

SARACENS 2013 AGM CHAIRMANS REPORT

Last Friday, I was present at a small Family event at Bramley Road, it was to remember a former player from the 1950 area, Brian Carter. His widow Jennie, told me about the many happy hours she had spent at the club watching Brian play and bringing their daughters to the games. It was Brians wish that some of his ashes be spread in a place where he, Jennie and his daughters had spent many happy hours and the influence that being a Saracen meant to them. It was made clear that my “gate crashing” was welcomed, as a person and in my capacity as Chairman of SARFC, to show respect and support to the family.

The conversation was wide ranging, including the good old days and the modern game, implicit were the values of rugby as stated in our hand book on page two, that of Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship.

I relate this to you as memories of Saracens experienced over generations, which as relevant now and will be in the future as a member of the Saracens Family, a club in which each age group strives to improve for themselves but within the collective ethos of a united club.

Let us examine a few scenarios to illustrate this, how it has impacted on the club and steps taken to address the issue.

It is nationally acknowledged that the game has a significant drop out rate post Junior stage coupled with recruitment and retention moving into Senior Rugby, and there are many reasons put forward for this. Three years ago working with the then Colts Team we began a programme to mentor, track and support these players in the next phase of their careers. This is now bearing fruit in that we have a steady flow of players returning to play for us on completion of Higher Education, as well as an increasing number being regular playing members in the squad during their undergraduate days.

The Club Coaching Policy was launched for the 2012/13 season after extensive consultation across all age groups and sections of the club, overall the evidence shows that it has met with areas of success eg a budget plan, RFU training sessions at Bramley Road, allocated funding to age groups. As to be expected the evidence also shows that there are areas for improvement, and there are plans to address these. However the single most important aspect of this policy is that it allows for accountability, it allows for evaluation as to what it claims to do and what it actually does.

There has long been the need to create a pool of qualified independent referees within the Club, this has been developed, led and achieved by the enthusiasm of Ciaran and Jerry, both active members of the London Society of Rugby Union Referees.

We recognised that the gym resource needed attention, and I hold my hands up that it took longer than I would have liked, however we now have an excellent free facility, staffed by fully qualified trainers available for members use. Grateful thanks are given to the members of Barnet Athletic Club (who now use our facilities), for their knowledge, time and effort in renovating and equipping this area.

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These are just a few illustrations to address and adapt to the needs of our members and the Club, but for me there is a greater one, the quality and accuracy of information flow. I was asked just days ago about the “portable lights” for the back pitch and what was happening? I was astounded that information on this matter which was raised at Committee in February, had not in this age group case (there may be others) been conveyed to the members. That leads me (with my head teacher hat on) to ask the simple question why not? What is the process? If there is a process of cascading information down to managers how does it work because it clearly failed in this example, and the odds are that this is not the only one. This is not good enough, I accept that we are all volunteers with busy lives and careers and there is no intent to lay blame, but this example illustrates the need to review our systems. There is a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise within our club why oh why do we keep reinventing the wheel?

Poor information flow, lack of clarity? I am sure that you could add to the list. Well here is my opinion to make a start to address this; the age groups/ sections across the club should have an identified, accountable, supportive line manager. In practice members of the General Committee take on this role for example I work with the Under 12/13s etc so that all sections are covered. As line Manager we are there to assist, discuss, give feedback, coordinate activities across and within the sections, this will enable us to monitor and evaluate what worked well, what did not, how do we improve but crucially to share our knowledge and good practice. And if I don't know the answer for my group I know a man who does!!!

Peter Haigh
Chairman
Saracens Amateur RFC

6 October 2013