

## **BIG Club Secretary's Report, 2019**

As autumn approaches, Monday night witnessed the last week of the 2019 league season. Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the creation of the league, we have been fortunate to have had a largely dry summer to support it. A record 44 teams in 4 divisions have competed, representing over 160 players every week. I would like to thank all players for their support, participation and sportsmanship, and those club representatives who have provided prompt and accurate results to enable me to circulate weekly league updates. I must not let the opportunity pass to thank all landlords and proprietors of the 21 clubs/pubs for their continuing hospitality which has been provided free of charge.

The report on the very close cup and plate finals can be found elsewhere on the web-site, and there is just the champion of champions to come at Caerleon RFC on Sunday 22nd September.

The season culminates in the annual presentation evening at Pontypool Leisure Centre on Friday 15 November. We would dearly love to see all clubs represented on our 20th anniversary. Please let me know as soon as possible numbers from your club. Thanks to three clubs who represent about 50 attendees which have provided an early boost for the evening.

### **END OF SEASON SUMMARY**

In Division 1, Caerleon A continued to dominate and recorded their third consecutive championship. Only one defeat underlines their consistency. Other teams will be encouraged by a winning margin which has shrunk from 13 points to 7! Runners-up Wheatsheaf Eagles have had their most successful season for some years, having finished 5th in the previous two seasons. Supported by only 1 home defeat, they showed consistent form and also reached the cup final. Despite an indifferent start, with 2 wins in the first 9 games, Caerleon Blues finished strongly with 7 wins and a draw in their last 8 games. This was enough to secure 3rd spot, equal to 2018. ROF Nomads were in 4th place which promised something more with only 1 defeat in their first 12 games. As a result, they slipped from a runners up place in 2018. Machen Mountaineer's 5th place was a slight improvement on 6th place in the previous 2 years. With 4 wins in their first 6 games, Machen had their usual strong start but this was undermined by only 1 win in their last 8 games. The top 6 was completed by Pilcs who are now an established Division 1 team and improved to 6th place compared to 7th in the previous 2 years. They will be encouraged by reaching 40 points in Division 1 for the first time, with only 1 home defeat. In the bottom half, Rising Sun Shunters experienced a difficult season, with only 1 win in their first 8 games. They stayed above the relegation zone but finished in 7th place, 3 places lower than their 2018 campaign. Division 2 champions in 2018, Talywain Tigers also found themselves hovering near the relegation zone, but 3 wins in their last 6 games secured Division 1 status and 8th place. Another team to secure their Division 1 status at the end of the season was Wheatsheaf Falcons in 9th place who accumulated 7 points in their last 2 games and just avoided relegation. Languishing at the bottom of the table throughout the season were Caerleon Greens and Ponthir House. 2 wins and 7 points in their last 2 games were not enough to prevent Caerleon from being relegated, largely due to 6 consecutive defeats towards the end of the

season. Relegated in 2018 but retaining Division 1 status, Ponthir House were also relegated with the unenviable record this year of no wins - a feat achieved by RS Locos last year - and 17 defeats. Consistency of the wrong kind!

In recent years, Division 2 has gained the reputation of being the most competitive. This year was no exception with 8 points covering over half the division. Ffrwd Fighters achieved the rare feat of back to back championships, having won Division 3 in 2018. A 7-point winning margin, and points in every game except one, highlighted a high degree of consistency. In a last game finale, Monmouth PC, Division 3 champions in 2017, gained promotion to Division 1 for the first time as runners up to Ffrwd Fighters. Having laid the foundations with only 1 defeat at home, Monmouth's late push for promotion was underlined by 6 wins and 2 draws in their last 8 games. 8th last year, Caerleon Cohort can be well pleased with 3rd place this year. Only 4 points away from promotion, points were picked up in all games. Promoted to Division 2, Aber Reds led the way in the early part of the season with 5 straight wins and 6 wins and 2 draws in the first 8 games. Points became harder to come by later in the season, with 6 defeats in 7 games. However, 4th place represents a creditable first season in Division 2. Little Crown continued to feature around the top of Division 2. They failed to secure points in only 2 games and 3 wins in last 4 games helped to cement 5th place. Completing the top half of the table is Machen Bouligans. They briefly threatened on the edge of promotion, but no wins in the last 5 games saw their promotion ambitions evaporate. In the bottom half of the table, Clytha Wrythas - formerly known as Clytha C - had a solid first season in 7th place, having been promoted from 3rd place in Division 3 last year. They hold the bragging rights over their 8th placed Clytha A colleagues but only by 1 point. 9th placed RS Locos, without a win in 2018, had another difficult season this year. Despite being in a lowly position throughout the season, they did well to avoid relegation with a win in their last game, coming off the back of 3 straight defeats. ROF Cannons and Halfway Allstars occupy the relegation positions. Cannons, 7th in 2018, failed to find any consistency. Allstars achieved 6 wins but 3 defeats in the last 4 games sealed their fate.

Making their Division 3 debut in 2018 and finishing 4th, Greenlawn A proved worthy champions this year with only one defeat and winning by 4 points. Relegated from Division 2 in 2017, and 9th last year, Wheatsheaf Harriers joined Greenlawn in gaining promotion to Division 2 with a strong finish of 1 defeat in 6 games. Division 4 champions in 2018, Upper Cock started their Division 3 debut strongly with an opening salvo of 4 straight wins. Undefeated at home, they only missed promotion again by 2 points and finished in 3rd place. 5th in 2017 and 2018, Twyn y Ffrwd A went one better this year, helped by a run of 9 games without defeat at the end of the season. After a poor campaign in 2018, Aber Golds started slowly with just 1 win in their first 7 games but recovered well to finish in 5th place. One place below, their colleagues Aber Blues who equalled their finishing position in 2018 and again suffered from a surfeit of draws. In the bottom half of the table, Clytha B equalled their 2018 finishing position of 7th but lacked consistency during the season by losing their last 3 games, winning the previous 3, and losing the 3 games before that. Third in Division 4 in 2018 and promoted to Division 3, Caerleon Centurions recovered from 1 win in the first 8 games to 1 defeat in the last 7, finishing in 8th place. The Star slipped 1 place to 9th, completing their matches with 1 win in the last 5. Relegation places are occupied by RS Buffers and ROF Exiles. The Buffers achieved 5 wins but were never in a safe position during

the season. Division 4 runners-up in 2018, the Exiles have made a quick return to Division 4 with just 1 win to show for their efforts.

In Division 4, with only 2 defeats all season, and bolstered by gaining at least 2 points in every game except 2, Greenlawn C proved too strong for their rivals and impressively won the league and gained promotion to Division 3. In a club one and two, Greenlawn B, bottom but one in their first season in 2018 also gained promotion to Division 3, helped by 6 wins in 7 in a mid-season surge. In their first season, Greyhound Shi Tzus gained early points to give them confidence and finished strongly in joint 3rd thanks to only 1 defeat in their last 8 games. Alongside the Greyhound, Isca Arms Sharks also finished joint 3rd - both sides with equal records and equal head to head. The Sharks maintained their form having come 4th in 2018. Halfway Allstars Others, 8th in 2018 and 10th in 2017, demonstrated improved form and rose to 5th place on the back of an end of season run of 5 wins in their last 6 games. With an impressive start of an unbeaten 10 match run, RS Sleepers will be disappointed to only finish 6th, not helped by a poor finish of no wins in last 7 games. At the bottom of the league in 2017 and 2018, Isca Arms Silures, formerly Dormice, managed a creditable 7th place, unbeaten in their last 6 games. White Hart Stags accumulated 7 wins which gave them 8th place, slightly lower than 6th in 2018. Despite a mid-season slump of 10 defeats in 12 games, Talywain Cougars finished the season on a positive note with 3 wins in the last 5 games. At the bottom of the table, the two Crown teams, Jewels and Crusaders, both struggled for consistency. The Crusaders started slowly with 4 defeats in first 5 games but will take encouragement from picking up points in all but 1 game. The Jewels lost half their games, but will also be encouraged by 2 draws to finish the season.

Robin