

CLECKHEATON RUGBY UNION FOOTBALL CLUB

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

11th AUGUST 2011

CHAIRMANS REPORT

The season of 2010/11 was the season that we would have liked to have seen our flagship team and coaching staff addressing the shortcomings of the previous season and return our Club to North 1 East status.

Despite poor discipline from players and coaches at the beginning of the season and unexpected defeats to bottom end teams, our 1st XV managed to finish a respectable third in the league. This gave both players and supporters a sense that we have broken the long run of defeats and returned to enjoying the feeling of winning again.

At the end of the season our 1st XV coach, Dave Harrison, had come to the end of his two year arrangement with the Club. This has now been extended for a further year to give him the opportunity to maximise the teams' potential and successfully elevate the Club to reflect the financial support and resources that has been provided.

There has been further development of our 2nd XV with home grown players now having a sound platform to enhance their capabilities and challenge for 1st XV places. The influence and passion of a recognised coach, Gordon Piper, has given this team more structure and ambition that is evident in the results they achieved throughout the season.

Our 3rd XV & 4th XV teams have, as ever, continued to put out teams to provide a channel for our young players to experience open age rugby amongst experienced and seasoned stalwarts. Thanks go to Colin Thompson who retired from his duties as 4th Team Manager at the end of the season. Colin often had to endure the frustrations of the drop down affect into his team, which on several occasions left him with a last minute shortage of players.

Much attention has been placed on our 1st and 2nd XV development and the generation of finances to support them. As I indicated in my last report, my view as Chairman of Rugby was, and still is, that our Junior Section was in much need of the Rugby Sections investment of both time and money to retain and develop our young players. With this in mind I started last season with a determination to be more involved with our Junior environment and to identify where the longer term future of our Club was positioned. I am pleased to report that the commitment of the coaches, players and many volunteers in the Junior Section are a credit to our club.

Our eager young players are being developed by committed, volunteer, coaches and many players are showing signs of achieving their aspirations of becoming significant contributors to our Senior teams. Key to the junior coaching ethos is team spirit, camaraderie, respectfulness, self discipline and Club identity. Elements that would be expected to be firmly ingrained into all members of our Club.

We must note loose site of what is happening in this area of our club and the many difficulties that are endemic in a junior environment. There are still gaps where there is no team for the age group and particularly at the entry end for minis where there is a shortage of young players coming into the sport at an early age. We must improve our support to this area if we are to ensure that the lifeblood of our Club is secured for future generations.

A massive well done to all the Junior committee, coaches, volunteers and parents for doing a fantastic job in support of our Club and young players.

Steve Fletcher has now stepped down from his position as Junior Chairman. I would like to give him personal thanks, and on behalf of the Club as a whole, for his tireless commitment to the cause of Junior Rugby and welfare of our future players. His successor is Andy Clark who will also be coaching our U15's next season. I'm sure he will be given every support in his new role.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the Club throughout last season particularly our Sponsors, Committee and the many volunteers who work tirelessly to make things happen.

You will all be aware that I am now stepping down as Rugby Chairman. When I took over the roll four years ago I had completed three years, as Treasurer, sorting out the finances as we entered into the National League and planning a sustainable financial structure for the Club. The situation when I took over as Chairman was described by some as "a poison chalice". There were many areas, particularly within our 1st XV structure, that required elements of "change management" to secure our future as a viable Rugby Club. This was likely to be unpopular with our 1st XV personnel as we were a club feeding the demands of the team rather than the team fulfilling their obligations to the values of our Club, its Committee and an ethos that has been protected for many years. Many used the analogy of "tail wagging the dog". Knowing that it was unlikely to be an easy ride, as there were many self interested parties that would be affected by these changes, I took on the roll with a professional view and a conviction to uphold the integrity and welfare of Cleckheaton RUFC.

To compound some of these problems it was clear that relationships between the Rugby Section and the other elements of our Sports Club were at low ebb.

I step down from my role as Chairman in the sound knowledge that our Club is now in good shape and has a solid platform for a sustainable future. Our finances are in good condition and the playing environment, for all players within the Club, can now demonstrate opportunities to develop and maximise the potential of home grown players. Our relationship with the other sporting sections is healthy and we now have a role to play within the committee structure of Cleckheaton Sports Club.

This being said there is still much work to do. Not least our committees conviction and resolve to moving our Club closer towards a totally amateur environment and eradicating the lack of discipline displayed too often at the expense of our Clubs reputation.

I would like to thank all of those who have supported me over the past four years in my resolve to do my best for Cleckheaton Rugby Club. My thanks go to the committee which has had many issues to deal with and in particular Keith and Ian as elected officers who have worked tirelessly in their respective roles.

I wish my successor well in his endeavours to move our Club forward and assure him of my full support in all issues upholding the interest and welfare of Cleckheaton Rugby Club.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that the role of Rugby President has been resurrected and congratulate Alan Bentley who has been invited to take up this roll. His long term commitment and passion for the cause of CRUFC has been evident for all to see and highlighted that he was an obvious and popular candidate for this prestigious ambassadorial role.

Good luck to all our teams for the coming season and I hope that everyone enjoys the many benefits that being a member of Cleckheaton RUFC brings.

Steve Hutton
Chairman Cleckheaton RUFC