INTERNATIONAL RUGBY COMES TO STAFFORDSHIRE

Lichfield Rugby Club have been selected to host an Under 16 International, England Under 16s v Italy Under 16s, on Monday 1st April (Easter Monday).

At present the kick off time and ticket prices have not been finalised, but put the date in your diary.

More details will be published of this event in the February edition of the SRU newsletter.

RUGBY Ready @ Stoke RFC

Just a gentle reminder that we have a Rugby ready running at Stoke RUFC on the 6th Feb 7-9.30pm.

There are currently 3 people booked on the course.

Could I urge you all to publicise around your mini/junior sections and seniors?

Booking is made with Helen Bridgeman

Helen Bridgeman @ RFU.com or 07590928534.

Midlands Rugby mourns Vic Hall

MIDLANDS rugby is mourning Vic Hall, a stalwart administrator and worker for rugby in Staffordshire and the region, who has died in New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton after a period of illness.

Vic played for Wolverhampton as a fly-half during a period of success for the club in the 1960s and he also played his county rugby for Staffordshire.

He went on to hold senior administrative posts with both his club and county, serving as a popular president of Staffordshire from 1987 to 1989 and as county secretary from 1999 to 2003.

Vic was also a highly-regarded chairman of the Midlands Counties and chairman of the English Rugby Counties Association.

Wolverhampton will observe a minute’s silence before their next matches when the bad weather relents.

The funeral will be on February 8th at 10:30am at West Chapel, Bushbury Crematorium, Wolverhampton, WV10 7JG, and afterwards at South Staffs Golf Course Danescourt Road, Tettenhall, WV6 9BQ.

CVC’s and Volunteers:

RWC 'HOST' 2015 - PILOT WORKSHOP

You are warmly invited to attend a very exciting evening for Staffordshire Volunteers!

A fantastic idea has been developed by the Leadership Academy in Staffordshire, to help launch the RWC 2015.

Please come along and be part of the final process that could launch this workshop across the country!

DATE - Tuesday 19th March 2013 OR Weds 20th March 2013

VENUE - BURNTWOOD RUFC. The Sportsway, Burntwood. Staffordshire. WS7 3PH

TIME - 7.30PM - 9.00PM

We very much look forward to welcoming you on the evening!

Please contact Becky on 07973 661967 for further information and please confirm all attendance by March 1st.

Becky Davies Staffs CVC - Community Rugby Representative
NatWest RugbyForce, a nationwide programme developed in partnership with the RFU, will aim to help nearly half of English community rugby clubs become stronger businesses over the next five years.

The programme will help local rugby clubs to improve their facilities with the support of volunteers and the community, with a long term goal of making clubs more financially viable businesses.

Register your interest now

Stuart Lancaster, England Head Coach, will act as a NatWest RugbyForce ambassador in England from 2013 onwards, looking to raise the profile of the initiative and encourage community clubs to register to take part.

Now in its fifth year, 2013 will see an enhanced programme that will enable all registered clubs to receive online guidance and support to help make their NatWest RugbyForce Weekend a great success. In addition, over the next five years, up to 50% of clubs will have access to planning workshops and funding to help make improvements to their facilities.

The NatWest RugbyForce Weekend, which takes place on June 15 and 16, remains a central part of the initiative, as an opportunity to encourage club members and the local community to come together for a weekend of DIY.

England Head Coach and NatWest RugbyForce ambassador Lancaster, said: “Rugby clubs are at the heart of their local communities and we know that they need support to sustain themselves, not only for the next couple of seasons but also for the years to come. Many England players started their careers at these clubs and NatWest RugbyForce will help clubs to help themselves by giving them a long term vision and enabling them to think like a business to attract and retain members.”

Paul Dunkin, NatWest Sponsorship Manager, said:

“Thanks to our enhanced community partnership with the RFU, we are proud to launch NatWest RugbyForce with Stuart as its ambassador and announce additional support for the programme, which furthers the RFU’s commitment to help clubs become more sustainable. Delivering RugbyForce under NatWest in England also enables us to help support and promote the programme locally through our NatWest branches across the country.”

RugbyForce was created by RBS in 2009, underpinning the RBS 6 Nations sponsorship to demonstrate the bank’s support of the grassroots of the game. The programme is delivered across the four home nations by the relevant RBS Group division operating in each market (NatWest in England and Wales, RBS in Scotland and Ulster Bank in Ireland).

The RugbyForce programme forms part of the partnership announced by the RFU and RBS last November, focused on supporting the grassroots game as part of the RFU’s commitment to strengthen its member clubs.
A NEW four-year England Elite Player Squad agreement has been reached between the Rugby Football Union, the Rugby Players’ Association and Premiership Rugby.

The EPS agreement covers England senior, Saxons and Under 20 squads until June 30, 2016 and includes confirmation of squad and match fees and performance bonuses.

Together with the existing eight-year Heads of Agreement between the RFU and Premiership Rugby, it ensures a stable future for club and country beyond the 2015 Rugby World Cup.

RFU Chief Executive Ian Ritchie said: “This agreement is another major step forward for the RFU, players and the clubs, and I would like to thank the RPA and Premiership Rugby for their cooperation and for reinforcing the partnership we enjoy.

“One of the strengths of the English game is that we have enshrined in contract the release of players from their clubs which gives Stuart Lancaster and his coaches confidence in their availability. Now this new agreement has been reached, we have stability and everyone pulling in the right direction through to the Rugby World Cup in 2015 and beyond. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the clubs for allowing us to add an additional player to the senior EPS for the forthcoming RBS 6 Nations.”

RPA Chief Executive Damian Hopley said: “In agreeing this new four-year deal on behalf of the EPS, all parties wanted to ensure that we built on the foundations and progress made by Stuart Lancaster and the squad in the last 12 months.

“The new contract duly recognises the efforts made by all 33 of the Senior EPS as well as the increasing overall value of the players to the RFU and their partners. We look forward to working collaboratively with the England squad and the RFU to deliver these rights, and I would like to thank the England Players Committee for their invaluable and professional input throughout these good natured negotiations.”

Premiership Rugby Chief Executive Mark McCafferty said: “We are delighted to be playing our part in giving Stuart Lancaster and the England team everything they need on the road to 2015 and we look forward to the continued support of the players and the RFU to ensure Aviva Premiership rugby goes from strength to the strength.

“We’ve shown flexibility in allowing Stuart to make seven changes to the EPS this month and to add a 33rd player to give him increased options following the law changes for international rugby rugby to increase the match day squads to 23, as has already been the case in Aviva Premiership rugby.”
From CB Safeguarding Manager – Jamie MacDonald:

As a result of the regular requests for advice from clubs in relation to best practise when working with children with increased vulnerabilities such as learning disabilities. We have recognised that there is a need to further explore the current practises and support mechanisms within rugby in relation to these vulnerable groups. The RFU recognises the extra barriers that some young people may face when they report abuse. It is important that all those working in rugby understand that all young people are different and some may also be at more risk of abuse in the first place. Children and young people with physical, sensory or cognitive impairments as well as those who exhibit challenging behaviour may also feel that they are less valued than their peers and poor care maybe observed and tolerated by others. This might, for example, include not speaking directly to the child or young person, failure to offer choices, using derogatory language and not respecting their privacy and dignity.

The RFU Safeguarding Department has begun collaborative work with Brunel University’s Centre for Sport, Health and Wellbeing. The Centre has a strong focus on research which is academically rigorous and ethically robust, and has relevance to policy and practice. The Research Professor at Brunel Celia Brackenridge, has pioneered much of the research and campaigns relating to child protection in sport. Professor Brackenridge received an OBE in the Queen’s 2012 New Year’s Honour’s list. She was also Chair of the Local Organising Committee for the 2012 International Convention on Science, Education and Medicine in Sport, the global scientific conference that precedes each Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The RFU Project will be overseen by Dr Daniel Rhind, Daniel is a Chartered Psychologist. His work has been presented at a range of international conferences and has been published in leading journals. His research has been featured on BBC News and on BBC Radio 4 as well as in the Guardian Newspaper and the Community Care magazine. It has also appeared in briefing papers and the newsletter, Relay, published by the NSPCC’s Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU). Daniel was also awarded the Sport Psychology Research Prize by the Canadian Sports Centre, Manitoba in 2008.

Method:

Questionnaires will be administered to all Club Safeguarding Officers (CSOs) and Constituent Body Safeguarding Managers (CBSMs). This is a short set of scale-type and open ended questions. It focuses on capturing experiences, particularly in relation to additionally vulnerable children. Interviews will then be conducted with a sample of respondents to explore their experiences in more depth. This would create a good opportunity for CSOs/CBSMs to have their voices heard and for the RFU to gain a greater understanding of the challenges being faced.

Some of the issues that these children might face include:

- lack a wide network of friends who support and protect them
- have significant communication differences - this may include very limited verbal communication or they may use sign language or other forms of non-verbal communication
- be subject to the prejudices and/or misconceptions of others e.g. about their ‘attractiveness’ to potential abusers
- require personal intimate care - this can make it difficult for them to distinguish between what is acceptable and unacceptable touch
- have a reduced capacity to resist either verbally or physically
- be used to being told what to do - and not being given choices
- not be believed
- depend on the abuser for their involvement in sport or for basic needs
- lack access to peers to discover what is acceptable behaviour
- have medical needs that are used to explain/ excuse abuse.

The questionnaires are currently in the final draft stage and will be circulated in the near future a timely response would be very much appreciated.

J MACDONALD
CB Safeguarding Manager
Staffordshire
Tel: 07711614761
james@jdmacdonald.ndo.co.uk
Funding Opportunities:

FIND FUNDING THROUGH GRANTFINDER

Tracking down the organisations offering sports clubs' funding is a complex and time-consuming affair, largely because, even in these challenging economic times, there are still a huge number of funding sources available.

So why not take advantage of the Grantfinder System on rfu.com designed to help clubs identify grant opportunities in their area.

The system provides access to a database of over 100,000 grant possibilities available from a myriad of funding groups, from small parish council offerings through to major European grant funds and includes funding opportunities for both capital and revenue projects.

The search engine is run in partnership with the Idox Group whose team of researchers maintains the database and ensures that any potential new funding partners are promptly identified and uploaded.

The RFU is keen to help clubs to access funding for their many projects and via this database hopes to give clubs the chance to investigate for themselves what the marketplace might have to offer to support schemes in their specific area.

The Facilities team and RDOs remain available to offer help and guidance, but the database will provide an easily accessible insight into what might be available in a specific area of the country or for a particular project.

To access the site log on to

www.rfu.com/ grantfinder

More information available from: Alex Thompson alexthompson@rfu.com or Dave Stubley davestubley@rfu.com

SPORT ENGLAND FUNDING FOR 2013-2017

Sport England recently announced its funding investment for the next four year period 2013 to 2017.

Overall it has pledged to invest £493m in 46 sports, including rugby union.

The RFU has been awarded £20M for this four year period, broken down as follows:

Participation and growth ......................£12m
Women's Talent Development ..............£4m
Women's Elite (years 1 & 2 only) ...........£0.75m
Capital Programme ..........................£3.25m

Said Development Director, Steve Grainger,

"We have an exciting four years ahead of us and will use this money wisely so that it continues to make a real difference to rugby at all levels. With the Rugby World Cup sitting right in the middle of the 2013-17 cycle we have a great opportunity to grow participation across the game"

The major difference between the previous four year award and this next four years is a reduction in funding for facility improvements due to more sports now being in a position to access this.

Whilst this is disappointing, the RFU will continue to support clubs to access funding through other Sport England facility improvement funds such as 'Inspired Facilities' and 'Protecting Playing Fields', where rugby union continues to perform well.

Support has also reduced towards the costs of the England Women's elite programme, the RFU agreeing to pick up these costs following the RFUW integration with the RFU in July 2012.

Steve Grainger added,

"While participation figures for rugby union have fallen over the four year period, the recent reversal in that trend has been received very positively by Sport England.

We are pleased with the funding allocated for Participation and Growth, and have confidence in our plans to retain and attract players. A key focus over the coming four year period will be on arresting the decline in participation amongst the 16-24 year age group, a key target for us to grow the game into the future."

Sport England's Director of Sport, Lisa O'Keefe said:

"Rugby union has a real opportunity in the build-up to the 2014 Women's World Cup and hosting the 2015 World Cup to galvanise people's enthusiasm for the game.

We are delighted to be working with the RFU to turn that interest into regular participation by investing in clubs, colleges and others to provide opportunities to play the sport."

For further information, go to www.sportengland.org
Centenary of Flight Rugby Festival for U13-U16 age groups:

2nd and 3rd March 2013

Full details and application forms are on the RAF Halton internet website.

http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafhalton/publicinfo/centenaryouthrugbytournament.cfm

RAF Halton is one of the largest training bases in the Royal Air Force (RAF) and wider military and next year also marks the centenary of flying from RAF Halton which is the oldest RAF base from which flying has taken place. RAF Halton is also the home for sport for RAF Rugby and amongst other things, hosts the RAF Rugby Team inter-service matches that do not take place at Twickenham. It is also the venue used by both London WASPS and Saracens for their youth development programme and is also used as a venue for civilian Rugby competitions such as the Landrover Cup.

As part of the centenary celebrations at RAF Halton, we intend to showcase RAF Halton’s role as the Home for Sport for RAF Rugby and run a junior (13-16 yr) old youth engagement event over the weekend 2-3 Mar 13.

The focus of this event will be a rugby tournament but given the limitations on the amount of Rugby that youths can play each day under RFU Regulation 15 – Age Grade Rugby, the event will also offer the players the opportunity to try the many facilities available at RAF Halton such as High Ropes (one of the largest in the UK) and Low Ropes team building activities (these are adjacent to the Rugby pitch area and are a firm favourite of RAF Families during the school holiday periods) together with use of the Dismounted Close Combat Trainer (think of this as the world’s best laser shooting game!).

Weather depending, those attending will also have the opportunity to fly in a glider or microlight aircraft as well.

The intent is to get clubs from around the UK to take part as well as those from around the RAF Halton area. To that end, teams that don’t wish to travel daily will have the opportunity to stay in one of the accommodation blocks at RAF Halton.

As these are mainly 4, 6 or 20 Man rooms, these will be allocated to clubs/teams for the duration of the event and clubs will be required to provide appropriate numbers of CRB cleared Rugby Coaches to meet welfare and duty-of-care ratios.

The format for the weekend will be that it runs from Fri evening to Sun afternoon with the Rugby taking place over the Sat / Sun period and clubs travelling a great distance having the opportunity to arrive Fri night so that they are fully rested prior to the Rugby starting on Sat Morning.

There will be separate competitions for each junior age group (i.e. under 13s, 14s, 15s, 16s) in a traditional format: groups of 4-6 teams playing for league position on Sat 2 Mar and then the Cup, Bowl, Shield quarter-final, semi-final and final on the Sunday.

The intent is to maximise attendance from around the UK, so initially clubs will be restricted to fielding one team per age group.

Individual games will be played according to the RFU rules and regulations and all players must be RFU registered. We envisage that we will have ~ 40-50 teams taking part with up to 8 games in play at any one time, with games running continuously from 0930-1700 on Sat and 0900-1500 on Sunday.

We are also hopeful that we will have representatives from the RFU, Saracens, London Wasps and London Welsh throughout the event as well. Those staying over Sat night will have the opportunity to attend the Stn Cinema and there will be age-appropriate entertainments (including games and a disco/live Band) as well.

We also intend to use the event to raise money for various charities and all monies raised will go to charity after the event. However, the focus is on celebrating Rugby and providing an enjoyable day for all concerned, so costs will be kept to an absolute minimum. E.g. £35 entry per team which will cover medals & trophies and ~£20-25 a night for accommodation, breakfast and evening meal. The High Ropes, Low Ropes, Dismounted Close Combat Trainer and Flying will all typically cost less than £5 net (all of which will go to charity) although costs for particular events (especially flying) will be higher as individuals will have to take out temporary membership of the appropriate civilian governing body to ensure they will be covered for insurance and legislative reasons.

Yours in Rugby

D S MOSS

Wg Cdr

OC Training Wing

RAF Halton / Halton Camp / Aylesbury / Bucks / HP22 5PG
CHRIS ROBSHAW has been re-appointed England captain for the RBS 6 Nations.

The Harlequins skipper, who led England to second place in last season’s Championship, will lead the team against Scotland in the opener at Twickenham Stadium on Saturday, February 2.

England Head Coach Stuart Lancaster, who confirmed the appointment at this evening’s squad meeting, said: “Chris stepped into the role 12 months ago, when we were building a new team, and he has grown as a leader on and off the field. He showed those leadership qualities during the QBE Internationals, and especially against the All Blacks when the whole squad got behind him. We have a number of leaders and I know they will all take this team forwards with Chris as we look to kick on from that result.”

Robshaw said: “Stuart told me this afternoon and I am really pleased to be asked again. There are other leaders in the squad that Stuart could have turned to so I am really honoured. The lads have been great over the last year and now we our focus is on building on the New Zealand performance and getting a result against Scotland.”

**Newcastle RFC:**

The Newcastle U12s squad attended the recent Leicester Tigers v Toulouse Heineken Cup game.

The boys enjoyed a full day during which they formed the guard of honour as the players ran onto the pitch, they paraded around the pitch during half time.

The day was rounded off with a group photo with Tom Croft, Tigers and England.

A party of 76 parents and boys and siblings watched an absorbing match played in heavy snow.

**Cannock RFC**

Cannock RFC have finally sourced the total funding required for their extension and modernisation.

B.T. Felton and Sons have been appointed as the contractor and work will start on site on the 4th February.

Completion will be around mid June in time for the Cannock 7’s on the 13th July.

They will have 4 new state of the art changing rooms with more than enough shower power, 2 referee’s rooms, a first aid room and a full suite of community washrooms.

They still have room for a few more bricks on their wall of supporters so ring 07976 811278 if you are willing to invest £100 for a lifetime mention on the wall of a rapidly growing rugby force in Staffordshire.

Be among the first to view these new facilities by getting your name down with Jon Freeman for our 7’s competition. As was the case last year this will be an event with something for all ages so pencil it into
RFU announces Chairs of the six RWC 2015 Regional Activation and Legacy Groups:

Two ex-England Captains appointed as Chairs:

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) today announced the appointment of six Chairs of the Regional Activation and Legacy Groups established to support the RFU in its aim to deliver a strong and effective legacy beyond 2015.

The Chairs, will be responsible for working closely with RFU management, RFU Constituent Bodies (CBs), and the England Rugby 2015 team to oversee the development and implementation of a robust activation and legacy plan. The Groups will mirror the six RFU regional areas, and RFU area managers will be central to the effective delivery of the Groups.

Bill Beaumont, RFU Chairman said: “Hosting the Rugby World Cup in less than three years gives us an incredible opportunity to grow the game. Our plans to ensure we build an effective legacy are already well underway and today’s appointment of six Chairs to lead our Regional Activation and Legacy Groups is an important next step. They will all bring a wealth of experience and relevant skills to the role, adding value to the local delivery work of our CBs and staff.”

The role of Chair is voluntary and individuals are committed up until April 2016.

Andy Cosslett, ER 2015 Chairman commented: “The Rugby World Cup is the biggest event in Rugby Union. The work of the Regional Legacy Groups will be key to us delivering an unforgettable tournament that makes the most of this unique opportunity to build the strength and appeal of the game.”

Area 1 - Chris Booy (Cornwall, Somerset, Devon, Dorset & Wiltshire, Gloucestershire)

Area 2 - Vic Luck (Middlesex, Hants, Oxfordshire, Bucks, Berks, Herts)

Area 3 - Roger Clarke (Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Essex)

Area 4 - Peter Wheeler (Notts, Lincs & Derby, Eastern Counties, Leicestershire, E Midlands, Warwickshire)

Area 5 - Fran Cotton (Lancashire, Cheshire, Staffs, N Midlands)

Fran Cotton made his England debut against Scotland in 1971, and played for them 31 times.

He also captained the England team three times and represented the British Lions on three tours. His clubs included Coventry R.F.C. and Sale.

After retiring, he remained in rugby administration and founded the clothing company Cotton Traders in 1987, one of the most successful mail order companies in the UK.

In July 2007, Cotton returned to his former club Sale as a member of the club’s board. He is also Honorary President of the rugby charity Wooden Spoon, improving the lives of disadvantaged children and young people in Britain and Ireland. Fran was also Chairman of Club England from 1998 to 2004.

Area 6 - Robin Wannop (Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, Cumbria)

England Rugby 2015 (ER 2015), Tournament Organiser of Rugby World Cup 2015, has appointed Joanna Manning-Cooper, previously Head of Public Relations and Media for LOCOG, to the new role of Communications & Marketing Director.

The new position will be part of the ER 2015 leadership team and will be responsible for ticketing and volunteering campaigns, promoting the tournament, managing the ER2015 brand, implementation of the Rugby World Cup brand, media relations, running the press office and coordinating press operations.

Joanna Manning-Cooper has 20 years of integrated communications and media experience, including six-and-a-half years at LOCOG, where she was responsible for global PR and media activity to promote the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Prior to LOCOG she was Director of Global Communications for the Financial Times.

Debbie Jevans, Chief Executive of ER 2015, said: “We want Rugby World Cup 2015 in England to be the best World Cup ever. With less than 1,000 days to go to the tournament we are strengthening our senior team, and Joanna has been appointed following a competitive recruitment process for this important new role within the ER 2015 leadership team. Joanna did an exceptional job for London 2012, and her skills and experience in major sporting events will be a great asset as we promote Rugby World Cup 2015 to the world.”
England Women’s Six Nations 2013 fixtures confirmed

England Women will play Scotland, France and Italy at home this year in the Six Nations championship, with Esher RFC and Twickenham Stadium hosting the reigning Grand Slam champions.

The seven times winners will open their championship campaign against Scotland at Esher RFC on February 2, kick off 2pm, before their first away game against Ireland at Ashbourne Rugby Club a week later.

Twickenham Stadium awaits England on February 23rd, when the Grand Slam winners take on fierce rivals France on the big stage, (720pm). Rugby fans can watch the match for free with free entry to the stadium after the men’s RBS 6 Nations clash against France. The game will also be broadcast live on the BBC.

England will then return to Esher RFC on March 9th to take on Italy, kick off 1pm, before their final game of the campaign at Aberavon RFC against Wales on March 17th, 230pm.

Rugby fans will also be able to watch England Women take on Scotland and Italy live on www.rfu.com/englandwomenlive whilst tickets for these games are available from www.ticketmaster.co.uk from Tuesday January 15th.

England head into this year’s tournament as defending champions but with 17 players involved in England’s Rugby World Cup Sevens training squad Head Coach Gary Street is set to field a very different squad to the side that defeated the world champions, New Zealand, in the autumn.

Lichfield No. 8 Sarah Hunter will captain England with Katy McLean involved with England Sevens, and Hunter commented: “Every Six Nations is a special tournament and I am always filled with excitement to play in the championship. But certainly this season it is going to be tougher than ever. We will be without several regular starters; players like Margaret Alphonsi, Emily Scarratt and Heather Fisher so that is going to present us with a very different challenge.

“However, I think it is going to be a very exciting challenge. We have shown over the last few years that we do have real depth in this England squad and this season’s Six Nations championship will be a real chance for some of the less experienced or younger players to show what they can do. It could certainly be our toughest Six Nations ever but I am relishing getting our campaign started and captaining this new-look England squad.”

QBE COACHING CLUB

The RFU is working in partnership with QBE, the business insurance specialist, to increase the quantity and quality of rugby coaching in England as the Rugby World Cup in 2015 provides a huge opportunity to grow the game as well as the number of coaches in it. The QBE Coaching Club will recruit and train 2,015 new level 2 coaches by September 2015. The Union’s network of regional teams will recruit those with a commitment to coaching beyond 2015 and all will be trained by RFU coach educators. The courses will cover the off, as well as on field skills, required by a level 2 coach. If you’re interested in taking part and committing to community coaching beyond 2015, please email QBECC@rfu.com.
League and Merit Table Round-up @ 19th January 2013

With the Christmas break and the inclement weather over the past few weeks only a limited number of games have been possible. The tables below are up to any games played on the 19th January. For up to date leagues and results please visit the Staffs RFU web site. Found on the links below.

RFU Leagues
Midlands West reserve and Staffs merit tables

National League 3 Midlands

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<th>Team</th>
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Despite a set back against Newport with a narrow 20-26 defeat Longton continue their run of good form with wins over Sandbach and Scunthorpe moving them clear of the relegation battle. Sutton Coldfield, next up will provide a stern test.

Midlands 1 West

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Lichfield with 2 wins out of 2 games in January are keeping up the pressure on the two league leaders. Walsall with fine wins against Burton and Lichfield in their last 3 games are showing some form as are Stoke, both clubs sit mid table and will be looking to climb higher in the division over the next weeks. Burton 10 points behind Lichfield sit 4th in the league but have a game in hand in the competition for the highest placed Staffordshire club in the league.

Midlands 2 West (North)

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With Tamworth beating Wolverhampton on the 12th January Wolves lost the top spot to the form team of late Silhillians. Moseley Oak with a game in hand are 3rd just the 4 points behind the Wolves, Leek with games in hand and Stafford are well placed to challenge for the honours. Tamworth look to have turned the corner with wins against Wolves and Aston in their last 2 games hope to continue in this vein to pull out of th erelegation places.

Midlands 3 West (North)

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<tr>
<th>Team</th>
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Only 10 points separate the top 7 teams in this division. Newcastle who had been leading the way since the start of the season finally lost top spot in losing to Yardley on the 12th December. Burntwood seem to be dropping off the pace and lost in their only game to date in January to Shrewsbury. Bloxwich missed an opportunity to move above Newcastle when losing to a much improving Eccleshall 24-36. Willenhall with 7 wins in row took the top spot in beating Stourbridge Lions in their only game to date this month.
League and Merit Table Round-up

Midlands 4 West (North)

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Market Drayton, as they have for most of the season, top the league. Uttoxeter 2nd, but played a game more, are on equal points. They meet on 2nd February in what may be the crucial game of the season. Cannock 4th with games in hand over all the top sides will be looking for victories in February to put pressure on the leaders. The top 4 sides seem to have built a clear lead above the rest of this league.

Midlands 5 West (North)

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Just the 4 points separate the 5 teams. St Leonards sitting 3rd but with games in hand look to be best placed to mount a strong challenge. Rugeley who play Essington, St Leonards and Warley in their next 3 games have an opportunity to put points on their nearest rivals, although both Essington and St. Leonards beat them in their first meetings of the season.

South Lancs/Cheshire Division Three

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Trentham are 5th in the division, level on points with Ellesmere, but 12 points behind league leaders Port Sunlight. Still favourites for the league title are Manchester Medics 9 points off the top with 3 games in hand, who visit Trentham on February 9th. A must win game for Trentham if they harbour any hopes of promotion this season.

Midlands West Reserve Team League

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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallasey2nd XV</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burton A’XV</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heniford 2nd XV</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport(S&amp;I)2nd XV</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malvern 2nd XV</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burslem 2nd XV</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoke on Trent Development</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dudley continue to run away with the league and remain unbeaten, only conceding 13 points in 8 matches. Lichfield are the closest rivals having played a game more but 2 points behind. 3rd place in the league is up for grabs as 5 teams are separated by just the 9 points.
League and Merit Table Round-up:

Merit Table B North

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannock 2nds</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trentham 2nds</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leek 3nds</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford 3nds</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle (Staffs) 3rd XV</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Leonards 2nd XV</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashbourne IV</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cannock and Trentham top the table with 29 points both having won 7 out of 8 games this season. Stone with a game in hand on both can join them and play Cannock on 26th January at Cannock.

Trentham meet Cannock on February 16th in what could turn out to be the title decider.

Merit Table C North

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanford</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannock 3rd</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoke Rhinos 3rd XV</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eccleshall 2nd XV</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford 4ths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uttoxeter 2nds</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linley &amp; Kidsgrove 3rd XV</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trentham Stags</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longton 3rd XV</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugeley 3rd XV</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hanford and Cannock look to be building a gap in this table, the chasing pack however the next 6 teams are separated by only 10 points and any one could put a run together which would put them back in the frame.
PROTECT AGAINST FROZEN PIPES

With unpredictable winter weather, a fierce cold snap could bite at any point, so now is the time to ensure your rugby club is protected against the misery caused by burst pipes.

There are a few simple actions you can undertake to help prevent burst and frozen pipes and keep those showers running:

- Make sure key people in the club know where the stopcock is and check you can turn it on and off
- With the clubhouse often empty and unheated for days on end it is crucial that all pipes and tanks in roof spaces are properly lagged
- In severe weather, or if severe weather is forecast, consider putting the heating on for a period each day
- During a cold snap ensure someone visits the club every day so if you do suffer from a burst pipe, it will be detected as soon as possible, and any damage caused can be minimised
- Ensure the contact details for your insurance company’s 24-hour helpline are widely known within the club’s key personnel
- If you suffer damage caused by a burst pipe always notify your insurance broker and they will help manage your claim for you.

Marsh is the official insurance broker to the RFU and has developed insurance policies specifically to cover your rugby club’s needs.

To find out more please call Marsh on 01444 335392 or visit www.rfu.com/ManagingRugby/Insurance.

Health and Safety:

Rugeley RFC battle the elements to continue training:

Rugeley Rugby Club decided to beat the winter weather with a unique training session last week with players swapping their jock straps and boots for lycra and sweat bands. Snow and frost had meant training had been cancelled since the new year.

With several important league and cup games to occur in February the club turned to personal trainer Rebecca Dyke to take a Zumba session in the club’s St Augustine’s club house.

Rebecca who runs several Zumba and aerobic sessions holds a regular session for ladies on a Thursday evening which is what gave club secretary Martin de Ridder the idea:

“I came down to lock up a couple of weeks ago and notice the ladies walking out of the class looked like they’d had a good work out and when I found out we were snow bound again I asked Rebecca if she would mind putting the lads through their paces in a male only class”.

“One of our local rivals posted on twitter that they would never do such a thing as their players weren’t in touch with their feminine side. Well our lads thoroughly enjoyed themselves so I guess that means we must be. To be honest I found it completely exhausting.”

Rebecca Dyke said “I was pleased with the effort the lads put in. They all were a bit shy to begin with but then most of them really got into it. Some of them were even dancing in the breaks between the exercises”.

There was a good turnout for the session and the club is considering running the session on a regular basis.

“I am pleased that we were able to train notwithstanding the weather. Hopefully this stands us in good stead for the rest of the season”.

Rugeley’s fixtures last weekend against Essington were postponed due to the poor weather and will now be replayed on Saturday 2nd February.
**Stafford RFC:**

**Who eat all the Pies?**

The latest Annual Mince Pie Eating Competition at Stafford RFC was held in late December at the County Ground clubhouse. As well raising £230 for Cancer research all who took part (and spectators) has a great evening, although some found the following morning a little hard to take. Reports have it that all were fully restored by Christmas day and even managed a few more.

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**Junior Growth at Handsworth**

After a couple of seasons of losing members, Handsworth Rugby Club’s junior section is now starting to see the rewards of the hard work put in by my new Junior Chairman, Lee Dawson and his team of volunteers.

Mid December saw the newly formed Handsworth Under 15’s, bolstered by a few players under an agreement with Wednesbury, win their first competitive game at home to Yardley and District. It’s good to see clubs working together to give juniors a chance to play. January 13th will see the return fixture being played.

Lee is looking for more fixtures at U15 level, so if your club is interested, please contact Junior Fixture Secretary, Steve Evans on 07946 070366

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**Rugby a family affair at Essington**

RUGBY is a family affair at Wolverhampton-based Essington where three members of the same family are involved in the club’s recently-established women’s team.

First team front-row forward Nick Smith is coaching the team with his daughter Callie-Jo, a hooker, and wife Trish Martin, a prop, in the side.

Callie-Jo, who has played for Staffordshire, West Midlands and England Colleges, previously played for Lichfield where her father first took up coaching.

“It’s a big rugby family,” Smith said. “When Callie-Jo went to Lichfield they were looking for volunteers and I’m not the sort of person who will tell somebody how to do something unless I can do it myself so that’s why I got involved.

“I ended up coaching there for three years but work commitments forced me to take a step back so I concentrated on playing at Essington. When we tried to start up a girls team I got back involved with coaching again.

“A couple of adults turned up for the first session and we didn’t want to turn them away. They brought some friends along for the next session and within about three weeks we had enough players to get a side out.”

Essington women’s team played their first match recently and beat Warley 44-20. They intend to continue playing friendlies for the rest of this season but are hoping to enter a league next year to play regular competitive rugby.
Wolverhampton RFC: (A potted history of one of Staffs oldest clubs.)

Unsurprisingly, Wolverhampton RUFC was founded in a pub - the old 'Star and Garter' in Victoria Street, Wolverhampton. Several of the founding fathers, including Charles Mander, were at Rugby School together in the 1820's. In 1875, they ran a 'rugger' school in the town and founded the club. Early matches were played near the 'Halfway House' on the Tettenhall Road and later played at West Park, Crowther Road and Danescourt before settling at Castlecroft in 1950.

Between the two wars, the club welcomed such names as Norman Dickensen, Jim Timmis, Gwyn Bayliss, Teddie Iles, Alfred Baker and Tom and Gordon Rutherford.

All these men served the club for many years as players and officials. In the mid 1930's, the fixture list included Handsworth, Pontypridd and Ebbw Vale as well as our old adversaries Stoke, Walsall, Burton and Stafford. How fortunes have changed! The Golden Jubilee was celebrated in 1926 and the Diamond Jubilee in 1937 with matches against teams raised by the President of the RFU.

After the war the club bought from Ansells Brewery for £3000, the ground we now call home. 3 Nissen huts were erected as changing rooms and clubhouse.

New faces such as John Thompson, Philip Page and Bobby Ireson started in the post war era. Towards the end of the fifties stalwarts such as Alan Walker, Brian Wordley, Ian Creed and Mike Parr started appearing in team sheets. Gerry Jones, a schoolmaster from the Municipal Grammar School captained the side from 1958-60 and his skill and experience set the tone for the next decade or so.

The new clubhouse was opened in 1960 with another all star match. The sixties saw the emergence of Vic Hall, Nick Hemmings, Roger Ashton, Ron Davies and Tony Hill. They were joined later in the decade by Bob Bracey, John Owen and Brian Mansell, who was an early recruit from Regis Comprehensive School. Along with M.G.S and Tettenhall College Regis provided a steady stream of players at this time. Spanning the sixties and seventies were Martin Cooper, who achieved an England trial whilst still with the club, Bill Tranter, Steve Bowden, Leo Harding a welshman from Cambridge University and later Jim Sherrat.

At this time the club boasted a back row including Dave Elliott and Dave Foulkes to rival the 3 'Ps' (Pratley, Pennington and Parr) of a decade earlier. In 1975 the club celebrated its Centenary against Moseley and a week of dinners and dances.

Mini rugby had begun in 1972 and during the late seventies, rugby began its evolution to the competitive world we know today. The Staffordshire Cup began as did the Midland Merit table which coincided with the development of a young, powerful side under the coaching of Mike Parr. Built around a pack containing Jim Sherrat and a young Graham Smith, captained by Gordon Doble, this side won the Midland Merit and came close to winning the Staffordshire Cup on several occasions.

When the Courage league was born, the club found itself in the Midlands Division One. The Staffordshire Cup was finally won in 1988, but the following season, the team was relegated to Division Two of the Midlands. At the end of the 1991/92 season, the club was promoted into Midlands Division One again. Another entertaining side including yet another back row of note. Thompson, Holland and Day provided the backbone to an exciting young side coached by Stuart Jardine. Since then the club has fallen back somewhat due to financial pressures in the professional era. In 1998/9 we were relegated to Midlands Division 2 and only avoided relegation last season through league re-organisation. We are currently in Midlands 2 West (North).

Whatever the form of the team, Wolverhampton has always played an enjoyable and exciting style of rugby which is reflected in the excellent social side of the club.

Here at Wolverhampton Rugby Club, we have a very active Mini and Junior Section running teams from Under 8's up to Colts. Every weekend during the season, 150 plus youngsters are training or playing the game of rugby competitively. Our coaches are always pleased to welcome new players at any time during the season.
**Humour:**

**SUBJECT: The Green Thing (FOOD FOR THOUGHT)**

At the cash register of the store, the young cashier suggested to the older Gentleman that he should bring his own shopping bags because plastic bags weren’t good for the environment. The man apologized and explained, "We didn’t have this green thing back in my earlier days."

The cashier responded, “That’s our problem today. Your generation did not care enough to save our environment for future generations. You didn’t have the green thing.”

She was right -- our generation didn’t have the green thing in its day.

Back then, we returned milk bottles, soft drink bottles and beer bottles to the store. The store sent them back to the plant to be washed and sterilized and refilled, so it could use the same bottles over and over. So they really were recycling. We refilled writing pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, and we replaced the razor blades in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull.

But we didn’t have the green thing back in our day.

We walked up stairs, because we didn’t have an escalator in every shop and office building. We walked to the grocery store and didn’t climb into a 300-horsepower machine every time we had to go two blocks.

But she was right. We didn’t have the green thing in our day.

Back then, we washed the baby’s nappies because we didn’t have the throw-away kind. We dried clothes on a line, not in an energy gobbling machine burning up 220 volts -- wind and solar power really did dry our clothes back in our early days. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters, not always brand-new clothing.

But that young lady is right. We didn’t have the green thing back in our day.

Back then, we had one TV, or radio, in the house -- not a TV in every room. And the TV had a small screen the size of a handkerchief, not a screen the size of the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

In the kitchen, we blended and stirred by hand because we didn’t have electric machines to do everything for us. When we packaged a fragile item to send in the post, we used wrapped up old newspapers to cushion it, not Styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap. Back then, we didn’t fire up an engine and burn petrol just to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power. We exercised by working so we didn’t need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity.

But she’s right. We didn’t have the green thing back then.

We drank water from a tap when we were thirsty instead of demanding a plastic bottle flown in from another country.

We accepted that a lot of food was seasonal and didn’t expect that to be trucked in or flown thousands of air miles.

We actually cooked food that didn’t come out of a packet, tin or plastic wrap and we could even wash our own vegetables and chop our own salad.

But we didn’t have the green thing back then.

Back then, city people took the tram or a bus, and kids rode their bikes to school or walked instead of turning their mothers into a 24-hour taxi service. We had one electrical outlet in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And we didn’t need a computerized gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 2,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest pizza joint.

But isn’t it sad the current generation laments how wasteful we old folks were just because we didn’t have the green thing back then?

Please forward this on to another selfish old person who needs a lesson in conservation from a smart-ass young person.

Remember:

Don’t make old people mad. We don’t like being old in the first place, so it doesn’t take much to set us off.
Humour:

The Bagpipers lament: As a bagpiper, I play many gigs. Recently I was asked by a funeral director to play at a graveside service for a homeless man. He had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper’s cemetery out in the country. As I was not familiar with the area, I got lost and, being a typical man, I didn’t stop for directions.

I finally arrived an hour late and saw the funeral guy had evidently gone and the hearse was nowhere in sight. There were only the diggers and crew left and they were eating lunch.

I felt badly and apologized to the men for being late. I went to the side of the grave and looked down and the vault lid was already in place. I didn’t know what else to do, so I started to play.

The workers put down their lunches and began to gather around. I played out my heart and soul for this man with no family and friends.

I played like I’ve never played before for this homeless man.

And as I played ‘Amazing Grace,’ the workers began to weep. They wept, I wept, we all wept together.

When I finished I packed up my bagpipes and started for my car.

Though my head hung low, my heart was full.

As I opened the door to my car, I heard one of the workers say, "I never seen nothin’ like that before and I’ve been putting in septic tanks for twenty years."

Apparently, I’m still lost... It’s a man thing.

My golf is definitely improving. I’m missing the ball much closer than I used to.

A golfer came home in a foul mood. "I only hit two good balls today," he moaned, "and that was when I stood on a rake."

He plays a fair game of golf - if you watch him. I’ve advised my friend to see a psychologist. He treats golf as if it were a game.

His doctor told him to play 36 holes a day, so he went out and bought a harmonica.

He’s hopeless. He’s the only golfer I know who shouts, "Fore," when he puts.

I love golf. I live golf. I dream golf. If only I could play golf! Last week I missed a spectacular hole-in-one by only six strokes.

My wife claims that her golf is improving because today she hit the ball in one.

Sunday is the day all of us bow our heads. Some are praying and some are putting.

Man: "My doctor has told me I can’t play golf."
Friend: "So he’s played with you too has he?"

My wife says if I don’t give up golf she’ll leave me. That’s bad luck. I know I’m really going to miss her.

What do you call a woman who can suck a golf ball through 50 ft of garden hose? Darling.

Two golfers at the first tee.
Golfer 1: Hey guess what! I got a set of golf clubs for my wife! Golfer 2: Great trade.

Golf was once a rich man’s sport but now it has millions of poor players.

Why does a golfer wear two pairs of pants. In case he gets a hole in one.
Dates for the Diary:

January 28th - Play it Safe workshop @ Leek RFC 1900hrs
February 4th - Play it Safe workshop @ Wolverhampton RFC 100hrs
   6th - RugbyReady @ Stoke RFV 7:30pm
   10th - Staffs U20 v Oxfordshire U20 @ Burntwood 1:30ko
   11th - SOR Meeting @ St Leonards Social 1930hrs
March  19/20th RWC "HOST" 2015 @ Burntwood RFC 7:30pm
April  1st - England U16 v Italy U16 @ Lichfield RFC

Please email any items/photos for future editions to:
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