Cardiff RFC - Chairman's Report
for the year's ending 31st May 2022

Last June I was elected as the chairman of our great club. As someone who is acutely aware of the history of Cardiff Rugby, I realise what an honour and privilege this is.

I would like to thank my predecessor Chris Norman for his notable contribution in his five year tenure and for his advice, assistance and support over the last year.

In Spring 2021 the board of Cardiff Rugby Limited decided to change the way it used its Premiership team. A decision that was based on both rugby and economic criteria. After the welcome and extremely well received rebrand from Cardiff Blues to Cardiff Rugby, we would now use the "Rags" as an aid to develop our academy players alongside quality semi professional and regional players. This model comes with its challenges as it is difficult to combine player development with competing for trophies. It requires a buy in from all parties, academy, semi professional as well as the full time professional players.

We have been very fortunate in having Steve Law and Gruff Rees to implement the new model. They have created an environment and produced a culture which allows the academy players to express themselves and have the regional players knocking on David Young's door asking to play for the Rags when they are not required for the first team.

Thanks are due to David Young for ensuring player availability whenever possible throughout the season. We would not have attained the success we did without this help.

Cardiff RFC enjoyed a very successful season reaching the semi finals of the Indigo Premiership Cup as well as winning the league title for the first time since 2008-9. Defeat against our nearest challengers Newport in March made the proposition of us being crowned champions extremely unlikely. However Newport's faltering form at the end of the season gave us an outside chance. A bonus point victory in each of our final four games would ensure us the title. The squad thrived under this pressure gaining the necessary bonus point victories away at Llandovery and Swansea as well as at home against regional rivals Pontypridd and Merthyr.
The league title was a fitting reward for the efforts of all playing and coaching staff throughout the season. Director of coaching Gruff Rees, Head Coach Steve Law, team manager Iestyn Williams and the coaching personnel of Craig Everett, Ian Evans, Aled James, Cai Jenkins , Scott Andrews and Dan Fish can feel justifiably proud of their achievement.

Morgan Allen captained the team, and created and demonstrated a high degree of leadership both on and off the field. His attitude and experience was a great advantage to our young squad.

Several new players were added to our squad during the close season. These included Ryan Edwards, George Gasson, Tom Hoppe, Llyr Green, Sean Moore, James Richards as well as the returning Alun Rees and Jack Maynard. Our young academy players included Jacob Beetham, Cameron Winnett, Theo Cabango, Ioan Evans, Ryan Wilkins, Ethan Lloyd, Theo Bevacqua, Rhys Barrett, Efan Daniel, Nathan Evans, Rhys Anstey, Alex Mann and Ehan Fackrell.

In a season that saw many notable perfomances, there were many highlights.The second half of the September fixture against RGC, victory at Sardis Road and the home win over Aberavon being especially memorable.

Jacob Beetham finished the season as both top points and top try scorer with 142 and 9 respectively. Alex Everett made most appearances playing in all 25 games winning his club cap in the process. The other payers to win their caps were Rhys Anstey, Gwilym Bradley, Ethan Lloyd, Sean Moore and James Richards. Congratulations also to prop Thomas Davies who played his 100th game for the RFC during the course of the season. Several players have left us at the end of the season.Thank you for your contribution and we wish you well in your future careers.

A number of our players have represented Wales Under 20 in the Six Nations Championship and this Summer's tournament in Italy namely Alex Mann, Rhys Barrett, Nathan Evans,Ethan Fackrell, Cameron Winnett, Efan Daniel, Mackenzie Martin and Mason Grady.

A review of last season would not be complete without noting the contribution of our academy and semi professional players and coaches in Cardiff Rugby's European fixtures in December. Despite the Cardiff Rugby playing squad and coaches being confined to their hotel in South Africa and unable to return home,it was decided to fulfill the European fixtures against French champions Toulouse and English champions Harlequins.
Eleven of the squad selected to play against Toulouse had represented the RFC the previous month against Pontypridd at Sardis Road. The players did themselves and the club proud. Their enthusiasm, courage and skill levels captured the minds and hearts of the Welsh rugby public and made all of us even prouder to be Cardiff supporters.

The players Player of the Year was awarded to Alex Everett who was outstanding throughout the season . We wish Alex well next season with the Cornish Pirates.
The coaches Player of the Year was our top try scoring hooker Alun Rees.
The Chairman's Award winner is our popular physio Dyfri Owen. Dyfri has looked after our players for the last 23 seasons, a remarkable achievement. Thank you for your professionalism and service. Good luck with everything that the future holds.

At the time of writing this report, the future structure of the Premiership remains unclear. The Welsh Rugby Union's preferred model being a nine team division(with RGC being ring fenced)to commence the season after next. How the other eight sides are selected is yet to be determined. We do not know if it will be decided by finishing league positions or split on a geographical basis with two teams per region. The Premiership clubs wish to keep the status quo with twelve teams.

Whichever model is finally implemented it is imperative that Cardiff is one of the chosen sides .We can be assured that all the other clubs will be striving tor the same goal. The challenge is to continue to improve our standards .

Sadly, last season saw the passing of two well loved and respected stalwarts of Cardiff RFC, namely Brian Bennett and Billy Woods. Their contribution to our club is immeasurable and both will be sorely missed.

We are very grateful to the many individuals and organisations whose support is invalueable and allows us to succeed.

May I thank all our sponsors for their generous support. In this difficult financial climate your generosity is greatly appreciated.

The board under chairman Alun Jones and chief executive Richard Holland are fully supportive of the new structure and determined to see it succeed.

The Athletic Club with its chairman Keith Morgan continue to assist and ensure we maintain our heritage obligations.

Our licensee Jason Chapman and his staff for their hard work throughout the season.

Our head groundsman Matt Jones for maintaining the high quality of our playing surface and his assistance on match days both home and away.

Abbie Gibbins for her ability to assist Cardiff RFC in all administrative matters.

Dyfri Owen and his team of physiotherapists, together with our doctors have worked tirelessly looking after our players needs. Thank you for your professionalism and expertise.

Cardiff are fortunate in having such loyal and passionate supporters. I would like to thank the Cardiff Rugby Supporters Club and CF10 Rugby Trust for their unstinting backing at games and on social media platforms throughout the season.

May I thank our volunteers who assist on match days and contribute to our working parties.

Our photographer Viv Jones for maintaining his high standards in capturing the memorable moments of our matches.

Our ballboys and future Blue and Blacks from Cardiff Schools Rugby Under 11's

My fellow committee members have been fully supportive and I thank them wholeheartedly. Vice Chairman and Liaison Manager for Cardiff Rugby Chris Collins, Treasurer Mark Wakeham, Secretary Jill Parker together with Chris Norman, John Huw Williams, Ian Tabor, Clive Davies, "Jock" Morgan, Ian Davies and Huw Campbell continue to work in the best interests of Cardiff RFC.

May I end by thanking all the members for their support during the season, and I look forward to seeing you all at the Arms Park in September.

Simon Down

Chairman Cardiff RFC