result. Wicklow had other ideas however and took full advantage of the tiring Portdara team to score a converted try leaving only three points between the teams 22 v 19. Now it was PortDara's turn to defend. A very tense 10 minutes saw the North Midlands side display their discipline and defensive ability in not conceding any kickable penalties. The final whistle was greeted with huge celebrations among the players. **Huge Congratulations to our Portdara Champions!!!**

Des Kavanagh and John Walsh in presenting the Cups complimented all four teams of the quality and intensity of the games. The skill level on display showed that the future of the girls game and ultimately the women's game was very positive. Both acknowledged the commitment of the coaches and management of all the teams in their work in preparing the sides. The team Captains of both winning and losing sides acknowledged the level of performance and sportsmanship of their opponents - **Cormac Smith**, U18 Girls Coach

U14's Boys Update - The u14s have had a great start to the season, considering many had never played a full pitch game prior to this season. A good mixture of 2008s and 2009s, some of these boys hadn't played rugby since u11s back in 2019. The season began with two difficult friendly area games against Nass and Portlaoise, here the boys quickly learned the benefits of communication and trust in your teammate. What followed was a run of 5 wins from 5 games with 4 wins in phase 1 of the Leinster U14 League, including a tight 2 point victory over North Kildare Kestrels and a great comeback victory over New Ross.

Another comeback in a friendly against Blessington in the glorious grounds of Russborough House, before a comprehensive win against Wexford wanders, meant the run of wins was ended at home against Longford in the last game of phase 1. "The lads have been a joy to coach and are learning all the time" according to coaches Kevin Hyland and Adrian Hennessy, who are supported in these roles by Strength and Conditioning Coach Karl James and Team Manager Joe Keogh. The U14s training on Monday and Thursday evenings at 7pm and new players are always welcome.

U16's Girls Update - PortDara Under 16s started the season with a panel of 18 girls and have been going from strength to strength with a panel of 25 girls now. The girls are in Group 2 of Phase 1 of the season. Once this Phase is over towards the end of January 2022, the top half of every group will go to Division 1 of the leinster League, which is this year's goal for PortDara.

Their girls two games were cup games which took place in October , and were a great start to their season. They played Barnhall at home with a score of 36-20 and then Edenderry away with a score of 0- 48. Unfortunately due to low numbers over the mid term break, PortDara had to concede to Tullamore in the third round of the cup. Towards the end of October they had their first league game, which was away to Wicklow. Unfortunately the damage was done by then, but the girls all showed incredible head and fighting spirit and never gave up.

They then had two big league wins against Clane and Dundalk at home:

Portdara vs Clane 76-0

Portdara vs Dundalk 44-0

A week later, Bruff RFT travelled from Limerick to Aviva via Portarlington RFC for a friendly. Bruff RFC's U16s coach is ex Ireland and Munster player Fiona Steed, so there was great excitement with this visit. Our girls put it up to them though with a final score of 27-0. This was a great achievement for the girls as it was their 3rd game in a row where they had not conceded any tries. In early December the girls travelled to Mullingar RFC on a wet and windy Friday evening where they were defeated 21-5. Again, the girls had a great second half, which remained scoreless for both teams. Their last game of 2021 was last weekend, where everyone travelled to Kilkenny FTC by bus, which was a great morale boost for them. They sang the whole way there and back, and ended up getting a great win of 10-54 against Kilkenny, which was the icing on the cake!

PortDara are currently third in the table, and with two tough games against Greystones & Enniscorthy before the Divisions are decided, it's all to play for!

Karen White

U16s Girls Coach



U14's Girls Update - The season began for the U14s with very low numbers - there were 8 girls only. We were unable to field teams for the first 2 matches. We ran two "bring a friend/give it a try" nights and the numbers increased. We played 2 subsequent matches and won one against Portlaoise and lost the other against Athy. The girls played their hearts out on both occasions, and we're looking forward to next year.

Linda

U14s Girls Coach



Minis Overview - Everyone involved with Portarlington RFC Minis have been delighted to have an uninterrupted season so far that has included blitzes with North Kildare, Newbridge, Athy and Blessington.

With the addition of an U5s Nursery group and the further development of our U8s, u10s and u12s teams we have never had more kids involved but there is always room for new players!

CCRO Páidí Mahon continues to provide rugby-based and general movement games as part of the PE programmes in the local and surrounding schools which exposes children to the fun and many benefits involved. His work encourages many of these kids to come out and join our teams.

With over 40 volunteers involved on a weekly basis, our coaches participated in a Coach the Coaches workshop run by Leinster which further strengthened their ability to keep the kids interested and learning. We really appreciate the generosity of our volunteers who give up so much time.

Most recently we had a visit from Santa and our Santa Hat Training Day in aid of Temple Street Childrens Hospital which raised more than a thousand euros - more on this later!

Barry Lambkin,
Minis Coordinator



As you you know, Santa (aka John) came to visit the club last week, and as a club we raised an amazing €1,063 towards Temple Street Hospital. This was a great effort and it was great seeing the kids so excited too - Thank you all! 🌨️🌲👴

We would also like to highlight the amazing efforts of John for those of you that don't know, Every year in the 6 - 8 weeks running up to Christmas, John downs everything, and spends everyday going around the country visiting schools, clubs and organisations, raising vital funds for Temple Street Children's Hospital. He gives so much of himself every year ensuring he speaks to every child to the point that he goes completely hoarse 🗣️ (I was only speaking to him today, he can barely talk 😊) Our visit last night was his 8th visit that day!!!!

To date John has raised over €500,000 which is a truly staggering achievement. Thanks a million everyone again, 🗣️🌲👴

Ruth Guilfoyle,
Under 7s Coach





U12 Boys - How great is it to see the lads back playing rugby!

The U12s Boys very quickly got back into the swing of things, dusting off 2 years of limited contact cobwebs, and started playing their open, offloading style of rugby. Tackling was a bit rusty, but only to be expected, and plenty of drills and lots of competitive challenges have got the lads tackling like monsters again.

Numbers are brilliant, we always have two teams at blitzes, and even played 15 a side vs Athy. The team has put in really strong performances against N Kildare, Blessington, Tullamore and Edenderry.

They've taken to positional rugby, and the standard banter between forwards and backs is already starting to pick up!

They're a chirpy, fun-loving bunch, a really good group of rugby players. And they're developing into a genuinely formidable rugby team.

2022 will be fun!

Ted Melaniphy,
U12s Coach



U11 Boys - Our 23 strong U11's boys have really gelled together as a team, developing their skills & confidence steadily over the last few months.

At each training session, they continue to build on passing, tackling, rucks, scrums, line outs & discipline techniques. They have played only two matches so far & were certainly a Team to be reckoned with - their commitment is awesome.

Richard, James, Seán & Michelle are very proud of their boys!

2022 here we come!

Onwards & Upwards!



U7 Boys - The 20\21 was a great year for our U7's team. We finished the season with 55 kids coming out to play each week. So at the start of the 21/22 season we knew we had to keep the momentum going. So this year, in addition to our U7's team we launched our "Cubs", It's our new nursery team catering for 5's and under. We've had a great start to the season with numbers growing weekly and we're looking forward to seeing both team continue to grow and have lots of fun over the rest of the season.

Ruth Guilfoyle,
Under 7s Coach



Big shoutout to Leinster and Ireland legend, Gordon D'Arcy who came to our club in November to help out with the training of our U11 and U12s teams.

As well as providing lots of expert advice and guidance, he signed 100s of autographs all evening. Thanks too to James and Reuben McElwee for facilitating the visit!



A Thank You from the Bravehearts Social Inclusion Club



What a fabulous night for all our BraveHearts members and their families. Thank you to John Whelan for supplying transport and to guard Peter Hynes for escorting us around the town. Thank you to Portarlington Credit union for supplying us with selection boxes. A big thank you to Dermot and Oisin Shaw for driving santy around on the fabulous bike. Also thank you to Eddies Hot Pot for supplying us with fabulous food and Christmas cookies. Thank you to Portarlington Rugby club for having the club lovely and warm and so inviting. And lastly thank you to Santy, who made the night magical for all our members. Great memories have been made tonight. Have a safe and peaceful Christmas from the BraveHearts committee.

And finally, a message from our club president...



"I just wanted to say thank you to all the coaches, volunteers and parents who continue to support the club.

Of special note, I'd like to highlight that in the recent IRFU raffle, you all raised an astounding €11,240, more than double any North Midlands club, and one of the highest tallies in Ireland. All of this money comes directly to the club, so huge thanks again for everyone's support.

Finally, I'd like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Peter McEvoy,
Club President