

CARDIFF ATHLETIC CLUB RUGBY SECTION

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2007/08

How things change over the space of two years, it seems a distant memory now that two years ago we were fighting relegation which for long periods of that season looked a losing battle. Last year our fortunes were transformed somewhat and we finished a reasonable 8th in the Premiership. This year the improvement has continued at a pace with a very creditable 2nd place and some excellent rugby played.

Tribute must be paid to our Head Coach Justin Burnell who has worked tirelessly in the pursuit of success and to his coaching staff of Danny Wilson, Howard Stone, Gareth Baber and Richard Hughes who have all done an excellent job this year. Unfortunately we have to say good bye to Gareth Baber who is leaving us to take up a coaching position with the Blues, I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for all he has done for us this season and to wish him every success with the Blues.

In addition Justin's backroom staff of Gafyn Cooper (Team Manager), Dyfri Owen (Physiotherapist) and Chantelle Thomas (Masseur) have all provided top class support for Justin and the players.

Our final League position of 2nd was the best ever achieved by a Cardiff side since the inception of the current League system. Doubles were achieved over the League winners Neath and the third placed team Pontypridd. There were also first Premiership wins at Sardis Road and the Brewery Field, but despite these victories the team did at times lose games that in reality we should have expected to win, looking at the relative League positions. This lack of consistency probably cost us the chance of really challenging Neath for the title as the season came to a close. The introduction of bonus points this year also made a difference at the end of the season, although Neath only won 1 more game than us they won the League by 13 points. The key to success next season will be consistency and a greater accumulation of bonus points. I know that Justin, who has done such a tremendous job over the last two years will not rest in his pursuit of building a winning squad for the coming season.

Our cup run despite impressive victories at Pontypool and Carmarthen came to a disappointing end at Aberavon. Let's hope for a good run in the cup next season climaxing in another final. Dare we also hope for a few home ties in the cup next season!!

One of our roles as a Premiership team is to develop players for the Regional side and again this season several players have represented the Blues with distinction. James Down, Ryan Howells, Roger Davies, Leigh Halfpenny & Darren Allinson have all shown this season that they are capable of making the step up to Regional rugby.

We are all extremely proud of the achievements of Tom James and Jamie Roberts in gaining their caps for Wales, both of whom have starred with the Premiership team. The same applies to Bradley Davies who was chosen for the short tour to South Africa this summer.

This summer sees the under 20 World Cup coming to Wales again. The Welsh squad has

a significant number of players who have appeared in the Cardiff Premiership side this season, notably Leigh Halfpenny with 19 appearances for the Blue & Blacks, Luke Evans 11 appearances, Jevon Groves 8, Patrick Palmer 7, Dan Franks 6.

Significant landmarks reached last season were: Leigh Halfpenny top scoring with 178 points, Craig Evans second top scorer with 139 points, Ryan Howells top try scorer with 14 tries, closely followed by Roger Davies with 12.

Owen Ruttley, Dan McShane, Ryan Price and Darren Fenton all made their 100th appearances for the club during the course of the season.

Eleven players qualified for Caps; Roger Davies, Ryan Howells, Leigh Halfpenny, Tristan Davies, Gareth Davies, Richard Cornock, Scott Roberts, Rhys James, Gary Horrigan, Damian Welch & Adam Whitney.

The last two seasons have seen a significant improvement in the fortunes of Cardiff RFC we are now back to where we should be at the top of the club rugby tree in Wales as I mentioned earlier we cannot allow ourselves to be complacent, we still have not won anything, this must be our goal for next season.

The Rugby Committee has again worked tirelessly behind the scenes for the benefit of the RFC. My thanks in particular go to Keith Morgan for continuing to work unstintingly for the Premiership side. To Simon Down and Steve Davies for attending the Premiership and East District meetings on our behalf Also to Steve Cannon for arranging the Sportsman's Dinner and Auction which was held last November.

I must congratulate Keith Morgan on being elected Chairman of the Athletic Club and I am sure the rugby section can now look forward to working with the Athletic Club for the benefit of both parties.

The Supporters Club and Call to Arms have again given us wonderful support over the season, not only in voicing their support at both home and away games, but in selling match programmes, replica training jerseys and souvenirs. This level of involvement is priceless and our gratitude to the supporters club can not be overstated... I cannot overstate how grateful we are to both groups for their support, long may it continue.

Brian Walker and his staff have again provided us with an excellent playing surface that is the envy of most clubs. I know that the ground staff are unstinting in their work on the pitch and must be congratulated on the high quality playing surface we enjoy throughout the season.

Karl Williams and his staff continue to provide us with excellent service in the clubhouse. Peter our head doorman in what can be a very difficult job particularly on International days, brings a very professional and effective presence to the position.

All concerned with the Premiership team have been delighted with the form of the Blues this season and they continue to gather strength and momentum. The Blues progressed through the group stages of the European Cup and finished second in the Magners league and were in touching distance of winning it right to the very last game

of the season. Our warmest congratulations to Dai Young and his coaching staff and we are looking forward to next season with a great deal of optimism.

Peter Thomas and his Board of Directors have been very supportive of the Premiership side this year and they have given us the resources with which to develop the team into one which can compete at the top of the Premiership. Paul Bailey one of the Blues Directors became our main sponsor for last season and has already agreed to sponsor us again next season for which we are very grateful. Bob Norster and Alun Doull are both very supportive of the Premiership team and are always ready to discuss matters and offer advice. The office staff are always prepared to help us in any way possible and I would like to offer our thanks for their invaluable support.

In conclusion I would like to wish you all a very good summer break and look forward to seeing you all in September.

Many thanks,

Malcolm Childs
Chairman Cardiff RFC