

STAFFORDSHIRE
RUGBY UNION Ltd.



ANNUAL
REPORT
2022-2023

Notice is hereby given that the Twenty-Fourth Annual General Meeting of Staffordshire Rugby Union Ltd. will be held at:

COUNTY GROUND
STAFFORD RUGBY UNION FOOTBALL CLUB
BLACKBERRY LANE, STAFFORD
on TUESDAY 27th JUNE 2023
at 7.30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of SRU AGM 2022.
3. To read and approve the SRU Annual Report for the season 2022-23.
4. To elect the following Officers for Season 2023/2024.
 - (a) President.
 - (b) Chairman.
 - (c) Honorary Secretary.
 - (d) Honorary Treasurer.
5. To elect a Vice President.
6. To approve seven representatives to serve on the Management Team for the season 2023-24.
7. To hear any other relevant matter for the consideration of the Committee during the ensuing year, but on which no voting shall be allowed.

R. J. WEBSDALE - Hon. Secretary,
22 CARDINGTON CLOSE
SEABRIDGE
NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME
ST5 3LJ.

Note: A member club can appoint one representative to attend the meeting on its behalf. A voting form for a member club to appoint a representative is available at the meeting and separate forms being available for unincorporated and incorporated clubs. Please ensure that the correct form is collected.

A club may send further representatives to attend the meeting, and any patron may attend the meeting, but such attendees may not vote.

COUNTY MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERSHIP
SEASON 2022-23

President and Chairman:	J. McDermott
Vice President:	M. Bezus
Hon. Secretary:	R. J. Websdale
Hon. Treasurer:	B. A. Scott
R.F.U. Council Member:	M. Procter
Senior Clubs Committee:	B Fraser
Junior Clubs Committee:	R. Davies
SRUSR:	P Everitt
Youth and Education:	M. Bezus
Coaching Society:	B. Williams
Playing Committee:	Not appointed
Competitions:	P. Sargeant
Women and Girls Rugby:	B. Williams

Staffordshire Rugby Union
Affiliated or Full Membership at 1st January 2023

RFU Voting Member Clubs (27)

Barton under Needwood	Rugeley
Bloxwich	St Leonards
Burntwood	Stafford
Burton	Stoke on Trent
Cannock	Stone
Eccleshall	Tamworth
Essington	Trentham
Handsworth	Uttoxeter
Leek	Lichfield
Wednesbury	Walsall
Linley & Kidsgrove	Whittington
Longton	Willenhall
Newcastle (Staffs)	Wolverhampton
Penkridge	

RFU Non-Voting Member Clubs (5)

Cheshire Police	HMP & YOI Brinsford
HMP Featherstone	HMP & YOI Swinfen Hall
Staffordshire County Police	

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
PRESIDENT & CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
2022-2023

What kind of season have we all just witnessed? Unprecedented is an overused word but I think it would be a fair description of a season that few could have predicted because, so few were in “the know” at the appropriate time.

The 2nd half of the season has been dominated mostly by events off the field, as the controversial tackle height law variation vote by the RFU council members in January, cast a shadow over the community game in England and absolutely, not least in Staffordshire, which seemed to receive national press coverage on the matter for several weeks. Such is how democracy should work, and our lords and masters sometimes need to realise that for the good of the game, they really need to listen first to many volunteers and players that make up the largest national union in the world.

In last year's report, Rob Forsyth mentioned that the four horsemen of the Apocalypse always seem to be on the horizon and yes, they're still there, but so are our fantastic clubs, plugging away under extreme pressure to provide the facilities for our players to get on with what they all love – playing the game.

We have seen this at first hand when visiting clubs in Staffordshire this season. It is always heartening to see so much positivity about the game and its future despite the challenges.

We know that all our club volunteers are working harder than ever, and it is heartening to see that this year the Staffordshire Volunteers awards, and Honda National Volunteers awards from Staffordshire have seen record numbers of volunteers recognised for their dedication in several different ways. Volunteering is at the heart of the game with playing, and it would be hard to imagine the game continuing without this symbiosis.

Your county is always looking for new volunteers to help with the myriad of jobs that need to be filled and so that the pressure remains bearable, the aim is to reduce the job to a small task basis.

Our recent Business and Governance audit undertaken with the help of Top 4 accountants PWC and the RFU has identified several areas where the CB needs to improve. Yes, the CB is a business, governed by UK law and in this evermore litigious world, we need to ensure that all our volunteers are protected from ignorance of it. This piece of work is detailed and necessary and forms part of the commitment we make as the link between the RFU and member clubs. Hopefully, more clubs can recognise talent that can help us improve our performance and thereby help all clubs in the county.

My strap line when taking office, a year ago, was “Unity with Purpose” and I stand by that phrase as we must all help each other to survive and thrive in a rugby world which, at the very least, can be described as in a fluid state. This season has seen a lot of cry offs of matches, leaving players to wonder if they want to carry on training and playing anymore. We must, as a family, work together to keep all those that want to play the game, able to do so, by being able to offer fixtures locally and where necessary mixing club players to ensure the game “goes on”.

The experiment with the National Cup competition at the end of the season has provoked a mixed reaction and was compounded by the weather preventing league matches from being played before Christmas.

Overall, though, it seemed like the league programmes without interruption meant that the certainty around fixtures was preserved. However, the introduction of lower XVs into the league structures meant our clubs, particularly at level 9, suffered with several fixtures cancelled due to cry offs and, in one case, club closure.

Perhaps, it is a case of too many changes occurring at the same time and is linked to the problem that the game continues to face, which is the declining adult male contact game. It has been reported that the number of participations has halved in the last decade, and it remains to be seen what happens next season with the tackle height law variation controversy, which could lead to swathes of older players stopping playing and, as importantly, referees not wanting to be caught up in the potential for adjudicating what a high tackle might or might not be. It is a game of laws though and so open to interpretation, as it should be, and we should be hopeful of positive outcomes.

Respect and the other core values of our game need to be borne in mind by everyone connected to the game and it is encouraging to see that younger players and their families and coaches are willing to work with these values and in themselves, are valuable life lessons for all to learn from.

The Staffordshire executive and management committee has worked hard to bring its services to the member clubs this season and my sincere thanks go to Hon. Secretary Robin Websdale for his continued grasp on all things administrative as well as ensuring the medals are made and in the right places for the end of season finals.

Mike Bezus, the vice president, vice chair and chair of Youth and Education and Team manager for the senior men and U20s, is a pillar of strength in his roles and I thank him personally for his support. He really does need to relinquish the duties of the Y&E and representative roles at the end of this season so that he can concentrate on what will become a challenging year as we try to improve our business and governance work, so that the CB is fit for the future.

Mick Procter, our council member, has had probably his most challenging year with the dual role of representative for the CB and RFU, now being openly challenged as an instrument of the past. His enthusiasm for working for our clubs remains undiminished and he has worked long and hard to ensure that clubs' needs are understood and can be helped. I thank him for his guidance and understanding and hope he will continue to support the management group in the year ahead.

My aim for the management team this year has been to try and focus on the future, identify gaps and opportunities for significant improvement. This has proved a big challenge for the team as the day job is significantly challenging anyway and it has proven very difficult to focus on gaps and how we might bridge them. For example, none of the 8 North Staffordshire clubs has an adult women's team, despite the proximity of 2 university sites. This means that there is no natural pathway in North Staffs for girls to progress and remain in the area to play and train. Notwithstanding the upward trend in W&G participation, it seems to have largely bypassed North Staffs except in fits and starts.

Introducing rugby into nonplaying rugby schools is an almighty challenge and, if truth be told, lies in the remit of the Rugby Football Schools Union. A half-hearted initiative by the RFU to support teachers to deliver rugby in Staffs schools failed miserably because it wasn't thought through and is a symptom of the general misunderstanding of what is required to make rugby fun and exciting to play for the youngsters of Staffordshire. Pockets of school recruitment by clubs exist and their use of the Sports Council officers is one way to try and help introduce or reintroduce rugby into schools.

We must not give up on these sorts of initiatives and indeed think of others, if we are to arrest the male decline and reinvigorate our clubs for the future with more women and girls playing. If we don't do this collectively, outcomes which we don't want will become inevitable and unstoppable.

I want to thank all the management team volunteers for their continued, unsung heroics in helping deliver rugby to everyone in our county and beyond. In clubs and schools, there are volunteers ensuring that the game is alive and thriving and I thank them for all their hard work.

The Disciplinary team, together with Staffordshire match officials, have ensured yet again that the game can be refereed, monitored and adjudicated on, when matters move beyond the laws of the game and all of us need to be thankful for their continued and demanding work.

Tim Westwood, Stu Eades and Chloe McMorran have all worked with the CB and clubs on development of the game, club facilities and RFU initiatives this year with enthusiasm and dedication and we thank them for their support also.

Next season we are fortunate to be able to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the formation of the domestic union of Staffordshire. Whilst in 1923, it remained part of the North Midlands constituency, clubs in Staffordshire wanted their players to have the opportunity to play representative rugby. 100 years later and we are still offering those opportunities and now spread to age grade and women and girls.

We are planning several events to help celebrate this milestone and we hope that you can all participate at one time or another. Please watch out for social media posts about how to get involved and if you have any ideas, please come forward and share them with your community.

Finally, let us reflect on what a fantastic game and society we have in Rugby Union and that the game is worth all the time and effort put into it, making many friends and experiences along the way.

Long may it continue.

John McDermott
President/Chairman – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT
2022-2023

Another season passed successfully, though with a few bumps on the way. It was very noticeable we were still suffering from the pandemic hangover but even so all clubs in Staffordshire have continued to move forward.

Walsall and Leek celebrated their centenary, Newcastle reached their 75th year and Burntwood their 50th. Congratulations to all four clubs, I apologise if any other club has reached a milestone in their history, and I haven't mentioned you.

This leads on to Staffordshire celebrating its centenary next season. It all started when a meeting was held on Thursday, 13 December 1923 at the Talbot hotel, Wolverhampton with 13 attendees from Burton, Denstone College, Handsworth, North Staffs, Walsall, Wednesbury and Wolverhampton.

At that meeting it was proposed that FF Sharpe, from Wolverhampton, became the first President of the newly formed Staffordshire Rugby Union.

He went on to be President for 13 years. No doubt you will hear more about Staffordshire's history and other Staffordshire rugby clubs history during the next season.

At the start of the season, we had matches postponed not because of rain or snow but because of pitches that looked like deserts. The unprecedented heat wave through July and August meant that pitches struggled to recover from the previous season and were so hard that it was unsafe to play on them. Fortunately, we had rain in the first couple weeks of the season, and the pitches became playable.

Last year in my report I mention about the lack of volunteers continuing to be a problem for all clubs and the county but during last season we had three people stepped up to take up roles in Staffordshire. Simon Barker became chair of Mini & Youth; Bas Fraser became CDC Rep - and Danielle Bayley has started working alongside Becky Davies with volunteers.

As always new vacancies will come up and we need replacements. In the forthcoming season we will have a new Women and Girls Chair but also, we need Chairs for Youth & Education, Facilities, Playing and a new Safeguarding Officer. If you are interested and feel you have the necessary experience to assist the county in any role do not hesitate in contacting me.

Finally, can I think all the volunteers across the county in all our clubs who do so much to help Rugby develop whether it's adult or age grade.

At the start of the season, we had many concerns over Lower XV's entering the league system and whether that would work. Junior clubs were concerned players would leave them and go and play for a Lower XV at a bigger club, but it didn't happen. In the north of the county

Longton, Newcastle and Stoke entered their 2nd XV's in the ECC. Burton, in the east, put their 2nd and 3rd XV's into the league. All five teams played most of their games and were reasonably successful.

At the end of the season, it was good to see Newcastle 2's gaining promotion after being runners up to Stone, moving from level 10 to level nine. Willenhall and Rugeley being promoted from level 9 to level eight. Burntwood going up to level seven. Tamworth were promoted to Regional 2. Finally, Leek being promoted for the second consecutive year moving into regional one. Congratulations go to all clubs and hopefully we will gain more promotions next year.

This season there are more 2nd XV's from Staffordshire in the leagues but unfortunately not all who applied to enter were successful in their application because it all depended on their ability level and whether there was a space in the league in their area. With their only being spaces at level 9 and 10 not all clubs were able to be put into the league. Some may have to wait a couple years before we are allowed to do another major reorganisation of the leagues. I just hope that all the teams that were given a place are successful in their leagues and their players have an enjoyable time playing the Game.

Anyway, after a quiet first half of the season the RFU dropped a bomb onto the community game. A statement came out from Twickenham saying that they were lowering the tackle height to below the waist when it should've been below the sternum. The furore that this caused led to a Staffordshire revolt against the RFU which made the national papers. We all know how it ended and next season all in the community game will be tackling below the bottom of sternum – which to be honest is how I learnt to tackle and how age grade players are taught to tackle. I appreciate that it may make it more difficult for the older player to get a little lower, but I think it will make the game safer. Also, I personally think that it will make the game much faster by players being able to offload quicker but there again we wait to see.

At the start of the season the Midlands league organisation did not have a secretary, and I was approached to take the role on. I agreed to organise meetings and see how it went. Obviously, the role has grown and as I got to know the internal workings of MROC I found out the clubs were being treated differently across the Midlands. When a club made an error, depending on their League Secretary, they could be fined after being given one or two or even three warnings. I found this quite unfair and at a meeting before Christmas it was agreed that all warnings and fines would be sent out centrally. This meant I did it.

It was interesting to see how Clubs reacted when they made an error and were fine £25. The majority apologised and paid the fine, but some were not so polite, but all paid in the end. I knew I'd got successful at this when one Staffordshire club paid the fine before I even sent them the letter. (Thank you Martin).

All I can say on this is that if you don't want to be fined ensure you don't break any of the rules in the Midlands Region Administrative Instructions and ensure your players are correctly registered and not just affiliated to your club.

In one game, a club in the England Clubs Competition, played three players, who were not registered under a registered players name. They also played a player who was registered but did not put his correct name on the

Electronic Match Card. As this was deliberate it gave them an 80-point deduction. After much deliberation they were given a 25-point deduction and a suspended 25 points deduction. They were lucky not to be given a more severe penalty.

Staffordshire is highly thought of by the RFU in that we will always try to help them. This year we have been asked to trial a Business and Governance programme where we filled in an online form with quite a lot of questions about our management and various other processes. As a reward for doing this we have been given free advice from PWC to help improve our management processes. We are now at the stage of where we are having online meetings with PWC. Throughout this programme we are asked to give evaluations on each stage. PWC will then adapt the program to try and make it as good as possible so that when other CB's and clubs do the programme, they have an even better experience than we have. This is ongoing and will continue into next season.

Once again there are several thank you's that need to be made. Firstly, to all my colleagues on the management team, thank you for your support and hard work throughout the season. May I also think all clubs for working so hard for their membership in trying to provide a wonderful rugby experience for all from the youngest to the oldest. I first played rugby as an 11-year-old and in the 57 years since I first picked up that odd-shaped ball I have had nothing but fun and enjoyment in all I've done with RUGBY. I hope you all have a similar experience to what I have had. I feel quite privileged in having such a long life in the game of rugby.

Long may it continue, yes that means you are going to have to put up with me for a little longer yet.

Robin J. O. Websdale
Honorary Secretary - Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT
2022-2023

Business as Usual!

After 5 years in the planning and implementation, the Future Competition Structure came into place, admittedly plagued with a small heat wave and pitches that resembled car parks in some parts of the country.

But despite the lacklustre start, clubs were playing new teams with a small number of clubs also entering second and third teams. The fear of clubs being lost, and Super clubs being formed has not happened. Now that the season has ended, more clubs are seeking to join the structure. Staffordshire has seen four clubs win their respective leagues: well done to you all.

The second component of the FCS was a Nationwide cup competition to end the season.

The Papa John Cup. Most clubs opted to take part in the great unknown of What, Who and Where, which saw an extended season and some good competitive games! In some cases, long distances gave way to HWO and AWO. As I write Newcastle Staffs head to a final in Darlington.

Our Staffordshire County Finals all took place last weekend on time as planned. What a festival of rugby! Well done to the clubs that competed and hosted events and thank you to the many volunteers, you made Staffordshire proud.

During the year we have hosted many RFU guests into our County, both Senior and Junior Vice Presidents Rob Brier and Rob Udwin joined guests to celebrate 100th anniversaries. It was a pleasure being a small part in their celebrations. Staffordshire will also join the 100 plus group next season and planning is well under way to make 2023-24 season special for all.

Head of Inclusion and Diversity, Jatin Patel also came to our first ID gathering of club leads, this area has been developing within the union for some six years it is good to see clubs enthusing to take part.

The work that started two years ago has been particularly pleasing. This started with past president Rob Forsyth and continued under John McDermott, working with RFU, Leicester Tigers, Lichfield RFC, Leicestershire CB and Staffordshire Clubs. This work is likely to support our clubs with recruitment and possibly retention of players: boys, girls, and women for years to come.

Staffordshire clubs' volunteers are continuing to work harder than ever to improve club houses and recruit the next generation of players into the game.

COVID changed how we access information and support, from in person to online events enabling more members to participate and access valuable resources. The cost-of-living issues and the economy have empowered volunteers to seek more efficient lighting and other savings that will support our clubhouses for the future.

Transgender issues became a very emotive and passionate topic this season. Research was carried out surrounding transgender participation, resulting in excluding players from the contact game.

The reduction of tackle height, again very emotive, prompted great concern among Staffordshire's clubs along with those from other CBs. This ensured that a national consultation process took place, the scale of which the RFU has never seen. The work has just started to ensure all areas of the game receive training (face-to-face and online) prior to the 2023-24 season commencing.

A RFU review group is currently fact finding on the issues following the event around Tackle Height. The results/recommendation of the review, which is due to report in June 2023, will hopefully give CBs and clubs more opportunity to feedback more readily into changes within the game in the future.

It is always a pleasure for me to host guests at Twickenham. In particular when our Senior men team were finalists in the Bill Beaumont Cup at the end of season 2021-22 and our Valued Volunteer Maz Jones, who has worked for many years at Club and CB level (Maz enjoy your retirement).

Our game is very special, let's make sure it stays that way.

Michael Procter
RFU Council Member

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
YOUTH & EDUCATION REPORT
2022-2023

In the first full season post pandemic, it has been a busy one for all involved in Youth and Education with many RFU initiatives designed to get the game back on its feet and initiatives designed to make our game better and safer. Not least of these has been the Tackle height law change proposals which dominated much of the second half of the season and divided opinion massively as to whether this was the right route and what was the correct procedure for implementing it. In the end following much hastily arranged consultation a sort of compromise was arrived at, and we all now need to get behind the implementation of the proposals and get our players educated in the new laws.

Iain Rowlands and Mike Redfern have continued to champion the school's programmes and Mike's Report details the great success they have achieved this year with limited resources and volunteers. Thanks again to them both for their efforts and hope that they will continue in their roles for next year.

Separately RFU initiatives to create better links between school and clubs has not been a resounding success for the CB. The RFU organised free coaching courses for teachers in Staffordshire at the end of last season at Walsall and Keele which appeared well attended but only actually involved a relatively small number of schools with multiple teachers. The CB then attempted to contact the attending teachers (a task made difficult due to data protection issues from the RFU) and link them to clubs. Unfortunately, this proved not as effective as the CB hoped and only 4 schools responded and to date the clubs, they were paired with have been unable to establish a programme and none of the available funding has been claimed. It is hoped to roll this over and make in-roads into it again next season.

Simon Barker and his Vice Chair Danny Carlin completed their first year in charge of the Mini and Youth Committee and did a fantastic job so thanks to them both. They have certainly embraced the communication side of things making sure all information is passed on to the various club Reps in good time. All the county clubs competitions progressed well with no major issues. Simon also, with the assistance of Staffs Honorary Secretary Robin Websdale, pulled together the Age Grade Calendar for the season which is no mean task and is of tremendous use for all in planning competitions/events/tours etc. Thanks to them both for doing this.

The U18s delivery team under Stephen Eastwood's management consists of coaches Simon Jones, Matt Adderley and Matt Weaver who have now also added the services of George Perkins as a trainee coach for the season. Thanks to all the coaching Staff and the Physio Blythe Fergusson for all their hard work and efforts. Since the decision by the RFU to let the academies run the U15/16 programme in its entirety the U17/18 programme is now the main entry point for CB representative rugby and as such has become a really important part the alternative player pathway and the transition of players from junior to senior representative and club rugby.

Stephen's report reflects the season, but the highlight again is that 3 Staffordshire players were selected in the Midlands squad to face the South-West and the North and from a former member of the Front Row Club it is great that they were all props!

The Regional Player Pathway Group has had relatively few meetings this season and those that have been held have not been particularly well attended.

At the time of writing, I understand that Junior Academy Coach George Glenn will be leaving Tigers to take up the post of Director of Rugby at Denstone College replacing Staffordshire Senior Men's Head Coach Rupert Harden who is moving on to Oakham School. Congratulations to them both on their appointments.

We have not yet been informed who will replace George at Tigers Junior Academy.

Highlights from the Tigers Academy are former Staffordshire Players Morgan Meredith (Stone RFC) and Joe Woodward (Lichfield RFC) have both appeared for Leicester Tigers in the Premiership cup along with one recent appearance from Malelli Satala (Trentham RFC).

Stephen Eastwood has expressed an interest in being involved with the group and I will ensure that he attends the next RPPG meeting with a view to him becoming the Staffordshire Representative on the group moving forward.

Staffordshire Schools Report 2022-23 prepared by Mike Redfern

The County Schools competitions returned to its normal programme of tournaments and competitions. The weather played a part towards the end of the season, with several events disrupted by the cold and wet period before the end of the Spring term.

Thanks go once again, to the organisers of the cup competitions and 7s tournaments and the members of staff who gave up their time to transport teams to matches.

Thanks also go to the clubs who staged finals, especially Willenhall RFC for their generous help once again in staging the boys U12 and U13 tournaments. The U13 event was down on numbers with 17 schools taking part, following several late withdrawals. 23 schools attended the U12 event held in fine weather at the end of the Spring term.

Staffs Schools continue to benefit from Eric Field and his team at Willenhall who offer the all-round support necessary to help these events run smoothly.

We are grateful as always to Steve Barr and the referees from the Society who gave their time to officiate at the finals and tournaments.

It was impossible to hold any events for girls due to the congested end to the Spring term. It is hoped that these events will take place early in the Autumn term.

The results of the competitions are as follows:

Boys Cups	Winners	Runners Up
U18	KES Lichfield	Denstone College C
U16	Newcastle School	St Joseph's College
U15	Final to be played in September.	
U14	KES Lichfield	Denstone College

Boys Tournaments

U13	Cup	QMS Walsall	Plate	John Taylor HS
	Shield	Walton School	Bowl	QMS Walsall B
U12	Cup	QMS Walsall	Plate	Rawlett School
	Shield	St Edward's School	Bowl	Oldfields School

Boys 7s

U18	Cup	Newcastle School
	Plate	Walton School
U15	Cup	St Joseph's College
	Plate	KES Lichfield
	Shield	Walton School

Staffordshire Boys Representative U17/U18 report prepared by Stephen Eastwood

Team: Stephen Eastwood, Simon Jones, Matthew Weaver and Matt Adderley, George Perkins (training) Blythe Ferguson (Physio)

The team are very well supported by Andy Campbell and Jeff Ball as County assessors.

U18 squad (2022-2023) October to January:

Staffordshire lost all 3 games to East Midlands, North Midlands and NLD and never played to their full potential, in all the games they were competitive but failed to win due to lack of possession from set piece's and they didn't obtain good field position from kicking.

Five players were taken into the Midlands training squad, Ben Crawford, Bill Forrester, Ralph Parr, Noah Fripp and Max Coton. We had 3 players selected for Midlands all props Ralph Parr, Noah Fripp and Max Coton

The coaches reviewed the U18 season and felt although the U17 had given many players good exposure to County Rugby, we carried too large a squad into U18 with insufficient time to distil down to the best core squad. We have implemented changes for this seasons U17's.

U17 2022-2023 season December - May:

We started with the ex DPP boys in December and January, and had 2 training sessions to ensure they were connected with the county early, and to start to assess what we had as our core squad. This followed with a county wide assessment evening, and a further training session bring the squad with 2 injuries (ex DPP) to 40 players.

Games Played:

The first game was played on the 10th of May 2023 against Leicestershire, Staffordshire fielded a squad of 35 players and Leicestershire 32, we played 3 *25 minutes, period 1 nil nil, period 2 Leicestershire 12 and Staffordshire 0 and period 3 Leicestershire 5 and Staffordshire 0.

Overall, 17 points to nil the score didn't reflect the game, Staffs had 2 well worked overlaps and one was stopped by a marginal forward pass due to a player over running and the second a final dropped ball to the winger. Within the 35 players we have several higher quality players with Midland's potential and a solid core of quality players.

Remaining games:

Sunday 21st May 2023 Cheshire away 2 games, Sandbach RFC Kick offs 1330hrs and 1500hrs.

Wednesday NLD 24th May 2023 NLD away Newark RFC Kick off 1930hrs.

Sunday 28th May 2023 North Midlands away, Stourbridge RFC Kick off 1430hrs.

Season 2023-2024

Given a good U17 campaign we are hoping to have a more established U18 squad for the Midlands games from October to January. We are also considering a buffet after training at the start of U18 to present ties and talk to the parents about the Midlands process, it will be self-funding as no budget allowance is available, we will also invite club coaches from Staffordshire.

Budget: The U18 is predictable as the format and costs are consistent year on year, U17 we have one year with all home games and the second year all away which distorts the costs year on year, hopefully the excess for season 2022-2023 can be carried over or used for season 2023-2024.

Equipment: For U18 we need some new training balls, a couple of match balls and if possible, warm-up tops and 5 pairs of shorts and 3 pairs of socks which have been taken by the players.

Team: Tom Williams has taken on additional responsibilities at School and Stafford RFC and has not been involved in the last year, we have assumed he will not return in the near future. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tom for this excellent service to the county over many years.

Simon Jones and Matthew Weaver handled the backs and Matt Adderley the forwards, George Perkins has joined the team as a trainee coach. We need to find a 2nd forward coach during the summer for U18.

Physio: Blythe Ferguson who has been very dedicated all year, she is very keen to complete the training to get to Level 2 which is required for U17 and U18 games. The Midlands had one level 2 for all the games last year which helped all sides, I assume it will be continued next season.

General Observation: The retention of players from U18 to seniors across the county remains poor, what is missing are development sides or Under 23 sides for players to develop. I realise this is outside this group's remit, but after all the excellent work by Mini and Junior it should not be lost in transition to senior rugby. The highest-level players are not the issue; the next level and social players remain the largest area of loss. This is a nation-wide problem for the game and needs addressing structurally by the RFU.

Finally, due to other commitments within the CB it has been decided that I should stand down as Chairman of Y&E. I have really enjoyed my time leading the group, but increasingly other commitments have limited the time I am able to dedicate to it. We need someone to grab the tiller and steer their own course perhaps in a slightly different direction, so we are looking for someone to take over. I will still be available to help support whoever this may be and will act as caretaker until we can find someone. So, thank you all for your efforts over the years and I am sure in my new role I will still see you all on a regular basis. Thank you again.

Mike Bezus

Chair of Youth & Education – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
PATRONS REPORT
2022-2023

A year of colours; Yellow and Red (cards)

On the International front we have had no shortage of games. Four Autumn games for the men and the women's World Cup, where their record-breaking unbeaten run of games culminated in defeat in the final against New Zealand and in front of a record breaking 40,000 attendance.

The men's Autumn International game saw losses against South Africa and Argentina, a draw against New Zealand and a solitary win against Japan. The result saw England part company with the enigmatic coach Eddie Jones just 9 months out from world cup 2023 in France.

You may recall that in 2015 when Eddie became England coach, I expressed my disappointment that we could not select an Englishman, but it has been a privilege to meet Eddie on numerous occasions. He was the correct person for the job.

A new year and new coach. Steve Borthwick has long been in the shadows and having had great success with Leicester Tigers, he became the new coach with a very short lead up to the 6 Nations. England managed two wins and three losses.

The Tik Tok 6 Nations, now a standalone tournament, saw the Red Roses back on form winning all 5 games and taking the Championship at Twickenham in front of 58,498, another world record for the women's game.

Closer to home local clubs have embraced the new structure. Four Clubs winning their leagues and more teams wish to enter the structure next season. Your support for local clubs and the County teams is the life blood that makes the future exhilarating.

The Staffordshire cups have just taken place, to the volunteers who ensured these events were a successful weekend, allowing patrons to meet and discuss what the future will be.

Next season we enter our 100th year which will see numerous events to celebrate and showcase playing opportunities throughout the county.

As England men prepare for the World Cup 2023 in France under new management, I wish Steve Borthwick every success. The team will take on Wales (home and away) as well as Fiji in warmup games prior to crossing the channel. To those who may be crossing the channel in support enjoy a fantastic festival.

Last season we saw four home Autumn Internationals and three home Guinness 6 Nations games which gave opportunities for all who wished to attend. The Red Roses celebrated another Grand Slam and will also emerge under new management next season.

Your continued support for Staffordshire and the Youth Trust allows for the development of young players throughout the county. Please follow Staffordshire through our social media platforms for regular updates on events.

Michael Procter
Patrons Honorary Secretary – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
PLAYING REPORT
2022-2023

The most important point about this representative rugby season was the decision by the RFU to make the Bill Beaumont Championship competitive at each of the 3 levels of competition.

Staffordshire, having reached the division 2 final last season with an outing at Twickenham, decided to enter as a county with players effectively registered with Regional 1 clubs and below. This decision meant the county would be placed in division 2 or 3 and because of the success in the previous year, Staffordshire was selected to play in division 2 along with 11 other counties.

The preseason was effectively curtailed because of the elongation of the league season due to the bad weather in December and the late start of the Papa John competition. It meant that the county's coaching team had only 3 sessions to work with the squad before the opening game.

The coaching team remained similar to last year's team with Rupert Hardern (Denstone College) as head coach, assisted by Tom Hughes (Newcastle RUFC) and Chaz Bunting (Burton RUFC). There were two further coaches added to mix, namely Andrew Appleyard (Leek RUFC) and Ash Martin (Newcastle RUFC). This gives the county a good mix of coaches and some continuity, which is vital if the squad is to remain competitive.

Staffordshire were drawn in pool 1 with Durham, Cumbria and Northumberland. Pool 1 winners would be drawn at home in the semi-final, so there was a real incentive to win the 2 home games against Cumbria and Northumberland with the away fixture at Durham, sandwiched in between.

The opening game, on Coronation Day, at Burton RUFC, took place against Cumbria and it went to the wire with Staffordshire pipping the visitors in the final minutes by 38-36. Staffordshire netted 5 points and Cumbria 2 points.

It is worthy to mention that the men's fixture was shared with the two counties' women's teams playing their Gill Burns pool fixture at Burton as well, in the first double header ever played at this level.

Durham beat Northumberland by 30-12 in the other fixture and so all to play for at Durham City the following week for Staffordshire. The squad, ably led again by skipper Jack Barry Neal, endured a torrid first half and 2 yellow cards to give themselves too much to do in the 2nd half and went down by 48-28, but gaining an important try bonus point as Durham took all 5 points to lead the pool with 10 points from 2 games. Cumbria won a close game at Northumberland 19-21, which left Cumbria and Staffs sitting on 6 points each in 2nd and 3rd places respectively.

The final pool fixtures would see Cumbria upsetting Durham at Aspatria with a 34-26 win. This meant both counties were level on 11 points with Durham edging the top by virtue of their points difference (PD) at +30. Cumbria's PD was +8.

Staffordshire meanwhile were due to receive Northumberland at Stoke RUFC, but the northernmost English county cried off as early as the Monday before the game citing an inability to field a team. This meant Staffs won the 5 match points, meaning we also had 11 points, but the match scoreline is 0-0, meaning the PD for Staffs remained at -18 and only 3rd spot in the pool.

In the event, it was not an ideal ending to the season, for it was not an unreasonable thought to believe Staffs could have won by 49 points against a side that would travel from Northumberland.

We will be making our point known in the County Championship review to come and I would like to thank all coaches, players, physio and the Burton club for their support of the fixtures.

John McDermott
Playing Chair – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION UNDER 20'S PLAYING REPORT 2022-2023

Staffordshire's U20s campaign kicked off in January this season with around 40 players attending an assessment day at Stafford RFC. There was a good spread of players from clubs across the county with quite a few players returning from last year's championship. The Delivery team were Mike Bezus - Team Manager; Steve Harris – Head Coach; Chaz Bunting – Backs Coach; Luke Rookyard & Donald Hayes – Forwards Coaches.

An oversize squad was retained for training through February and early March before a warm-up game against Neighbours Cheshire at Stockport RFC on Sunday 19th March 2023. Despite a few cry-offs Staffordshire ran out worthy winners 29-35 in a very entertaining game.

In their first game of their Jason Leonard U20 County Championship Midlands Pool 1, Staffordshire were drawn away to North Midlands who had already played and won their first pool game against Warwickshire. Staffordshire travelled down to Dudley Kingswinford on a sunny Easter Sunday and thrilled the crowd with a stunning display of open flowing rugby comfortably dispatching the opposition 31-57 to lead the pool.

Next up was our only home game of the campaign held at Newcastle (Staffs) RFC on 23rd April 2023. The weather not so kind this time out as both teams received a biblical soaking as they warmed up ahead of the game. Thankfully the rain abated, and the visitors Warwickshire could not cope with the rampaging home side and were blown away in a resounding 33-12 victory. Staffordshire finished top of their Pool.

Staffordshire were preparing to travel to Northampton to Play the winners of Pool 1 in Midlands Divisional Final but in a strange turn of events were informed by the RFU that East Midland were being deducted points and Notts, Lincs and Derbyshire had been elevated to pool winners. This meant a trip to Derby RFC to play on the RFU AGP on Coronation Sunday 7th May and another warm sunny day. NLD on their home artificial surface were a slightly different opponent playing fast attacking rugby scoring in the first couple of minutes of the game. Staffordshire started to settle and got into their stride, but NLD kept coming back and the game was nip and tuck right up until the final whistle with Staffordshire just edging it 29-33 to be crowned Midlands Divisional Champions.

This earnt them a place in the National Semi Final against the North which involved a long trip to Hartlepool Rovers FC to face a strong Durham side made up mainly of Durham University players. A 9.00am coach Journey start for the 3 ½ trip had the players feeling confident if a little apprehensive. The warm-up went well but the visitors were a little disappointed to find the Match Officials were all Durham County officials not RFU appointed as stated in the correspondence from Twickenham.

The home sides pace and organisation on the counterattack stunned the visitors with the first try coming from their spilt possession in the first minute of the game. Staffordshire continued to struggle and were 19-0 down after 15 minutes. The travelling side settled and then opened their account with a couple of tries before both sides scored again to go in 29-17 down at half time.

Staffordshire came out strong at half time and clawed their way back into the game to trail 32-31 with about 55 minutes gone. Getting close however seem to be their downfall as in the last 20 minutes every decision seemed to go Durham's way and Staffordshire had 2 players dispatched for 10 minutes for dissent and a technical offence. Gaps started to open, and the slick Durham backs took every opportunity that presented itself to give them a resounding 54-31 win and a trip to Ealing Trailfinders to face Hampshire in the final on 4th June 2023.

All in all, a very creditable campaign for us as one of the smallest CBs in the country and some great talent in the side. At the time of writing 12 players have been invited to the Midlands development day from which, if selected they will go on to play for the Midlands in a Divisional weekend against the North, the London & South East and the South West at Broadstreet RFC from 9th to 11th June.

A good spread of clubs were represented through the campaign including Burton, Stoke, Lichfield, Wolverhampton, Leek, Newcastle (Staffs), Uttoxeter, Stafford, Trentham, Crewe and Nantwich and Sandbach.

Mike Bezus

U20 Team Manager – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
WOMEN & GIRLS REPORT
2022-2023

As a CB we now have 13 clubs with a Women and Girls section, an increase of 3 at Girls level and 1 at adult Level.

We have seen an increase from 10 teams to 11 teams playing league Rugby. This has come with an increase in number at all levels of our game. This is also on the back of the exit of our highest-ranking Championship team amalgamating with Leicester Tigers and exiting the County.

The Women's senior county programme saw engagement from all our clubs - over 85 females wanting to play county rugby. This is an unprecedented number of players and required selection to take place over two stages. We still use county as a development tool for all female players across the county and selection was the hardest it has ever been. One of the most talented squads we have had in several years came together and over 30 players were able to represent the CB this season, in the Gill Burns Competition.

This year was the first year for the new 2-year age bands with U12, U14, U16 & U18 teams across the county. The recruitment for the U12 section saw over 80 new players form new teams across the county with 11 Clubs working together to create a positive first season. We had clubs at U16 and U18 enter the RFU Cup competition, with Stafford RUFC getting some silverware for their amazing performance at U16.

Our county programme transitioned from U15 & U18 into an U16 ERDPP programme and an U18 County Programme. We had over 100 players to select from and a further 15 making it through to the U18 COE Programme. We then saw the U18 England team having representation from the County as well as the Captain and Vice-Captain coming from Staffordshire, in Lucy Calladine (Burton & Gloucester Hartpury) and Daisy Aspinall (Burton & Worcester).

Becky Williams

Women & Girls Chair – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
CDC REPORT
2022-2023

The season for our clubs has been dominated by 2 major things affecting the Men's Adult Game.

The changes to the height of the tackle law. The incompetence of the RFU in their introduction of this major change united our clubs at all levels. We showed great unity of purpose in fighting the changes that were initially imposed. Whilst we did not get what we wanted the united efforts of all the clubs was great to see and we shall continue to push the RFU to be more democratic and mindful of the needs of the Community Game. It is important for our clubs to struggle to impose our needs onto the RFU and to this end we will need to remain united and active. Complacency is our worst enemy and it is also allowing the RFU to keep pushing forward stuff that is not beneficial to us.

The other main cause for concern was the structured season that meant a very early close to the competitive season. The delay in announcing the details for the Papa John Cup competition meant a huge loss of interest in the Cup from the clubs and their players. However, the run of success achieved by Newcastle (Staffs) showed that if the competition was relevant to the clubs, it sparked a lot of interest. For next season we must try to ensure the RFU come forward with the details much earlier and make it a competition in which the clubs will look forward to competing.

For season 2023/24 I hope that our togetherness and unity can be continued, and that we can continue to push forward the agenda of Staffordshire clubs within the Midlands framework. I believe the important items on our agenda for next season will be the structured season and not allowing it to fade away so dramatically and fatally as it did in 2022/23. The organisation of the Papa John Cup will be crucial to this, and we should collect our ideas and push forward with the organisers on this.

We have been promised that the league structure will remain largely as is for the next few years, but we should be thinking about how we feel it should be changed (if at all) and making suggestions to the powers that be. All in all, there is plenty of work for us over the next 12 months.

*Bas Fraser - Above Level 8
Becky Davies - Level 8 and below
Club Development Representatives – Staffordshire Rugby Union*

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
FACILITIES REPORT
2022-2023

RWC2025 Impact Funding

We have completed Year 1 of 4 on the [Rugby World Cup 2025 Impact Fund Programme](#). The clubs listed below have received a grant to develop their Social Space, Toilets or to add sanitary provision. The Social Space projects were solicited whilst the Toilet & Sanitary were open applications. **£73,000** of grants have gone to Staffordshire clubs in Year 1 of the programme. Sanitary grants are being currently being procured; the package value is £1,000. We are in the process of shortlisting projects for Years 2-4, these will be for Changing Rooms and Social Spaces.

Social Spaces Award

Club Name	Grant Value	Award Status
Trentham RFC	£10,000	Award accepted

Toilet Upgrade Award

Club name	Grant Value
Barton-Under-Needwood RFC	£5,000.00
Cannock RUFC	£5,000.00
Essington RUFC Ltd	£5,000.00
Handsworth RUFC	£5,000.00
Leek RFC Ltd	£5,000.00
Rugeley RUFC	£5,000.00
Stoke on Trent RUFC Ltd	£5,000.00
Tamworth RUFC	£5,000.00
Trentham RFC	£5,000.00
Wednesbury RUFC	£5,000.00
Willenhall RFC Ltd	£5,000.00
Wolverhampton RUFC Ltd	£5,000.00

Sanitary Package Awards
Club Name
Barton-Under-Needwood RFC
Cannock RUFC
Essington RUFC Ltd
Leek RFC Ltd
Rugeley RUFC
Stafford RUFC
Stoke on Trent RUFC Ltd
Stone RUFC
Tamworth RUFC
Trentham RFC
Walsall RFC Ltd
Wednesbury RUFC
Willenhall RFC
Wolverhampton RUFC

Pitch Maintenance Fund

We are in the process of piloting the Pitch Maintenance Fund; this is in collaboration with the Football Foundation. The programme is designed to take clubs with *basic standard pitches and develop them into *good pitches. This is all through the PitchPower online tool, where clubs can regularly update and receive reports from their local pitch advisor. The grant is for £14,400 (per pitch) over 6 years, funding will be tapered to encourage clubs to adopt the new recommendations and practices. Burntwood RFC are part of this pilot, they are to receive grant funding for 2 pitches.

*Pitch Quality Scores are a product of the Grounds Management Framework

FF 3G Pitch collaboration

We are working collaboratively with the Football Foundation to identify sites where rugby clubs can utilize new and upgraded 3G pitches to support some of their demand. These 3G pitches will have a shockpad installed and be tested to World Rugby Regulation 22 compliancy, so full contact training can take place on the surface.

Honda Rugby Grounds Connected

We are in the second year of the GMA Pitch Advisory Service; this has now been supported with the addition of Pitch Power. Clubs that have had a report carried out in 2022–23 are: Stoke, Handsworth, Wheaton Aston & Penkridge, Burton. They are in addition to the clubs that had a report carried out last season and have now also had their 12 monthly revisits: Trentham, Rugeley, Barton UN, Wednesbury.

We are in process of delivering our Honda Rugby Grounds Connected Events series, we are delighted to be hosting an event at Stafford RFC this year. We already have 40 booked on to the event taking place on 14th June. There are still places available, contact below. Whilst aimed at Grounds People, we welcome committee members and other club volunteers along that share a common interest in learning more about grounds maintenance.

Playing Pitch Strategies (PPS)

We have been working with local authorities and consultants to support the completion of several Playing Pitch Strategies across Staffordshire. This is important work as it can support clubs to access S106/CiL funding, we ensure that club data is as up to date and as robust as possible to ensure they are represented accurately. If you wish to view an example strategy, contact below.

The authorities across Staffordshire we have been working on throughout this year are: South Staffordshire District Council, East Staffordshire District Council, Stafford Borough Council & Stoke City Council.

RUWSF Asset Loan

Stoke-on-Trent RFC and Walsall RFC have now both completed the works, Stoke carried out works to upgrade their changing rooms and Walsall completed the new build on their club entrance. They are now in the process of completing phase 2 paperwork and preparing to begin the repayment schedule.

VIY

Wednesbury RUFC carried out works to their clubhouse as part of the VIY programme. This project awarded the club £17,272 to improve the outdoor social space and repair plaster throughout the clubhouse. This project engaged students from Shireland Collegiate Academy to support them with the development and interest in the field of construction.

Club Offers

We now have suite of Rugby Club Offers across a range of facility items: Fencing, Rugby Posts, Reusable Cups, Mobile Floodlights, Coffee Machines and Showers. We have worked with these companies to provide discounts and bespoke offers just for Rugby Union clubs. You can see the latest offers here.

Technical Support/Advice/Guidance

This is our business as usual; we provide an ongoing service to support clubs resolve their technical queries around their facilities. We are also constantly updating a resources to provide clubs with the most up to date and relevant information for Facility Development.

Stuart Eades
Tel:07730814156
Email: StuartEades@RFU.com

Adam Blackford
Tel:07718706578
Email: AdamBlackford@RFU.com

*Iain Haley
Facilities Chair - Staffordshire Rugby Union*

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
VOLUNTEERS REPORT
2022-2023

Following on from the outstanding job that Marilyn (Maz) Jones did as Staffordshire Volunteer Co-ordinator, a new team has evolved this season to look after the important task of rewarding and recognising the incredible army of volunteers that run the rugby clubs of Staffordshire, season in and season out!

My thanks to Danielle Bayley, Rhi Greenaway and Daniel Carlin for giving their time to contribute to the running of the annual Staffordshire Volunteer Event to be held in June that this season which will be hosted by Whittington RUFC for the first time.

This event is a personal opportunity for Staffordshire's Clubs to nominate a volunteer that they feel has gone above and beyond in their volunteering for their home club!

The county will also once again be supporting in conjunction with England Rugby's National Volunteer Recognition initiative, the Honda Valued Volunteers evening. This is open to all, to nominate an individual or group of volunteers under a series of categories. This year the Staffordshire event will be held at Holdcroft Honda in Stoke at the end of June.

Without the time, energy and commitment of volunteers, rugby simply would not happen. That is why it is so important that we continue to support and inspire this incredible group of people and why we should take the care and time to recognise their hard work and let them know just how valued they are!

Becky Davies
Volunteers - Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
COACHING & RUGBY SAFE REPORT
2022-2023

Coaching - The Coaching & Rugby Safe sub-committee has seen another positive year in online attendance, delivering year on year development and support to our club coach coordinators (CCC's) & Rugby Safe Leads. We have seen a positive alignment with clubs and volunteers by retaining the CCC and Rugby safe leads from all clubs on the same Call.

The new version of the ERCA (England Rugby Coaching award / L2) entered its second year in its new format, seeing more coaches than ever before coaching with the accreditations to their name.

With the RFU controlling all CPD at a national level, we have seen better alignment and engagement from our clubs and the consistent message continuing to go out about CPD's.

We have seen a positive uptake in the ERMA (England Rugby Mentor Award) where we are aspiring to have one qualified coach mentor in every club. This will allow all our clubs to support their coaches journey from within and become more self-sufficient and accessible to all club coaches.

We have continued our support of the Advanced Coach Award with 2 coaches achieving the qualification this year. With the alterations to the program next year, we will be enhancing our support and vastly increasing the level of support that we offer to coaches across the county.

Rugby Safe - We have seen all our clubs continue their commitment to rugby Safe, allocating valued volunteers to the Golden Role. They have all been able to continue the robust and consistent message in delivering the importance of player safety and Wellbeing.

We have seen clubs working closer on supporting their age grade coaches and their First aiders on a team-by-team bases, successfully implementing the compulsory inclusion of a first aider at every game. This has seen more volunteers than ever supporting our clubs with these duties. The CB Continued its support of first Aiders by allocating out vouchers to all clubs that had created a new team. We also allocated vouchers to adult teams, as we prepare for the regulations changes where all games in the county no matter the age, require a first aider to be present.

We have seen a great improvement in the completion of the Rugby Safe checklist and more clubs than ever better aligning with key initiatives ran via the RFU.

We have seen the Inclusion of Activate now becoming a standard part of everyone's training and all coaches completing their Headcase.

We have seen the continued inclusion of the Howdens Risk assessment app, ensuring that all clubs across the county have access to the appropriate resources. The CB has continued to support our medical staff as we aspire to get more people qualified on their PHSIS course. This in turn offers a great level of support to our clubs as well as our county squads.

Becky Williams

Coaching & Rugby Safe Chair – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
INCLUSION & DIVERSITY REPORT
2022-2023

The 2022/2023 season has been an exciting one for inclusion and diversity within Staffordshire Rugby Union. The creation of a committee of inclusion and diversity leads from Stafford, Trentham, Cannock, Leek, and Burton rugby clubs has helped us to bring together voices from across the region to create a more inclusive rugby community.

A significant highlight of the season was the visit of Jatin Patel, the Director of Inclusion and Diversity, in January 2023. His visit helped to educate clubs and promote meaningful discussions about how we can create a more diverse and inclusive culture in rugby.

We also celebrated important awareness days, including National Autism Awareness Day, Mental Health Awareness Day, and Pride Day. These celebrations helped to create greater awareness and understanding of these important issues and demonstrated our commitment to making rugby a welcoming and inclusive sport for everyone.

Looking ahead, we have exciting plans for the next season, including developing a calendar of events to raise even more awareness for inclusion and diversity. We also aim to help clubs create purpose and vision statements that reflect our shared values of diversity, inclusivity, and belonging.

In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, the power to unite people in a way that little else does." We believe that inclusion and diversity are key to unlocking the full potential of rugby and creating a brighter, more inclusive future for the sport. Together, we can make a difference.

Danny Carlin

Staffordshire Inclusion and Diversity Lead – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
DISCIPLINARY REPORT
2022-2023

This season the Disciplinary Panel heard and dealt with 61 cases at Senior level. The vast majority of these were again dealt with on the papers alone and on-line, only meeting when players were contesting the award of a red card or for very contentious cases that required the attendance of the individuals involved. This total was up by 9 cases on the previous season and disappointingly high for a County with such a small number of

clubs. This increase can be mostly attributed to the increase in dangerous/high tackles which rose from 3 in 2021/22 to 9 this season. With the introduction of the new tackle height of, below the sternum coming in next season, we fully expect a further increase, at least in the early part of the season, here's hoping we are proved wrong.

There is still an on-going concern within the game with regards to the increase in Match Official Abuse/Disrespecting the authority of a Match Official. We in Staffordshire are not alone in seeing that rise, our cases were up from the previous season, albeit only by a couple of cases and thankfully not as high as reported by some CB's elsewhere in the Country. Junior rugby appears to be a major concern regarding this type of behaviour, parents/spectators abuse on the touchline appears to be increasing year on year. The R.F.U. are set to introduce sanctions to immediately suspend any parent/spectator or any others charged with Match Official abuse prior to any disciplinary hearing.

The Staffordshire Disciplinary Panel are committed to try and reduce this type of offending and will be engaging with all concerned within the game in Staffordshire in the coming months, to find solutions that benefit all those involved, especially the referees, as we all know, without them there is no game.

Again this season, Punching/Striking topped the list of offences committed with 15 cases, down from 20 last season, a move in the right direction, however, and as indicated above, Dangerous/high tackles increased from 3 in 2021/22 to 9 this season, tackle height and the need to avoid head contact being increasingly highlighted in the International game and at Premiership level and in the media week in week out, has contributed to this rise in awareness of this offence and again, as I pointed out earlier, next seasons reduced tackle height in the Community game will be very interesting to observe.

Verbal Abuse and Disrespecting the authority of the Match Official (dissent) cases rose from 8 last season to 11 this year, 6 cases were for dissent, up from only one case the previous season, the introduction of the new disrespect Law and clarification on the definition of disrespect rather than Verbal abuse, accounting for the increase. The rest of the cases were for the various offences you can see listed below.

Junior rugby cases dropped from 16 last season, to 11 in the past 12 months, a trend we hope continues in the coming season. All cases were dealt with by their respective club, disciplinary panels or school/head-teachers as appropriate and approved by the Staffordshire Constituent Body Age Grade Disciplinary Secretary.

DISCIPLINARY STATISTICS SEASON 2022/2023.

Punch/Strike	Law 9.12	(NP)3	15
Reckless play	Law 9.11		1
Verbal Abuse of Match Official	Law 9.28		5
Stamp/Trample	Law 9.12		2
Strike with Head	Law 9.12		1
Tip tackle	Law 9.18		2
Dangerous tackle	Law 9.13	(NP)1	9
Kick	Law 9.12		2
Dangerous play at a ruck	Law 9.20(b)	(NP)1	1
Disrespecting the authority of the Match Official	Law 9.28		5
2 yellow cards	Law 9.27		6
Tackling a player without the ball,	Law 9.14		1
Obstruct opponent who had just kicked the ball	Law 9.25		1
Grabbing the genitals	Law 9.27		1
Verbal abuse of a player	Law 9.12		2
Disrespect authority of Match Official	Rule 5.12		1
No attempt to wrap arms in tackle	Law 9.16		1
Hair grabbing	Law 9.27		1
Misconduct	Law 9.27		1

Conduct prejudicial to the Game	Rule 5.12	3
Total		61
Not Proven (NP)		5
Players suspended for less than 30 days		41
Players suspended for more than 30 days		11
Sending off Sufficient		4
Not proven		5
Total		61
Clubs 1 Disciplinary Offence		3
Clubs 2 Disciplinary Offences		12
Clubs 3 Disciplinary Offences		3
Clubs 4 Disciplinary Offences		5
Clubs 5 Disciplinary Offences		1
Total		61

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my Disciplinary Panel Members for their continued support over the past season. To Mel Jones, Disciplinary Chairman, thanks again Mel, Mel has stepped down from his role as Chairman in the last week as I write this report; to take up the position of Captain of his golf club, our loss is their gain. Mel began on the Disciplinary Panel in 1997 and became Chairman in 2013, his knowledge of the game and the disciplinary process will be sadly missed, thankfully he has informed me that he will still be available to deal with cases when required, probably only online, we will miss his cheesy jokes and calm persona, good luck Mel, hope your year goes well. I really have appreciated your help and advice, especially over the last 10-11 years.

We also had to say a fond farewell to Maz Jones, my Assistant Secretary during the last season, who had to admit defeat to a progressive health issue that curtailed her being available to continue in the role. She is still alive and kicking and I wouldn't rule out her being involved again at some stage in the future, thanks for all your help Maz, I miss you, keep drinking that Guinness.

To Iain, I look forward to working with you as our Disciplinary Chairman again next season, the position is safe in your hands, and we will all benefit from your knowledge and experience of the disciplinary process.

To Jez, Rich and John, thanks for all your help and hard work in the past year, the County is lucky, as am I, to have such experienced disciplinary officers as you guys, and I look forward to working with you all and seeing you more in person next season.

I am pleased to say that we will have Becky Davies back on the Disciplinary Panel from the start of next season, her depth of knowledge of the game and the disciplinary process will be a huge bonus for us and we look forward to welcoming her back to the fold.

Thanks to Newcastle (Staffs) R.U.F.C. for again letting us use their clubhouse for our disciplinary meetings, especially Andy, the Club Steward, who is always accommodating with our requests for meetings, sometimes at very short notice. It is very much appreciated. We look forward to being back there again from the start of next season.

Also, many thanks to Burntwood R.F.C. for letting us use their club facilities for a cross-border hearing in November 2022, again it was very much appreciated, and we thank those club officials involved in arranging that evening for us.

Whilst I hope you all enjoy a quiet and relaxing summer break can I just take this opportunity to remind all Panel members that we begin next season with the R.F.U. Disciplinary conference weekend at Wyboston on 2nd/3rd September 2023. I look forward to seeing you there.

Kevin Cantrill
Staffordshire Disciplinary Honorary Secretary

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
SOCIETY OF REFEREES REPORT
2022-2023

I am very proud to have held the title of Society Chair over the last 12 months, but nothing would have been achieved without the dedication and hard work of our committee, and of course the dedication and hard work of the members, without which there would be no Society and consequently no rugby in Staffordshire. So, congratulations to everyone on another successful year of refereeing. Once again, the Society members have enabled hundreds of players throughout the county and beyond to enjoy their rugby in a safe and controlled environment. This has given enjoyment to all, players and officials alike.

Throughout the season our members have managed to cover all the games required of us, although we have been stretched at times. Thanks to those who can help midweek and Sundays, and especially those of you who can still manage more than one game in a weekend. None of this would happen of course without the massive effort put in by the appointments team. This all culminated in the County Finals weekend where once again the Society put out teams of 5 to all games and contributed to a hugely successful set of games.

A special thanks goes out to the “behind the scenes” members of the Society, the Match Observers and Watchers, who help us progress and maintain our standards. Also, the other members who can no longer referee, but help in so many other ways.

It was also my pleasure this season to welcome several new female members, who bring a new perspective to the Society, we look forward to them expanding their refereeing careers, and numbers next season.

Sadly, we have also seen an increase in match official abuse this season, but it is heartening that we are supported in dealing with this by the RFU publishing MOA cases online, and the County Discipline Team who deal with the cases.

I would like to mention the Referees Society monthly meetings. As well as a social get together, they also serve an important function in getting us all to maintain consistency and standards in our officiating. Many of these meetings are open to all, coaches and players as well as referees. The Society Training Lead has a lot of plans to make the meetings more interactive and entertaining, and we would love to see more of you there.

We are very lucky in SRUSR that we don't have to pay for our kit. This is a luxury that many Societies don't have, some only get a shirt free, some get no free kit at all and must buy it all themselves. So once again we are indebted to Martin Lennon for his generous support in sponsoring our kit, something we should never take for granted.

In conclusion it's been a successful season for SRUSR and for rugby in Staffordshire.

Phil Everitt
Chair, SRUSR

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
COMPETITIONS COMMITTEE REPORT
2022-2023

What a season it was, with weather related postponements and the introduction of the RFU's Papa John's cups presenting greater challenges than we have faced for many years, but we got there in the end, with no fewer than five finals on the last weekend of April. Thanks go to Burntwood, Lichfield and Trentham for their hospitality and the use of their facilities.

The Colts Cup and Plate competitions, masterminded by Martin de Ridder, proceeded smoothly and according to plan, but it was not until the weekend before the scheduled date that we knew that the Senior Final and the Owen Cup could go ahead, as Burton, Barton and Trentham were still involved in the Papa John's Cup at that stage.

The Colts Finals kicked off first at Trentham, with the eleven teams which had entered whittled down to the last four and both matches decided by the final kick of the game. The Plate final was between Trentham and Uttoxeter, with Trentham scoring a converted try after just five minutes. Uttoxeter levelled the scores before half time and then scored again to open a 14-7 lead, only for Trentham to touch down again with the clock in the red. The conversion went agonisingly wide to give Uttoxeter the trophy by the narrowest of margins. Lichfield faced Wolverhampton in the Cup final, with the game in the balance at half time – two tries and a penalty apiece and Wolves ahead 17-15. A Lichfield converted try and a penalty each took the scoreline to 25-20, but with no side imminent, Wolves touched down again, and the difficult conversion sailed between the posts to give them a 27-25 victory. Two great colts matches to round off the season.

Meanwhile at Lichfield, Burton were playing Stoke in the Senior Final, with Craig Maxwell-Keys – Premiership referee and local lad made good – in the middle. Burton raced into a 17-0 lead in just ten minutes, but Stoke clawed their way back into the game, scoring 15 unanswered points of their own in the next fifteen minutes, although Burton claimed their third try before half time. Stoke's converted try levelled the scores at 22-22 early in the second half, but Burton crossed the line twice more in the final quarter and with Stoke able to register just a single penalty, Burton ran out as County Champions 36-25.

Sunday at Burntwood was President's Day. Barton-under-Needwood faced Trentham in the Owen Cup. Trentham dominated early possession and territory, but Barton registered the first points, on almost their first incursion into the Trentham half, with a straightforward penalty, followed by a try. An exchange of penalties and a try apiece gave Barton an 18-8 lead at half time. The second half was largely one way traffic, in part, because of Trentham indiscipline, with Barton running in a further six tries and a consolation score for Trentham at the very end to produce a 56-15 scoreline at the end. The Intermediate Cup (Lewis Taylor Trophy) between Burntwood and Stafford was a much closer and very entertaining affair, with the scores tied at 27-27 with just five minutes remaining and nine tries scored. It took two late penalties to tilt

the balance Burntwood's way and enable the hosts to bring their 50th anniversary season to a close as League and Cup winners.

The Papa John's Cups had several teething problems nationally in their inaugural season. 571 teams entered, including almost all Staffordshire clubs, but there were withdrawals from Day 1 right up to the semis. Congratulations to Newcastle – the only Staffordshire club to reach a Papa John's final. Sadly, they lost a close game against Huddersfield Laund Hill by a single score at the Darlington Arena but should be proud to have flown the Staffordshire flag on the national stage.

On the league front, Lichfield and Leek will change places next season, with Leek promoted to Regional 1 Midlands as Champions. Uttoxeter slip out of Counties 1, and Burntwood, Willenhall and Stone all topped their respective leagues at Counties 2, 3 and 4.

This is my tenth (possibly eleventh) annual report, and it will be my last as it is time for someone else to take the reins. My thanks go to my colleagues on Competitions Committee and at SRU for their support over the years – it has always been a team effort. Neill Pow has now taken over as Chair, and I know that Competitions in Staffordshire will flourish under his leadership.

Steve Barr
Competitions Committee Chair – Staffordshire Rugby Union

Regional 1 Midlands								
	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Dudley Kingswinford	22	17	0	5	671	372	299	85
Bridgnorth	22	16	0	6	631	499	132	82
Syston	22	16	0	6	761	414	347	79
Bromsgrove	22	13	1	8	666	480	186	75
Kenilworth	22	14	0	8	621	507	114	71
Burton	22	9	0	13	560	595	-35	55
Oundle	22	9	0	13	481	617	-136	54
Derby	22	10	1	11	562	691	-129	53
Stoke on Trent	22	8	0	14	607	699	-92	51
Broadstreet	22	8	0	14	504	698	-194	46
Lichfield	22	6	0	16	544	836	-292	37
Nuneaton	22	5	0	17	485	685	-200	35

Regional 2 North Midlands								
	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Leek	22	19	0	3	721	364	357	94
Long Eaton	22	16	0	6	686	523	163	81
Moseley Oak	22	13	1	8	571	446	125	69
Melbourne	22	12	3	7	529	515	14	67
Sutton Coldfield	22	11	2	9	628	680	-52	66
Newark	22	11	1	10	674	625	49	65
Matlock	22	10	1	11	572	507	65	61
Oadby Wyggestonians	22	10	1	11	637	691	-54	56
Leicester Forest	22	8	0	14	613	625	-12	53
Silhillians	22	8	0	14	521	581	-60	50
Belgrave	22	6	0	16	433	630	-197	29
Nuneaton Old Ed's	22	3	1	18	336	734	-398	24

Regional 2 West Midlands

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Old Halesonians	22	19	0	3	652	392	260	91
Walsall	22	17	0	5	720	285	435	86
Ludlow	22	17	0	5	762	307	455	83
Stratford Upon Avon	22	13	0	9	596	436	160	65
Hereford	22	13	0	9	502	464	38	65
Malvern	22	13	0	9	512	485	27	62
Worcester	22	11	0	11	521	571	-50	56
Crewe & Nantwich	22	10	0	12	567	558	9	54
Whitchurch	22	9	0	13	563	493	70	52
Wolverhampton	22	8	0	14	422	493	-71	43
Evesham	22	2	0	20	354	772	-418	10
Droitwich	22	0	0	22	170	1085	-915	0

Counties 1 Midlands West (North)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Luctonians II	22	22	0	0	827	251	576	110
Tamworth	22	19	0	3	903	346	557	94
Edwardians	22	16	0	6	812	428	384	84
Stafford	22	13	0	9	591	504	87	66
Camp Hill	22	12	0	10	655	580	75	60
Shrewsbury	22	10	1	11	595	596	-1	54
Newcastle (Staffs)	22	10	1	11	487	656	-169	50
Old Saltleians	22	9	0	13	543	598	-55	49
Telford Hornets	22	8	0	14	491	586	-95	48
Longton	22	7	0	15	454	788	-334	39
Stourbridge Lions	22	2	2	18	297	824	-527	15
Uttoxeter	22	2	0	20	336	834	-498	9

Counties 2 Midlands West (North)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Burntwood	22	17	2	3	791	365	426	89
Harborne	22	18	0	4	722	385	337	84
Veseyans	22	15	1	6	625	343	282	78
Newport (Salop) II	22	11	0	11	682	430	252	64
Clee Hill	22	11	2	9	370	390	-20	55
Oswestry	22	10	1	11	432	484	-52	55
Market Drayton	22	9	0	13	603	583	20	52
Luctonians III	22	9	1	12	532	463	69	51
Bridgnorth II	22	9	1	12	365	588	-223	46
Handsworth	22	9	0	13	414	779	-365	44
Cleobury Mortimer	22	8	0	14	406	553	-147	37
Aldridge	22	2	0	20	240	819	-579	9

Counties 3 Midlands West (North)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Willenhall	18	17	0	1	638	143	495	85
Rugeley	18	13	0	5	445	292	153	67
Trentham	18	11	0	7	519	354	165	59
Barton-Under-Needwood	18	11	1	6	460	332	128	56
Aston Old Edwardians	18	12	1	5	638	201	437	51
Eccleshall	18	9	0	9	431	491	-60	44
Cannock	18	9	0	9	318	450	-132	42
Ludlow II	18	5	0	13	346	628	-282	26
Wednesbury	18	2	0	16	237	563	-326	14
Warley	18	0	0	18	109	687	-578	2

Counties 4 Midlands West (North)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Stone	20	20	0	0	916	192	724	92
Newcastle (Staffs) II	20	16	0	4	664	253	411	82
Bloxwich	20	12	0	8	499	433	66	60
St Leonards	20	12	1	7	374	408	-34	59
Essington	20	11	0	9	319	301	18	52
Atherstone	20	9	0	11	338	396	-58	50
Burton III	20	10	0	10	424	508	-84	49
Linley	20	7	0	13	279	516	-237	36
Erdington	20	6	1	13	287	524	-237	30
Stoke on Trent II	20	4	0	16	345	506	-161	21
Longton II	20	2	0	18	202	610	-408	5

Midlands Reserve League Div 1

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Syston II	14	13	0	1	494	167	327	67
Bournville 2nd XV	15	11	0	4	366	291	75	55
Lichfield 2nd XV	16	10	0	6	379	335	44	54
Dudley K. 2nd XV	14	9	0	5	300	169	131	45
Nuneaton 2nd XV	13	7	0	6	236	341	-105	41
Walsall 2nd XV	14	6	0	8	358	356	2	41
Wolverhampton II	15	3	0	12	270	432	-162	27
Stafford A XV	16	4	0	12	144	400	-256	25
Birmingham Medics	15	3	0	12	138	194	-56	17

Staffordshire League Division 1

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Tamworth 2nds	16	14	0	2	599	305	294	74
Whittington	16	13	0	3	475	167	308	73
Shrewsbury 2nd XV	15	10	0	5	421	249	172	58
Trentham 2nds	15	8	0	7	393	424	-31	56
Telford Hornets 2nd XV	16	7	0	9	454	335	119	53
Walsall 3rd XV	16	6	0	10	324	490	-166	45
Lichfield 3rd XV	16	7	1	8	317	235	82	44
Handsworth 2nds	16	3	1	12	264	668	-404	37
Uttoxeter 2nd XV	16	1	2	13	104	478	-374	23

Staffordshire League Division 2 EAST

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Burntwood 2nd XV	14	12	0	2	416	185	231	67
Leek 3rds	14	10	0	4	386	306	80	54
Tamworth 3rds	13	9	0	4	400	246	154	52
Barton-U-Needwood 2nds	12	7	0	5	258	157	101	45
Penkridge	14	6	0	8	195	476	-281	45
Rugeley 2nd XV	14	4	1	9	247	475	-228	38
Cannock 2nds	13	3	1	9	190	318	-128	28
Stafford Bulldogs	14	2	0	12	166	95	71	13

Staffordshire League Division 2 WEST

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Willenhall 2nds	8	6	0	2	286	137	149	36
Featherstone	8	7	0	1	173	142	31	30
Telford Hornets 3rd XV	8	3	0	5	109	271	-162	24
Eccleshall 2nd XV	7	2	0	5	101	68	33	11
Shrewsbury 3rd XV	7	1	0	6	87	138	-51	10

Women's Championship Midlands 2

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Buckingham Swans Ladies	14	13	0	1	466	124	342	67
Lichfield Ladies	14	13	0	1	431	163	268	64
Sutton Coldfield Ladies	14	9	0	5	362	246	116	42
Bury Foxes Ladies	14	6	0	8	342	268	74	32
Shelford Ladies	14	5	0	9	244	288	-44	31
Hitchin Ladies	14	5	0	9	242	324	-82	27
Aston Old E. Women	14	5	0	9	197	301	-104	24
Birmingham Moseley Women	14	0	0	14	34	604	-570	0

Women's NC 1 Midlands

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Long Eaton Women	16	15	1	0	568	117	451	74
Cannock Lionesses Ladies	16	10	0	6	522	214	308	54
Bridgnorth Women	16	9	1	6	255	266	-11	47
West Bridgford Ladies	16	9	0	7	369	249	120	43
Derby Ladies	16	7	0	9	225	326	-101	35
Coalville Ladies	16	6	2	8	282	319	-37	33
Coventry Welsh Ladies	16	6	0	10	431	497	-66	32
Lincoln Ladies	16	6	0	10	333	317	16	31
Lutterworth Ladies	16	2	0	14	59	739	-680	10

Women's NC 2 Midlands (West)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Old Leamingtonians Ladies	16	14	0	2	500	74	426	74
Lichfield Green Ladies	16	14	0	2	441	91	350	74
Handsworth Ladies	16	11	2	3	563	249	314	67
Telford Hornets Ladies	16	9	1	6	279	275	4	60
Bournville Women	16	9	1	6	397	186	211	56
Stourbridge Panthers Ladies	16	4	0	12	215	470	-255	38
Wolverhampton Ladies	16	4	0	12	140	327	-187	35
Tamworth Ladies	16	1	0	15	32	785	-753	35
Dudley Kingswinford Ladies	16	4	0	12	147	257	-110	33

Women's NC 2 Midlands (North East)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Boston Ladies	16	16	0	0	506	129	377	80
Burton Ladies	16	9	2	5	241	246	-5	61
Ashfield Ladies	15	10	0	5	303	184	119	58
Sleaford Ladies	15	8	1	6	235	279	-44	53
Sutton Bonington Students Ladies	15	8	0	7	288	233	55	47
Mellish Ladies	15	5	1	9	197	344	-147	45
Kesteven Ladies	16	5	1	10	225	388	-163	45
Mansfield Women	16	4	2	10	261	313	-52	44
Sileby Town Ladies	16	1	1	14	127	267	-140	21

Women's NC 3 Midlands (West)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Stafford Women	6	5	0	1	113	81	32	27
Silhillians Ladies	6	4	0	2	155	100	55	23
Clee Hill Women	6	3	0	3	142	96	46	21
Stone Ladies	6	0	0	6	69	202	-133	12