

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION Ltd.



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2024-2025**

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION LIMITED

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

THE COUNTY GROUND
STAFFORD RUGBY UNION FOOTBALL CLUB
BLACKBERRY LANE, STAFFORD
on TUESDAY 24th JUNE 2025
at 7.30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of SRU AGM 2023.
3. To read and approve the SRU Annual Report for the season 2024-25.
4. To elect the following Officers for Season 2025/2026.
 - a) President.
 - b) Chairman.
 - c) Honorary Secretary.
 - d) Honorary Treasurer.
5. To elect a Vice President.
6. To approve nine representatives to serve on the Management Team for the season 2025-26.
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 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 2024-25

President and Chairman:	M. Bezus
Vice President:	S. Godfrey
Hon. Secretary:	R. J. Websdale
Hon. Treasurer:	B. A. Scott
R.F.U. Council Member:	M. Procter
Senior Clubs Representative:	A. Lewis
Junior Clubs Representative:	T. Roberts
Rugby Safe:	B. Williams
DOR / Coaching	A. Appleyard
Competitions:	N. Pow/P. Sargeant
Women and Girls Rugby:	R. Wiggins
Age Grade:	D. Carlin
I & D	C. Dale
SRUSR:	P Everitt

Staffordshire Rugby Union
Affiliated or Full Membership at 1st January 2025

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 (2)

HMP Featherstone
Staffordshire County Police

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
PRESIDENT & CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The world of rugby has seen its share of turbulence this year, following on from the pandemic and then the tackle height debacle we thought we were through the worst. However, I feel I must highlight in my report the recent and the most pressing issues while celebrating the achievements within Staffordshire Rugby Union.

At the national level, the controversy surrounding Bill Sweeney's LTIP bonus and the subsequent Special General Meeting revolt, aiming to remove him, has cast a shadow over the Rugby Football Union (RFU). This unrest had already resulted in the resignation of Tom Elube, RFU's Chairman, and has further highlighted the governance challenges facing our sport. The rapidly organised tour of the country under Interim Chairman Bill Beaumont seemed to only serve to raise more questions than provide answers.

One of the most significant developments, partly borne out of some of those questions raised on the 'roadshows' is the ongoing RFU Governance review, which promises to bring sweeping changes to the structure of rugby in England. The potential abolition of the RFU Council has sparked widespread debate, with implications that could alter the grassroots game as we know it. While this review aims to modernize and streamline governance, it is crucial to consider its effects on the stability and inclusivity of rugby, particularly for community-centric bodies like ours.

All of this has pitched the community game back into instability with the planned Community Game of the Future and Regionalisation proposals all being put on hold pending the Consultation exercise commissioned by the RFU as part of the review.

Not only does this leave the CBs and clubs unsure of what the future holds it also leaves the working groups associated with the plans, one of which I was involved with, in limbo for an as yet indeterminate period.

The RFU AGM is this coming Saturday at St Georges Park where many of the issues will be voted upon, and the CB will be represented by it's council member Michael Procter. Clubs should have received their invitation to go along and vote or if they prefer, they can ask Michael to carry their Proxy vote. Whichever way they decide I would urge all clubs to make sure their voice is heard.

Thankfully the story here in Staffordshire is a lot more positive as we try to steer our way past the stormy seas of the professional game and get on with running the Community game.

To ease him into his new role at the start of the season, Vice Chairman/President Shaun Godfrey spearheaded Staffordshire Rugby Union's own governance review. This initiative, reflecting the RFU's broader objectives, was designed to ensure that our organization stays relevant, efficient, and impactful. The findings and recommendations from this review are being steadily implemented across this season and the next, aiming to refine how the Constituent Body (CB) operates.

A key outcome of our governance review and something that had been discussed between Past President John McDermott and I during his time as president was to restructure the organization, focusing on streamlining operations within the CB. We have therefore made some notable appointments which we believe have strengthened this framework and thank those appointed for their efforts throughout this season:

- Andy Appleyard: Director of Rugby, overseeing all aspects of Representative rugby, player development, and moving forward, coach development within the CB.
- Danny Carlin: Age Grade Lead, tasked with bringing structure and clarity to Age Grade (non-representative) rugby throughout the county.
- Caroline Dale – Inclusion and Diversity Lead who is looking at how we can make Rugby in Staffordshire more inclusive.
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These changes aim to enhance efficiency and provide better support for players, coaches, and volunteers alike and I plan to continue looking at adapting our structure to suit the changing rugby landscape.

The resilience of our rugby community has been on full display, with both adult and junior games showing promising signs of recovery. Participation numbers are beginning to return to pre-pandemic levels, reflecting the depth of passion for the sport across Staffordshire.

Adult rugby has shown steady growth in player retention and engagement, with clubs across the region benefiting from targeted initiatives aimed at revitalising the game.

Staffordshire also achieved remarkable success in the bids put together by Shaun Godfrey to the RFU innovation fund, securing the maximum amount of funding available in each strand, allowing Staffordshire Rugby Union to implement several key initiatives:

- Club Refereeing Initiative: Aimed at cultivating refereeing talent within clubs to ensure the smooth functioning of club matches and ongoing availability of referees.
- Player Retention and Transition Initiative: Focused on easing the transition for players across different stages of their rugby journeys and encouraging retention of players to ensure long-term commitment to the sport.
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These initiatives not only address immediate challenges but also lay the groundwork for sustainable growth and encourage enjoyment of the game in less challenging environments than league rugby.

Our ongoing focus on Age Grade rugby has been instrumental in nurturing the next generation of players. Structured programs and competition organisation put together by Danny Carlin, Robin Websdale and the Age Grade committee have ensured a positive trajectory for junior rugby in Staffordshire.

In a bid to further our inclusivity goals and get more underrepresented children into the game, Staffordshire Rugby Union has linked up with the Star Scheme Charity. This partnership promotes their work in clubs by introducing children with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to rugby. By providing a supportive environment, we hope to leverage the transformative power of sport to positively impact the lives of these children. Thank you to Shuan Godfrey and Danny Carlin for driving this connection.

The Staffordshire Cup competitions, including the Senior Cup, Intermediate Cup, and Owen Cup, faced significant difficulties in scheduling fixtures due to fixture congestion. League fixtures and the Papa John's Cup been given precedence, all adding to the challenge of arranging these matches. A special note of appreciation goes to Neill Pow and Paul Sargeant for their dedication and hard work in successfully arranging all the finals without extending the competitions into the next season. Congratulations to the respective winners: Senior Cup: Burton RFC; Intermediate Cup: Willenhall RFC and Owen Cup: Eccleshall RFC

The Centenary Cup for lower-tier teams, inaugurated in our centenary celebration last year proved again to be a notable success. Due, in part to problems with the senior cups, the Centenary cup was showcased during Presidents Day, where Newcastle (Staffs) RFC achieved a remarkable double victory as their 3rd team defeated Walsall RFC in the Tier 2 Cup and their 2nd team triumphed over Lichfield 2nds in the Tier 1 Cup.

Our thanks also go out to Martin de Ridder for his exceptional efforts in organizing the Colts Competition, which was well-executed and culminated in thrilling cup and plate finals held at Cannock RFC. Congratulations to the Cup Winners: Lichfield Colts and the Plate Winners: Stoke Colts

Staffordshire clubs were divided over entry into the Papa Johns with many choosing not to enter and a few more dropping out without playing a game. Two Staffordshire sides got to their respective finals with Leek narrowly losing to Tunbridge Wells and Walsall even more narrowly defeating West Bridgford. This is the last year of it being Papa John's and I understand the format will change next year to try and help alleviate the fixture clashes and congestion it caused this season.

The CB has also initiated a competitions review under the chairmanship of Shaun Godfrey, to try and streamline competitions across men's, women's and age grade to give a more consistent offering, and we will be looking at implementing any recommendations from the review as soon as is practical.

On the representative front Staffordshire U18s had a tough programme of 3 Super Sunday Games. Michael Reseigh of Stoke getting through to the Midlands U18 squad on completion. Michael was also nominated as the Staffordshire Young Player of the year and was presented with the Connor Young Trophy at Stafford RFC prior to the senior men's game against East Midlands.

The U17s played several friendlies against neighbouring CBs to gain match time and experience ahead of the selection into the U18 squad for next season's campaign starting in October 2025.

The U20s started well winning their warm-up game against Cheshire and beating Warwickshire in the first pool game before going down to North Midlands in their second pool game and thereby missing out on progressing out of the pool for the first time in 3 years. In consolation 6 players from the Staffs U20s were selected in the initial Midlands U20 training group with 4 players getting through to the final squad. Josh Butler of Lichfield, Arvie Birchall and Lewis Dono of Trentham and Samson Shute of Stoke.

The senior men won their first 2 pool games against Warwickshire and North Midlands and drew with East Midlands to secure a semi-final place as best runner up. They travelled to Ivybridge to play Devon but were narrowly defeated in a hard-fought game.

The women started well overcoming a strong Lancashire side in their first outing in Division 1 but were brought down to earth by Yorkshire suffering a heavy defeat in their 2nd game. They suffered a further defeat to Northumberland in a spirited performance in Whitley Bay which brought to an end this Season's campaign for them.

Thanks to all the County management and coaching teams for the hard work and dedication to their respective programmes and for their commitment to providing Staffordshire men, women, boys and girls with the opportunity to play in the aspirational pathway.

Staffordshire women Daisy Aspinall from Stafford and Lucy Calladine from Burton also made the county proud when Lucy was appointed captain of England U20s women and Daisy made her debut at Scrum half in a game against South Africa U20 women. Well done to both!

The role of volunteers in sustaining the fabric of rugby cannot be overstated. This year has seen the success of several volunteer events organized by Volunteer Coordinator Danielle Bayley and her dedicated team of helpers. These events have celebrated the dedication of those who give their time and energy to support clubs, players, and the broader rugby community. Both our own Volunteer awards and the RFU/Honda Volunteer awards show the commitment we all have to celebrating and supporting the volunteers who are the absolute life blood of the game. CB volunteers Martin De-Ridder of Rugeley and Donna Thomas of Wednesbury have managed to get through to the final of the Honda Volunteer awards and we wish them the best when they visit Twickenham in August. The CB and clubs can never have too many volunteers so please contact your club or CB if you would like to volunteer your services or help out in any way.

Staffordshire Rugby Union Society of Referees continues to work hand in hand with the CB to provide a fantastic service supplying referees across the county and beyond. Thank you to outgoing chairman Phil Everitt for his input to the management team over the last year and we look forward to new chairman Andy Joseph's involvement in future meetings.

Similarly, the Staffordshire disciplinary team led by Iain Haley and Secretary Kevin Cantrell have done a sterling job again this year in the face of a growing tide of Match Official abuse cases across the game. Thanks to them for all their work and I would urge everyone across the game to help us to try and reverse this trend for next season.

I have in my report already paid tribute to a number of people for their contribution to the CB but would like to move on to thanking a few others and apologise in advance if I miss anyone.

Already mentioned several times in my report I would first like to thank my Vice Chairman/President Shaun Godfrey for his support and for always being available to bounce ideas off or have a chat. Similarly, thanks to our Council member and my long-standing friend Michael Procter whose depth of knowledge about all things RFU and Staffordshire have been invaluable to me and kept me on the straight and narrow.

Thanks of course to our treasurer Brian Scott for keeping a firm hand on the financial tiller as well as taking the award for accompanying me on club/county game visits with his wife Yvonne. Thanks also to Honorary Secretary, Robin Websdale & partner Dawn running a close second on the visits as well as juggling his county duties with work as MROC secretary and his club, ensuring he is always busy.

I would also like to thank Becky Williams – Coaching and Rugby Safe, Ros Wiggins – Women & Girls, Kelly Hope – Safeguarding, and Andy Lewis and Trevor Roberts – CDC Representatives for all their work, attendance at meetings and input into the Management Team, I hope to see them all again next season.

I am grateful to the RFU professional staff of Chloe McMorran, Richard Lightbown, Stuart Eades and Liz Fletcher for their help and support of the CB. We have a new Club Developer in Lottie Bozon who I have spoken to but have yet to meet so welcome to her. The RFU have also this season established a Schools Rugby manager, Wayne Clark, based down in the Wolverhampton area and are working on engaging a provider to go into schools in the Stoke on Trent area.

In Conclusion my first year's journey as President/chair has been marked by challenges at the RFU and triumphs at the local level. I and the Staffordshire Rugby Union management team remain committed to fostering the growth of the sport, addressing governance challenges, and upholding the values that make rugby the cornerstone of our community. As we move forward, the initiatives and structural changes implemented this season will, I hope, continue to shape our CB into a forward-thinking, inclusive, and resilient organisation.

That concludes my report and happy to take any questions at the AGM.

Mike Bezus

President/Chairman – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT
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Another season and another issue at the RFU, Bill Sweeney's LTIP Bonus caused more problems upsetting certain people across the game. Only one resignation though, a tour of England to listen to all, the Community Game told them the problems that the game faced, which seemed to push the LTIP out of people minds in these meetings, then a SGM was held where the game supported the RFU and did not insist that BS had to go.

The game does not help itself, as recently, as you will be well aware, we have the Governance review report sent out to the game. Interesting part of this was that we had a choice to get rid of the Council and a second choice also to get rid of the Council. There was not a third choice which all would expect i.e. to keep the Council. If you want to keep the Council, you have to say no to both options given and then explain why you have said no by saying because I want to keep the Council. It was interesting to see the Chair of the Review get a grilling on this and then agree that there should have been a third choice!

Let's hope next season the game can just enjoy playing rugby rather than shooting itself in the foot.

CB Volunteers.

Over this season a number of roles have been advertised, all being filled. Andy Appleyard was appointed as DOR and will also take over as Chair of Coaching. Danny Carlin was appointed as Age Grade Lead. Trevor Roberts became the below level eight representative on the CDC and Caroline Dale became I & D lead. A highlight for me with regards to Volunteers was assisting Danille Bayley with the County Volunteers Evening. There was a wide range of people from the game in Staffordshire all who had either singly or as part of a group devoted much time and effort to taking the game forward and giving the opportunity to many others to enjoy the Game of Rugby.

League rugby.

The big issue for many Clubs before the start of the season was getting all players to register themselves ready for the new season. As it happened everybody was registered across Staffordshire. From reports Club Registrars put a lot of time and effort into making the registration process successful. Apparently, it should be a much easier affair this year, we wait with trepidation and fingers crossed. Let's hope Club Registrars do not have to put so much time and effort in this year.

Across the Midlands this year 27 new teams have been allowed to enter the ECC. In Staffordshire Trentham 2's and Stafford 2's have joined the Leagues, and I wish them all the best.

Unfortunately, this year Whittington pulled out of the league and a few others across the County struggled but all Clubs have worked hard at making sure they get their teams out to play their fixtures. Two Clubs were successful in winning their league, Lichfield came top in R2MN, whilst Leek 2's topped C3MW(N) by points difference from Newcastle 2's who were also promoted.

Next season the Papa John's Cups will have finished and will be replaced by RFU Cups. The Adult Competitions Sub Committee have listened to the game and put the first three rounds in during the season with the QF, SF and Final only now at the end of the season.

Finally, as always, there are a number of thank you's to be made. Firstly, I have to make a massive thank you to the Staffordshire Management team for all the hard work you put into ensuring rugby continues to develop throughout Staffordshire.

As always thank you to all Staffordshire clubs, especially the officers and committees for working so hard to ensure, their clubs are run successfully. These as well as all coaches and volunteers in your clubs who try to ensure that they deliver the game to as wide an audience as possible.

My last thank you as always goes to all players from 6 to 60 who have entertained us for another season.

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

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

The word *Covid* has become a regular part of our vocabulary since 2020 and its impact—both positive and negative—has been felt across all our clubs. This season marked the first real opportunity for rugby to fully move forward.

However, in November, the RFU's annual report was released, drawing significant media attention—particularly around the Long-Term Incentive Plan (LTIP) payments. Over the following five months, this issue dominated headlines. During this period, RFU Board Chair Tom Ilube resigned. Bill Beaumont, then Junior Vice President, was duly elected as Interim Chair. He immediately embarked on a series of roadshows across the country, both in person and online, giving the rugby community a chance to voice their concerns.

A Special General Meeting (SGM) was requested by members of the Rugby Football Referees Union, calling for the removal of RFU CEO Bill Sweeney. I would like to thank all clubs who engaged in the debates and allowed me to represent them, as well as those who participated in the vote.

In response to the LTIP controversy, the RFU Council commissioned an independent investigation. The legal firm Freshfields conducted a thorough review and produced a detailed report.

This year also brought significant opportunities. The "Community Game of the Future" initiative moved from consultation to implementation. Plans for the new regional structures began to take shape, including the recruitment of paid staff to lead these ventures. Unfortunately, during a five-month period, all appointments were paused.

For most of the season, we operated without a dedicated Rugby Development Officer (RDO). Despite this, RFU staff provided excellent support. I'm pleased to report that the recruitment process is now complete, and I look forward to meeting the new RDO.

Throughout the year, in anticipation of England hosting the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025, many Staffordshire clubs took the opportunity to improve their facilities. Numerous clubs have already benefited from this initiative.

During the Autumn Internationals, England faced New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and Japan—winning just one of the four matches. As expected, the media began questioning the team and coaching staff once again. Charlie Bradley of Stoke Rugby Club was our valued volunteer representative, and she attended the South Africa match alongside President Mike Bezus.

The Red Roses continued their dominant form throughout 2024, winning the Six Nations Grand Slam for the fourth consecutive year—a remarkable achievement. I was delighted to be joined by Becky Williams for the Scotland game.

The Guinness Six Nations did not disappoint. Although there was no Grand Slam this year, England finished a respectable second.

Across the county, we continue to support all age groups through coach and referee development, and by promoting competitive rugby from age-grade levels through to senior county representation. The CB also secured additional funding from the RFU Innovation Fund, which supported a floodlit Vets competition at two locations—producing some exceptional matches—as well as referee training and mentoring throughout the season.

As the club season draws to a close, many teams have participated in centenary games and the Papa John's Cup. Congratulations to Walsall, who won the North Plate at Doncaster Knights Stadium. Unfortunately, it wasn't third time lucky for Leek, who fell short in the Regional 1 Shield Final at Worcester Sixways. Senior County rugby continues with a packed schedule of fixtures.

Looking ahead, the RFU Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held in Staffordshire for the first time, at St George's Park. While the official notice has yet to be issued, it appears that further challenges and debates are likely to arise.

Finally, I want to express my heartfelt thanks for the hospitality and friendship shown to me during all my visits. It truly means a great deal. I look forward to continuing our conversations and supporting you all in the season ahead.

Michael Procter
RFU Council Member

Season 2024/25 has been mixed but I consider that good areas of deliberation have been very useful for the CDC.

The season started with the new committee members who then joined the Management Committee to represent the CDC. The first topic of interest for everyone was the change in the Registration of Adult Players procedure which was introduced by the RFU. We hope the RFU have listened to feedback from around the country and consider the re-registration of players will be simple and allow an email to be sent to players to simply confirm their details that are already on GMS.

Our meetings throughout the season have been well attended and certainly holding the meetings 'on-line' was very beneficial during the late autumn, winter, and spring.

The concern around the drop-off of adult male players was discussed more than once, but it became clear that clubs took their own initiatives to seek to find those people, former players and also those new to the game, to enhance our clubs teams and thus be able to provide suitable levels of rugby for everyone. One of our club's initiatives was to invite schools who do not have rugby playing facilities to their club and then hope that those players will form a novice Colts team by providing training, coaching, and playing facilities to their new recruits.

Despite the changing situation around the CB's Regional Development Officer, we have been very well supported by Richard Lightbown as the interim RDO, and I, on behalf of the CDC, offer him a huge vote of thanks for the support and supply of information that he has given throughout the season.

One matter of concern that was raised early last season was the need by clubs to have accurate Club Contact information on GMS that our CDC Secretary needs to have to be able to send specific information to those people with targeted roles at Clubs. By and large, and through the help and co-operation of Club secretaries, this was achieved and is an ongoing work in progress for next season and beyond.

Our president stated that the CDC is one of the steering committees for Staffordshire Rugby and he wanted to collaborate with clubs as much as he could because that is part of our key purpose, which is promoting rugby in Staffordshire, which we all agreed with his sentiment.

We also recognised the vital role facility development plays in supporting our member clubs' growth and retention needs, and the CB and RFU are eager to update our Facility Needs Capture with the full support of the Midlands Facilities team. This update not only builds upon last year's impactful facility responses but also pave the way for shaping the future of our clubs. By providing us with each club's most up-to-date facility's needs, the response will directly contribute to a comprehensive list of prioritised projects, allowing us to channel support, resources, and investment effectively.

Becky Williams - Proactive Risk Assessment programme, an opportunity to have information in one place, this was, Becky felt it should help all, proactive does keep it in one place, it keeps it centralised, list of inclusion areas in programme, all contacts, tour personnel, lets you be able to show information, CRISP, Becky, and Luke would visit sites. The process was club linked, not player, player pathway, all contacts for family and dependants are in place. Community coaching to allow preparing before playing. All about safety and ready to play. Log of what injuries are occurring. Knowledge is important to develop how best to deal with. All clubs had the information. This is a different way into the clubs themselves. Does link with Howdens where insurance is based. Paper book is a thing of the past. Rugby safe.

Initiatives through RFU

- **Volunteer Recruitment Scheme.** This scheme (if the application is successful), offers clubs £500 to use in an attempt to recruit new volunteers.

- **Women's Leadership Programme.** We have two programmes running to support women involved in rugby union. Programme one is the 'Women's Leadership Development Programme' to help support and develop strengths and confidence to make a difference. Secondly to 'Inspire', for 20–25-year-old leaders and aspiring leaders for the future.
- Talked through attracting all clubs in the County to attend the Staffordshire Clubs Meetings and to share the "load" of hosting these meetings: with a number of representatives attending to observe the workings of the Committee who may then be inclined to volunteer to get involved themselves.

We were sorry to hear what must have been a hard decision to make for the club to leave the league, Whittington, Erdington, Aldridge, with Yardley and District close by. We think it is probably the best decision to take at this time as it will allow those clubs to regroup & re build a stronger base.

Some information items that were useful to us, from RFU were, The Allianz Future Fund – The Injured Players Foundation (IPF) - in the event of a catastrophic injury occurring on the pitch, which fulfils one of the above definitions, supports any player who maybe unfortunate to succumb to such an injury.

Initiatives through the year included **Volunteer Recruitment and Awards** and the volunteer recruitment process. We encouraged clubs to nominate volunteers and highlighted the importance of the awards.

Grassroots rugby is the foundation of the Union. Most Clubs at this level depend upon their senior men's teams playing regularly to ensure their survival. As a Union could it not be considered that there is a responsibility to nurture these Clubs. Any increase in playing participation at this level will allow diversity and strengthen the game throughout.

Topic covered recently and discussed, Referee Recruitment and Support:

An introduction of the associate referee program to support club referees. It was explained that the mentorship and support provided to referees and the importance of the program for addressing the shortage of referees.

In conclusion, a varied and most interesting season for us all.

I thanks Trevor Roberts and Paul Sargeant for their unending support throughout the year, and I thank the clubs and Management Committee for their support also.

Have a restful 'off-season' and I look forward to welcoming you back at the start of next season.

*Andy Lewis - Above Level 8
Trevor Roberts - Level 8 and below
Club Development Representatives – Staffordshire Rugby Union*

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION PLAYING REPORT

1. Coaching Team & Preparation

Staff Structure

- Andy Appleyard – Director of Rugby
- Clive Griffiths – Consultant Lead Coach
- Tom Holmes – Forwards Lead & Lineout Specialist
- Mark Irving – Scrum Coach
- Harry Titley – Backs Coach
- Chaz Bunting – Player-Coach & Captain

- Tom Hughes – Team Therapist

Approach

Applied a high-performance, inclusive methodology: structured planning, video review, statistical analysis, PowerPoints, and practical drills. Delivered a professional environment that harnessed diverse learning styles and strengthened team cohesion.

2. A-Team Fixture & Community Engagement

Charity Match vs LooseHeadz

Hosted at Leek RFC, this fixture raised awareness for LooseHeadz while providing exposure lower-tier players. The event generated positive community engagement and talent identification.

3. Competitive Results

Pool Stage

- 17 May @ Broadstreet vs Warwickshire: 27–19 (bonus-point win)
- 24 May @ Droitwich vs North Midlands: 22–0 (bonus-point clean sheet)
- 31 May @ Stafford vs East Midlands: 38–38 (progressed as best runner-up)

Semi-Final

- 7 June @ Devon: 20–27 defeat, in a closely contested match

4. Officiating Feedback (RFU Recommendation Only)

Observations included inconsistent officiating, particularly regarding advantage rulings, offside management, and high hits in the final game. A high-contact incident resulted in one of our players being diagnosed with a fractured cheekbone.

****Recommendation (for RFU consideration) **** Future Division 2 fixtures should be refereed by RFU national-panel officials to ensure consistency and safeguard player welfare. Players who compete in this competition a L4 capable and the games match the standard of L4, it needs the support of L4 experienced officials. At this time of the year this shouldn't be a problem.

5. Squad List (31 Players)

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- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Ollie Rowbury (Moseley Oak) | • Luke Brough (Burton) |
| • Jamie Loska (Stoke on Trent) | • Alex Nesbitt (Burton) |
| • Josh Humphreys (Cannock) | • Benny Elliott (Newport) |
| • Chaz Bunting (Burton) | • Jack Dace (Lichfield) |
| • Tommie Collingwood (Burton) | • James Davies (Burton) |
| • John Kirwan (Burton) | • Josh Bailey (Stoke on Trent) |
| • Keifer Laxton (Burton) | • Macauley Green (Burton) |
| • Adam Ellis (Bridgnorth) | • Ed Brown (Burton) |
| • Carl Williams (Longton) | • Jack Ward (Veseyans) |
| • Jack Neal (Stoke on Trent) | • Cal Oakden (Sandbach) |
| • James Milan (Burton) | • Alex Fitzmaurice-James (Newcastle) |
| • Will Midwinter (Leek) | • Adam Nunney (Walsall) |
| • Ben Pitt (Walsall) | • Ollie Powell (Leek) |
| • Corbon Clarke-Selby (Walsall) | • Simon Weaver (Walsall) |
| • Lewis Dunleavy (Leek) | • Tom Hayes (Leek) |
| • Joel Hine (Leek) | |

6. Sponsorship & Social Media Engagement

County-Level Initiatives

- Staffordshire RU promoted sponsorship packages via Facebook and Instagram during the build-up – offering brand exposure, hospitality, and digital content inclusion. This was successful and something to build on for next year. There is opportunity to align this with the other representative sides to boost support and exposure.
- Social Media engagement has doubled throughout the campaign and the County has picked up more followers across the platforms.

7. Future Strategy & Development Plan

1. Early stakeholder outreach: Engage DoRs and club leads early.
2. Enhanced Talent ID: Host structured talent events, invite players from lower tiers, use performance data in selection.
3. Marquee Fixtures: Confirm Sixways vs British Police; explore additional high-profile/social-impact matches.
4. 'A Team' Revamp: Relaunch to create developmental pathways for levels 7/8/9.
5. Digital & Commercial Engagement: Build on what has been done this year.
7. End-of-Campaign Recognition: Collect feedback and host representative awards 2026.

8. Conclusion

This was an outstanding campaign, showcasing coaching excellence where we have pooled lower-level players (L5 Burton, Bridgnorth ranked mid-table Leek ranked lower table, Stoke relegated) against L5 top table ranked outfits.

We also had wide representation, and competitive excellence from the players involved.

We recommend sharing officiating concerns with the RFU, while Staffordshire refocuses on deepening talent pathways, enhancing community engagement, securing high-profile fixtures, and cultivating sponsorship to support continued progress.

Andy Appleyard
Director of Rugby – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION UNDER 20'S PLAYING REPORT

Staffordshire Men's U20 XV competed in the Jason Leonard U20s Men's County Championship. We played a warm-up match against Cheshire and then two Championship fixtures against Warwickshire and North Midlands.

Date	Opposition	Result
2 March 2025	Cheshire U20	Won 33 - 16
30 March 2025	Warwickshire U20	Won 41 - 31
11 May 2025	North Midlands U20	Lost 32 - 26

The coaches used 28 Players to represent the County: scoring 100 points over the 3 matches.

At the completion of the Championship fixtures 7 players from Staffordshire were selected to attend Midlands U20 Squad training.

The coaching team were:

Name	Role
Steve Harris	Head Coach
Jim Davies	Player Analysis
Donald Hayes	Forwards Coach
Luke Rookyard	Forwards Coach
Brett Taylor	Backs Coach
Tim Liggins	Backs Coach
Recce Elliott	Physio
Nick Dermott	Team Manager

We go again in 2026 with trials planned for early January 2026.

Nick Dermott
U20 Team Manager – Staffordshire Rugby Union

U17/U18 Report

Team: Stephen Eastwood, Simon Jones, Matthew Weaver, Matt Adderley, James Hitchen and Danny Bayes with Kelly Hope (Physio). The team has come together well with good complementary approaches with the ability to train and observe the squad.

The team are very well supported by Andy Campbell.

Budget for the year is tight we have not given out socks and shorts at U17 and encouraged players to purchase kit as we loss at U17 in recent seasons 10 pairs of shorts and socks. We have 12 pairs of shorts and socks which should see us through U18. Kit and match balls we are just ok for the season 2025-2026.

The investment in U17 is critical for the future of Staffordshire senior Men's sides which I think is starting to be demonstrated at U20 and senior men's. It is clear that without U15 and U16 within Staffordshire Rugby and the recent years of no feedback from Tigers, we have no option but to carry a higher U17 cost if we want strong senior Rugby in the county.

U18: Season 2024-2025

The team performance was excellent in the warmup squad development games and 3 Midlands fixtures. The squad had a very strong pack which dominated the performance it was both big and fast so provided a good base for the backs and excellent defence. The 3 midlands games were North Midlands which we won, Warwickshire we narrowly lost but played the better Rugby and NLD we had a significant victory. Overall, a very strong team performance.

Staffordshire had 3 forwards selected for the Midlands training squad and 1 players Michael Reseigh in the final Midlands 23 squad in the second row.

U17: Season 2025

The U17 has 2 objectives: expose as many players as possible in the county to experience county rugby then by the end of U17 reduce the numbers to the core squad which will make up the U18. With more coaches we have put much more time into U17 to try and improve our competitiveness as a CB. We have trained more and will have more game time, the time to consolidate took longer with no information available from Leicester Tigers on released DPP players and clubs putting all 15 players forward for trials.

Matthew Weaver took on the role of Head Coach for the team which has helped provide clarity in direction at U17.

U17 CB Assessment event:

Eligible players, Staffordshire DPP/Tigers Released players, Clubs, Schools, and Colleges

Stage1 Monday 31st March 2025 Longton

Stage 2 Game and further assessment for selected players from Stage1 Monday

14th April 2025 at Burton RFC

U17 Squad Development Internal Staffs Game

Monday 28th April 2024 Burton RFC

Training Grass and games:

Training and selection for Game 1 Monday 5th May 2025 at BRFC

Training and selection Game 2 Monday 12th May 2025 at BRFC

Training and selection Game 3/4 Tuesday 20th May 2025 at BRFC

Game 1 Sunday 11th May 2025 Leicestershire at Lichfield, lost a heavy defeat.

Game 2 Sunday 18th May 2025 Cheshire away at Lymm - solid win

Game 3 Friday 23rd May 2025 NLD at BRFC, narrowly loss in the final minute

Game 4 Sunday 25th May North Midlands Stourbridge 1400 hrs high scoring game with North Midlands dominating the first 40 minutes and Staffordshire outstanding in the last 20 minutes. North Midlands winning by a 10-point margin.

Stephen Eastwood

U17's & U18's Team Manager – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION WOMEN & GIRLS REPORT

24/25 committee:

Chair: Ros Wiggins

Vice Chair: Becky Williams

Secretary: Molly Sanghera

Age Grade:

Girls registered to Staffordshire clubs:

388 total Girls U12-18

U12 - 77 across 7 clubs @ end of season

U14 - 131 across 10 clubs @ end of season

U16 - 105 across 8 clubs @ end of season

U18 - 81 across 6 clubs @ end of season

Staffordshire Girls Cup Competition results:

U14 Runner up: Leek/Longton

U14 WINNERS: **Lichfield**

U16 Runner up: Burton

U16 WINNERS: **Stafford**

U18 Runner up: Stafford

U18 WINNERS: **Tamworth**

Girls Playing Opportunities

Girls additional playing opportunities will look to include the involvement of U10 and U11 girls within some Pitch up and Play events to show the player pathway to younger players and develop friendship and comradery across the age groups.

U18s Inner Warrior Series equivalent - offering greater competitive opportunities for those players not in National Cup playing squads. It is hoped that this will give the girls a focus through the season and keep them engaged within their own clubs as they will be able to

Senior Women's:

Registered Senior Women in Staffordshire 2024-25 season: 395

Burton - NC2 Midlands (West) 5th in league

Cannock - Championship Midlands 2 - 6th in league

Eccleshall - Eccleshall RUFC - taster sessions held in May 25 with good attendance. It is hoped Eccleshall will join the Inner Warrior Series and gain experience in local games before looking to develop further in the coming seasons.

Handsworth - NC1 Midlands (West) - 7th in league

Lichfield - 1st team - Championship North 1 - 2nd in league

2nd team - NC1 Midlands (West) - 4th in league

Rugeley - Rugeley looked to start a Women's contact team but did not achieve a critical mass of players. They have continued to involve a number of women in their touch team and those wanting to play contact have travelled to other Staffs teams to gain experience.

Newcastle - Entered the Inner Warrior Series, looking to join NC3 league 25-26 season

Stafford - NC2 Midlands (West) 2nd in league

Stoke - Entered the Inner Warrior Series, looking to join NC3 league 25-26 season

Stone - NC3 Midlands (West) - 7th in league

Tamworth - NC2 Midlands (West) 6th in league

Wolverhampton - Withdrew for the league to focus on building a solid foundation to restart the new season with.

Women's Cup Results:

Winners of the Senior Cup - **Cannock Lionesses RUFC**

Winners of the Junior Cup - **Stone Roses RUFC**

Runners Up of the Junior Cup – Newcastle (Staffs) RUFC

In the 25-26 season, the Women's Cup Competition will look to be run as a one-day event in more of a festival style with teams playing each other in shorter, 15 a side games throughout the day, in senior and junior rankings based on league entry for the season (IWS/NC3 & NC1/ 2 and Champs 1 / 2).

It is hoped that this format will enable more teams to actively engage in the Cup competition and so make it more competitive across the clubs involved.

Women and Girls Representative Rugby:

International Representation

Daisy Aspinall, from Stafford Rugby Club, made her debut for England U20 Women against South Africa Women in this uncapped International Fixture.

Lucy Calladine, from Burton Rugby Club, captained her country for the first time, she has already got 6 U20 caps.

Morgan Hodgkins was selected to represent England Deaf Rugby Union in their games against Wales Deaf and Blackheath.

Girls' County

Strong squad selected and played representative games including a 55- 14 win against Cheshire

Women's county

Entered Division 1 to enable players from all leagues playing in the county to play representative rugby for the County.

First game in the series vs Lancashire saw the Staffs squad take a convincing win. Staffs 53 - 40 Lancs

The County coaching team is looking to recruit more quality coaches to support the Women and Girls' programmes in the coming seasons. This includes an effort to recruit female players who are currently or are looking to start a coaching career, enabling them to share playing experience and guidance.

Looking forward to 2025-26 Season:

Women's world Cup, Summer 2025 - Clubs are looking forward to hosting events across the summer, building on the international exposure of the National team. Clubs will play host to watch parties and events, welcoming new players and supporters into clubs across the county culminating on the weekend of 3-6th October with the RFU World Cup activities. Clubs will be able to host specific events or use existing league games as a base to host an event.

*Roz Wiggins
Women & Girls Chair – Staffordshire Rugby Union*

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
AGE GRADE REPORT

Introduction

As the Age Grade Lead for Staffordshire Rugby Union, it has been both an honour and a privilege to represent our organisation during its 101st season, following my appointment in October 2024. This report aims to encapsulate the achievements and developments within the age grade sections of our union over the past season, highlighting significant milestones and acknowledging the invaluable contributions of all involved.

Growth and Development

The 2024/2025 season has proven to be a remarkable period for Staffordshire Rugby Union, particularly in the age grade sections. We have witnessed substantial growth, marked by increased participation and engagement across various age groups. A pivotal aspect of our success has been our collaboration with the Star Scheme charity, which has facilitated vital resources and support for our clubs. This partnership has not only bolstered the operational capacity of our clubs but has also fostered a positive impact on our community, enhancing the rugby experience for all involved.

Competitions and Events

Our age grade competitions were conducted throughout the season, yielding significant successes. The cup and league final days stood out as highlights, showcasing the talent and dedication of our young athletes. Additionally, our mini festivals were exceptionally well-received, providing an enjoyable and inclusive environment for participants and spectators alike. The enthusiasm displayed at these events underscores the vibrant rugby culture we are cultivating within Staffordshire.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to age grade rugby in Staffordshire. This includes the management team members, coaches, parents, and spectators who have supported our initiatives. Special thanks are due to the bar and kitchen staff, groundsmen, and referees, whose dedication and professionalism have ensured that rugby can flourish in our county. Your collective efforts have made a profound difference in the lives of our young athletes.

Conclusion

As we reflect on the accomplishments of the 2024/2025 season, it is clear that our collaborative efforts have laid a strong foundation for the future of Staffordshire Rugby Union. I am excited about the continued growth and development of our age grade sections and look forward to building upon this success in the seasons to come.

Danny Carlin
Chair of Age Grade – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION
COACHING & RUGBY SAFE REPORT

Coaching

This year we have seen another year of growth with the number of coaches attending CPD courses and completing Award Courses. The season started off with the changes to the tackle height laws, resulting in over 200 coaches from across the country attending CPD courses, to ensure that they were correctly prepared for the new changes. We then saw another year of success on the ERCA courses with the need to further expand the number of places due to the high demand. This then led onto the Advanced course, where the county saw another year of increase with 5 coaches being successful in obtaining a place on the newly formed 2-year programme. Year 1 is the generic advanced skills of coaching and year two is where a coach can specialise in a key area of the Game such as age grade, player pathway or the adult game. The coaching conference was all

about the Tackle height, where we were able to deliver a conference supported by expert coaches and Refs for the day, leading into the advanced techniques required to toll this into the game with success.

Rugby Safe

We are incredibly proud of the manner that our clubs continually support the welfare of their players both on the pitch and off the pitch. We now have all of our clubs working tirelessly to ensure that every game played has medica support no matter the age or level. This has resulted in the highest level ever of First aiders in the county,

We are seeing more and more clubs offering Mental Health support via support networks within each team as by also hosting support groups at our clubs. This is seeing more and more players getting the support they need to remain both physically and mentally fit.

We have seen year on year success with ensuring all our coaches, volunteers and first aiders have completed their Headcase training, ensuring that no one passes the white line until this is complete. A massive congratulations to our clubs for ensuring that the minimum standards are not only met but surpassed at all levels.

Becky Williams

Coaching & Rugby Safe Chair – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION PATRONS REPORT

101 and Not Out – What a Year!

Last year, Staffordshire introduced the Centenary Cup competition to extend playing opportunities for clubs finishing at the lower end of league and merit tables. Meanwhile, first teams once again had the opportunity to enter the Papa John’s Cup. Two clubs reached the final stages—Leek at Sixways and Walsall at Doncaster. Congratulations to both and particularly to Walsall on their success this season!

The Autumn Internationals featured close contests against New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa, though unfortunately without a win. As ever, the media were quick to call for changes in coaching. However, a victory against Japan provided a much-needed boost ahead of the Guinness Six Nations.

In November, Sir Bill Beaumont returned to English rugby as RFU Junior Vice President, having completed his tenure with World Rugby.

That same month, RFU CEO Bill Sweeney came under scrutiny over the Long-Term Incentive Plan (LTIP), a payment scheme dating back to the end of the Covid period. Over the following five months, the media often seemed one step ahead—sometimes spreading misinformation. RFU Chair Tom Ilube stepped down and Bill Beaumont was appointed Interim Chair while recruitment for a permanent replacement progressed (now in its final stages).

Bill Beaumont, alongside executive staff and council members, made a concerted effort to engage the rugby community through face-to-face meetings, webinars, and open letters. This was followed by a Special General Meeting (SGM), called to vote on the removal of Bill Sweeney as CEO. Thanks to the support of the game, the motion was defeated. Watch this space—the RFU Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held for the first time in Staffordshire, at St George’s Park. Never a dull moment!

In a Guinness Six Nations (especially important in a Lions year!), the games did not disappoint. We witnessed an excellent display of entertaining rugby, with everything coming down to the final weekend. England showed improvement, finishing second. This was swiftly followed by the Red Roses, who demonstrated why they hold the world number one ranking by securing a fourth consecutive Grand Slam.

All ticket requests were fulfilled, and I sincerely hope your support for Staffordshire and the wider game continues.

In recent months, we have seen children's festivals and youth finals taking place across the county, supported by the tireless efforts of volunteers who make it all possible. For the first time, adult finals were held as standalone fixtures, each enjoying fantastic support from the rugby community.

I'm especially pleased to see increased club engagement in county rugby programmes. These opportunities allow players to perform beyond their usual club level, and when they return, they help raise the standard of rugby across Staffordshire.

Rugby only exists because of the dedication of volunteers who continue to support their clubs and the game. Long may that continue.

Enjoy the break!

Michael Procter
Patrons Honorary Secretary – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION FACILITIES REPORT

Clubs in Staffordshire continue to work hard on maintaining, improving and expanding their facility offer, which undoubtedly assists us all in delivering the very best of rugby experiences to our players, members and visitors.

Stuart Eades and Adam Blackford are a constant source of excellent professional support, advice and guidance on the projects that come up in the CB. On behalf of the clubs and the SRU Management Team, I thank them both for the excellent job they do, not just in Staffordshire but across the Midlands

Stuart Eades

Facility Development Manager - Midlands

Tel: 07730814156

Email: StuartEades@RFU.com

Adam Blackford

Facility Development Executive – Midlands

Tel: 07718706578

Email: AdamBlackford@RFU.com

Becky Davies
Facilities Chair - Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION VOLUNTEERS REPORT

As the Staffordshire Volunteer Event Coordinator, my responsibilities have focused on positively influencing the rugby community through dedicated service and steadfast commitment. This past year marks my aims to enhance lives, foster connections, and contribute meaningfully toward shared goals. Whether working with individuals, supporting organisational initiatives, or advocating for causes close to my heart, my efforts are directed toward creating lasting change.

This year saw a remarkable increase in nominations for Staffordshire: 27 clubs and 37 volunteers attended the Valued Volunteers Dinner at Tamworth Rugby Club. Many thanks to Tamworth for the excellent room decorations and food.

The Honda Valued Volunteer of the Year event is scheduled to take place on 20th June 2025 at the Honda facility in Cobridge. We are pleased to confirm that 58 nominees will be in attendance. I am eager to read the nominations and announce our finalists for the National Awards 2025, which will be held at England Rugby's Twickenham Stadium.

I extend my sincere gratitude to Mike Bezus, Becky Davies, Robin Websdale, Dawn Anderson, Andy Lewis, Jen McIntosh, and Mick Procter for their support and dedication in assisting with the Valued Volunteer event. Your efforts ensured the evening was organized smoothly and efficiently.

Being a volunteer myself there is nothing more satisfying than seeing our volunteers being rewarded and recognised for the hard work and effort they put into their roles at their clubs each season.

Danielle Bayley
Volunteers - Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION INCLUSION & DIVERSITY REPORT

An interesting start to this role where I am making gradual progress in ensuring we follow the I&D ideals.

I am in the process of contacting 4 clubs who are reviewing an I and D questionnaire. I have also posed the question around a meeting out of season; I am expecting the feedback on the questionnaire by the 13th June then it will be shared wider. (It will take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete)

I have agreed to attend Community meetings to drill up some support for I&D across the County.

I will be talking to John Atkin regarding having an I&D section on the website for information to be shared.

I have been tapping into then RFU resources and will be sharing these with Clubs

I am awaiting a date for the planned National programme delivery.

Caroline Dale
Inclusion and Diversity Chair – Staffordshire Rugby Union

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION DISCIPLINARY REPORT

This season the Disciplinary Panel have dealt with 59 cases in the adult game. This total is down by 11 on the previous season which is very encouraging but still displays some worrying trends with regard to certain offences.

The greater majority of cases were in-person hearings, (the Disciplinary Chairman's preferred option), the remaining cases were dealt with "on the papers" for those more straightforward obvious guilty offences.

The areas of concern are Match Official Abuse, either Disrespecting the authority of, or Verbal Abuse of the Match Official. This is not only confined to players, touchline abuse from coaches and spectators is definitely becoming a major concern within the game as a whole.

There were 10 cases of Disrespect/Verbal Abuse of a Match Official by players, and a further 4 proven cases for the same offences by coaches and spectators.

There were 7 cases of general Misconduct on the touchline from coaches/spectators which varied between abuse towards opposition spectators and players, supplying false details to a Match Official and becoming engaged in altercations with opposition players on the touchline.

These cases were treated as General Misconduct and dealt with by way of Formal Written Warnings, Match Day Activity suspensions and touchline and playing suspensions.

As was pointed out in last season's report, the RFU had issued a Countrywide extra deterrent for Verbal Abuse/Disrespect of a Match Official in January 2024 due to the increase in these types of offending at that

time, that extra deterrent stayed in place for the duration of this season, sadly its effect does not seem to have made much difference and I suspect it may continue for season 2025/26.

Another area of concern is the number of abandoned games that have occurred this season, 5 in total, involving 6 of Staffordshire`s Clubs.

This may well be down to the general lack of discipline by some players or that referees have had enough of this type of behaviour and will act more quickly and not tolerate misconduct in any way. Whichever it is, the Disciplinary Panel will have to take some serious action with regard to this type of behaviour, if that means removing Clubs from playing games, then so be it. Warnings have been issued; every Club should be aware of the consequences should they be involved in an abandoned game.

Dangerous tackles resulting in head contact were up from 5 last season to 8 this time, all were high, neck and above, and were always red cards, even before the new tackle height was introduced in 2023/24.

Whilst I seem to be pointing out all the areas of the game that are giving concern, there seems to be some good news regarding Punch/Strike offences. These are down hugely from 21 last season to just 8 this time, 2 of which were not proven, obviously a massive improvement and very much welcomed by this Disciplinary Panel. The rest of the offences committed were for breaches of various Laws and can be seen below in the Disciplinary Statistics.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone, coaches, replacement players, spectators, parents or anyone else, that entering the field of play during a match without the permission of the Match Official will result in that person being suspended for a period of up to 4 weeks pending further disciplinary action being taken. The suspension will be from attending any matches during the specified period. This new Regulation introduced last year has already been imposed against individuals who had failed to heed the message.

Age Grade rugby has also seen a reduction in cases, down from 19 last season to 13 this time.

There was not a single case of Verbal Abuse/Disrespect of a Match Official, good news, but Punch/Strike cases were the same at 6 recorded. All of these were for punching to the head, so still further work to do.

All of the Age Grade cases were dealt with by Club Disciplinary Panels with guidance from the CBAGDS (Constituent Body Age Grade Discipline Sec) and some Clubs also took advantage of the newly introduced Alternative Sanctions available only in Age Grade Rugby, to further reduce time spent away from the game by young players who had been red carded.

Alternative Sanctions allow Clubs to introduce an educational element to any suspension period that would act as part of the suspension and reduce the time spent away from the game. The Alternative Sanction has to be identified and monitored and completed by the player to receive any reduction to the usual suspension period. The Alternative Sanction should reflect the learning that the particular player needs to address to combat their individual problem with regard to the offence committed.

All Age Grade cases were ratified and approved by the CBAGDS and I would like to thank all the Club Officials involved in this process.

Disciplinary Statistics Season 2024/2025.

Punch/Strike, Law 9.12	8	(NP 2)
Dangerous tackle, Law 9.13	8	
2 yellow cards in a match, Law 9.27	2	
Kick, Law 9.12	3	
Tip tackle, Law 9.18	1	
Leading with forearm, Law 9.11	1	(NP 1)
Strike with head, Law 9.12	2	
Verbal Abuse of player, Law 9.12	1	

Disrespect of Match Official, Law 9.28	5	
Verbal Abuse of Match Official, Law 9.28	5	
Disrespect/Physical Abuse of Match official, Law 9.28	1	(NP 1)
Verbal Abuse of Match Official, Law 5.12	3	(NP 1)
Disrespect of Match Official, Law 5.12	3	(NP 1)
Abandoned Game, Law 5.12	5	
Misconduct, Law 5.12	10	(NP 3)
Bad Disciplinary Record, Law 5.12	1	
Not proven	9 (NP)	
	(59)	(NP 9)

Disciplinary Suspensions Season 2024/2025.

Players suspended for less than 30 days,	34
Players suspended for more than 30 days,	16
Not proven,	9
	(59)

Disciplinary Suspensions Season 2024/2025.

Clubs with 1 disciplinary offence,	11
Clubs with 2 disciplinary offences,	3
Clubs with 3 disciplinary offences,	4
Clubs with 4 disciplinary offences,	6
Clubs with 6 disciplinary offences,	1
	(59)

My thanks to Disciplinary Chairman Iain Haley, we really are very lucky to have someone who knows and understands the disciplinary processes so well, and who guides us through some very tricky cases from time to time.

To John Cartwright and Jez Tomson who have both stood in as Chair at various times when Iain has wanted a break or is occasionally conflicted on cases, thanks again, your support is very much appreciated.

To Rich, Becky and Fiona, thanks for all your help and assistance, I look forward to seeing you all again at the start of next season to continue the journey.

Finally, thanks again to the Newcastle Club for the use of their facilities for our meetings, sometimes at very short notice, it is very much appreciated, and the beers always fantastic.

Kevin Cantrill
Staffordshire Disciplinary Honorary Secretary

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION SOCIETY OF REFEREES REPORT

This is my last season as Chairman of Staffordshire Referees Society, and it has been a privilege to have overseen the Society for the last three years. It has also been an honour to represent the Society on the County Management Committee.

During the course of this season SRUSR have appointed 1283 referees to games across the county, this number doesn't include all of the Society referees who also take charge of games at their own clubs as club referees. Staffordshire Society are proud of their contribution to the game and will continue to support rugby in Staffordshire for many years to come.

A big thank you to Shaun Godfrey who, through the society, introduced the Associate Referees program, which continues to flourish and support club referees across the county. Society numbers have swelled over the season, but we always need new members, and the associate referees' program is an introduction to the society without commitment. As a Society, and as a county we still need to keep on top of match official abuse and always report it, we owe it to the game to report abuse in any form, in order to maintain the game values.

A final thank you to Martin Lennon and his continued sponsorship of the society kit, without which our referees would not look as professional as they do.

*Phil Everitt
Chair, SRUSR*

STAFFORDSHIRE RUGBY UNION COMPETITIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

This was again a very difficult season to attempt to fit the main competitions in before the end of the season, due games having been cancelled and rescheduled on several occasions due to weather and then commitments in the leagues going all the way to the last games, and some great successes by Staffordshire sides in the Papa John's Competitions. There is still a real possibility that some finals may even be played as preseason friendlies next season...

This season saw the introduction of a vets under floodlights competition supported by the RFU to encourage players back into rugby or to keep playing rugby.

The competition was very closely fought at two venues with Leek winning in the North on a bonus point earned on an outstanding very close match where they scored 4 tries. Not to be outdone bonus points also separated Tamworth as the winners in the south. More importantly the County Selectors got to pick players to go on to play County Vets games, results to follow.

The teams were:

Stafford, Leek, Cannock, Eccleshall, Willenhall, Rugeley (Grey Beards), Lichfield, Tamworth, Burntwood. Vets Rugby in Staffordshire owned the Friday evening of RFU Super Rugby week end, and already next season we are looking for 3 venues, and possibly a few friendlies before...

Colts Competition Report

The 2025 Staffordshire Colts Cup proved to be a fantastic showcase of the county's emerging talent at U18 level. With 11 clubs entering the competition, this year's tournament highlighted the growing depth and quality of junior rugby across Staffordshire. The structure remained consistent with previous years, with an initial knockout format leading to a split into Cup and Plate competitions at the quarter-final stage – ensuring continued involvement and meaningful fixtures for all sides.

From the outset, matches were fiercely contested, with Burton edging Leek and Lichfield asserting early dominance over Longton in the preliminary round. As the tournament progressed, familiar names began to emerge as frontrunners. Stafford, Wolverhampton, Lichfield, and Newcastle all progressed to the Cup semi-finals with convincing quarter-final victories. In two dramatic semi-finals, Lichfield narrowly defeated Newcastle, while Wolverhampton edged past Stafford by a single point.

The Cup final, held in April, saw Lichfield produce an outstanding display, overpowering Wolverhampton 54–19 to lift the 2025 Colts Cup. Their high-tempo attack and strong set-piece laid the foundation for a deserved title

Meanwhile, the Plate competition proved equally entertaining. Walsall, Tamworth, Leek, and Stoke progressed through a busy plate quarter-final round, with Stoke receiving a bye. The Plate final featured a thrilling, high-scoring encounter between Walsall and Stoke, with the latter running out 55–35 winners to cap a strong tournament campaign.

The quality of rugby, commitment from clubs, and the positive attitude of players and coaches alike made this year's competition one of the most successful in recent memory. Thanks are extended to all clubs, referees, volunteers, and host venues who made the competition possible.

The finals of the Centenary Cups for Staffordshire Lower XV's were held on Presidents Day, Sunday 4th May. Stoke-on-Trent RUFC hosted the Finals which led to a very successful day especially for Newcastle.

T1 Cup:	Winners - Newcastle 2	Finalists - Lichfield 2's
T2 Cup:	Winners - Newcastle 3	Finalists - Walsall 3's
T3 Cup:	Winners - Uttoxeter	Finalists - Cannock
T1 Plate:	Winners - Leek 2	Finalists - Burntwood 2
T2 Plate:	Winners - Spartans 2	Finalists - Longton 2

The Competitions Committee will again be reviewing the competition framework and structure, as there is a lot of uncertainty about Cups and Competitions for next season so watch this space. That review will look at whether it was successful enough to continue next season, and if so, what changes/improvements could be made. The competition was meant to give lower sides in Staffordshire who didn't qualify for Papa Johns or the traditional Staffs Cups competitions, meaningful games after the main leagues were completed.

The Intermediate Cup Final, also known as the Lewis Taylor Trophy, reached its climax at Stafford where Willenhall overcame Burntwood in an entertaining game of Rugby.

The Owen Cup a hard-fought competition as always was decided between Eccleshall and Uttoxeter with Eccleshall continuing their recent form and beating Uttoxeter to lift the trophy.

The Staffordshire Senior Cup again producing some fantastic rugby, with the final, Burton v Lichfield in a close fought final, Burton taking the honours.

Papa John's Round Up, the Staffordshire teams got through to 2 of the finals, the final games came at the tail end of the season and credit must be given to all clubs who remained in the competition to the end.

Leek 36 v Tunbridge Wells 47, Leek just losing at the final hurdle.

Walsall 30 v West Bridgford 29, Walsall winning a very close game.

I would like to thank all the competitions committee for all their hard work and support this season, without which I don't think I would have made it to the end of the season.

We are looking forward to this summer's charity Staffordshire 7s, with the competition to be held at Willenhall, on the 21st of June.

This season we are hoping to have both a Woman's and Men's competition played on the same day. This is the plan.

Neil Pow

Competitions Committee Chair – Staffordshire Rugby Union

Northern Division										
Regional 1 North West										
	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts	Bonus pts	Adjust
Rossendale	22	18	1	3	994	570	424	94	20	0
Anselmians	22	18	0	4	702	458	244	88	16	0
Manchester	22	17	0	5	835	502	333	87	19	0
Wirral	22	16	0	6	627	529	98	81	17	0
Stockport	22	14	0	8	778	562	216	75	19	0
Newport (Salop)	22	11	0	11	661	633	28	62	18	0
Penrith	22	8	3	11	723	679	44	58	20	0
Blackburn	22	7	1	14	594	805	-211	43	13	0
Kendal	22	6	1	15	564	649	-85	43	17	0
Leek	22	7	0	15	588	836	-248	42	14	0
Stoke on Trent	22	4	0	18	602	915	-313	34	18	0
Birkenhead Park	22	3	0	19	447	977	-530	21	9	0

Midlands Division

Regional 1 Midlands

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts	Bonus pts	Adjust
Syston	22	21	1	0	856	415	441	102	16	0
Stourbridge	22	16	0	6	870	491	379	85	20	0
Bromsgrove	22	14	0	8	820	394	426	75	19	0
Burton	22	12	1	9	697	652	45	69	19	0
Bridgnorth	22	11	0	11	716	536	180	66	22	0
Nuneaton	22	11	0	11	694	612	82	64	20	0
Banbury	22	10	0	12	673	612	61	59	18	0
Long Eaton	22	9	0	13	616	682	-66	54	18	0
Derby	22	10	0	12	565	756	-191	53	13	0
Dudley Kingswinford	22	10	0	12	444	473	-29	50	9	0
Silhillians	22	7	0	15	458	773	-315	36	8	0
* Kenilworth	22	0	0	22	260	1273	-1013	-11	4	-15

* Denotes points deducted in the right hand column

Counties 1 Midlands West (North)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts	Bonus pts	Adjust
Sutton Coldfield	22	22	0	0	1160	302	858	110	22	0
Burntwood	22	19	0	3	797	490	307	91	15	0
Newcastle (Staffs)	22	14	1	7	696	529	167	75	17	0
Veseyans	22	13	0	9	655	584	71	74	22	0
Spartans (Midlands)	22	13	0	9	578	575	3	70	18	0
Telford Hornets	22	10	0	12	543	665	-122	56	16	0
Newport (Salop) II	22	9	0	13	571	611	-40	55	19	0
Kidderminster	22	10	0	12	539	725	-186	50	10	0
Shrewsbury	22	7	0	15	633	830	-197	47	19	0
Willenhall	22	6	0	16	510	694	-184	45	21	0
Stafford	22	6	0	16	437	781	-344	33	8	0
Wolverhampton	22	2	1	19	365	698	-333	21	11	0

Counties 2 Midlands West (West)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts	Bonus pts	Adjust
Stourbridge Lions	20	18	0	2	899	300	599	91	18	0
Bromyard	20	15	0	5	696	331	365	74	14	0
Trentham	20	14	0	6	658	470	188	73	17	0
* Clee Hill	20	14	1	5	477	301	176	64	11	-5
Bridgnorth Bulls	20	12	2	6	536	413	123	63	9	0
Luctonians III	20	8	0	12	392	488	-96	46	12	0
Longton	20	7	0	13	587	595	-8	42	14	0
* Harborne	20	7	0	13	495	504	-9	32	9	-5
* Walsall II	20	7	0	13	507	667	-160	32	9	-5
Oswestry	20	5	1	14	354	688	-334	29	6	0
* Market Drayton	20	1	0	19	212	1056	-844	-3	3	-10

* Denotes points deducted in the right hand column

Regional 2 Midlands North

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts	Bonus pts	Adjust
Lichfield	22	20	0	2	921	385	536	99	19	0
Dronfield	22	20	0	2	857	308	549	95	15	0
Melbourne	22	17	0	5	792	487	305	84	16	0
* Walsall	22	13	1	8	845	545	300	67	18	-5
West Bridgford	22	12	1	9	700	554	146	67	17	0
Newark	22	11	1	10	667	614	53	59	13	0
Ilkeston	22	8	0	14	737	635	102	54	22	0
Paviors	22	9	1	12	632	630	2	52	14	0
Old Saltleians	22	8	1	13	506	568	-62	49	15	0
Matlock	22	8	1	13	539	657	-118	48	14	0
Mellish	22	1	0	21	333	1096	-763	13	9	0
Tamworth	22	2	0	20	236	1286	-1050	11	3	0

* Denotes points deducted in the right hand column

Midlands Division

Counties 3 Midlands West (North)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts	Bonus pts	Adjust
Leek II	20	17	1	2	763	325	438	86	16	0
Newcastle (Staffs) II	20	17	1	2	664	314	350	86	15	0
Barton-Under-Needwood	20	14	1	5	694	361	333	75	16	0
Uttoxeter	20	13	0	7	593	437	156	71	18	0
Eccleshall	20	12	0	8	607	370	237	63	15	0
Handsworth	20	10	0	10	526	561	-35	54	12	0
Cannock	20	9	1	10	557	537	20	50	12	0
Stone	20	7	0	13	466	503	-37	43	15	0
Rugeley	20	4	0	16	332	729	-397	25	7	0
Burton III	20	2	0	18	223	916	-693	12	4	0
* Stoke on Trent II	20	3	0	17	233	605	-372	-3	5	-20

* Denotes points deducted in the right hand column

Counties 3 Midlands West (East)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts	Bonus pts	Adjust
Syston II	19	19	0	0	1005	117	888	95	14	0
Lutterworth II	20	16	2	2	815	344	471	84	15	0
Atherstone	19	11	1	7	433	388	45	56	10	0
* Lichfield II	20	12	0	8	593	405	188	54	15	-10
* Hinckley III	20	12	0	8	609	398	211	52	13	-10
Bedworth	20	9	1	10	378	636	-258	51	11	0
Nuneaton II	20	8	1	11	457	685	-228	43	9	0
Pinley	20	5	1	14	338	682	-344	33	10	0
* Veseyans II	20	7	1	12	376	493	-117	29	9	-10
Tamworth II	20	5	0	15	332	717	-385	26	6	0
* Old Sattleians II	20	1	1	18	281	752	-471	-4	5	-15

* Denotes points deducted in the right hand column

Counties 2 Midlands West (West)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts	Bonus pts	Adjust
Stourbridge Lions	20	18	0	2	899	300	599	91	18	0
Bromyard	20	15	0	5	696	331	365	74	14	0
Trentham	20	14	0	6	658	470	188	73	17	0
* Cleve Hill	20	14	1	5	477	301	176	64	11	-5
Bridgnorth Bulls	20	12	2	6	536	413	123	63	9	0
Luctonians III	20	8	0	12	392	488	-96	46	12	0
Longton	20	7	0	13	587	595	-8	42	14	0
* Harborne	20	7	0	13	495	504	-9	32	9	-5
* Walsall II	20	7	0	13	507	667	-160	32	9	-5
Oswestry	20	5	1	14	354	688	-334	29	6	0
* Market Drayton	20	1	0	19	212	1056	-844	-3	3	-10

* Denotes points deducted in the right hand column











Counties 4 Midlands West (North)

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts	Bonus pts	Adjust
Newport (Salop) III	18	17	0	1	794	261	533	84	15	0
St Leonards	18	15	0	3	643	248	395	73	12	0
Warley	18	13	0	5	676	285	391	68	16	0
Wednesbury	18	12	2	4	547	288	259	64	10	0
Burntwood II	18	7	1	10	379	461	-82	35	5	0
* Bloxwich	18	6	2	10	337	402	-65	33	9	-5
Newcastle (Staffs) III	18	5	1	12	235	721	-486	28	4	0
* Telford Hornets II	18	6	0	12	270	456	-186	20	5	-10
* Linley	18	4	0	14	166	559	-393	9	2	-10
* Essington	18	2	0	16	202	568	-366	-4	3	-15

* Denotes points deducted in the right hand column

Women's Leagues

Championship North

#	TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	TB	LB	Pts
1	 Cheltenham Tigers Women	18	17	1	0	732	151	581	14	0	82
2	 Lichfield Ladies	18	15	0	3	650	246	404	13	1	74
3	 Buckingham Swans Ladies	18	13	1	4	633	220	413	11	2	67
4	 Sale FC 1861 Women	18	11	0	7	504	278	226	10	1	55
5	 West Park Leeds Women	18	8	0	10	456	408	48	9	3	44
6	 Barnsley Ladies	18	7	0	11	454	472	-18	10	3	36
7	 Novocastrians Ladies	18	8	0	10	365	461	-96	6	0	34
8	 Kenilworth Women	18	6	0	12	396	573	-177	7	2	33
9	 Bishop Auckland Ladies	18	4	0	14	208	685	-477	2	0	19
10	 Sheffield Women	18	0	0	18	55	959	-904	0	2	-13

Championship 2 Midlands

#	TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	TB	LB	Pts
1	 Bury St Edmunds Women	10	9	0	1	326	134	192	9	1	46
2	 Old Albanian Saints II	10	9	0	1	346	63	283	7	1	45
3	 Shelford Ladies	10	5	0	5	266	279	-13	5	2	27
4	 Sudbury Ladies	10	2	1	7	195	374	-179	5	1	16
5	 Sutton Coldfield Ladies	10	2	0	8	182	288	-106	4	2	14
6	 Cannock Lionesses Ladies	10	2	1	7	126	303	-177	2	2	9



Women's NC 1 Midlands (West)

#	TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	TB	LB	Pts
1	 Bridgnorth Women	14	14	0	0	543	114	429	11	0	67
2	 Old Leamingtonians Ladies	14	10	0	4	470	185	285	9	0	50
3	 Birmingham Moseley Women	14	9	1	4	454	195	259	10	2	50
4	 Lichfield Ladies II	14	9	1	4	577	152	425	9	2	49
5	 Hucclecote Ladies	14	5	0	9	223	471	-248	5	0	20
6	 Aston Old Edwardian Women	14	4	0	10	183	419	-236	3	1	16
7	 Handsworth Ladies	14	2	0	12	130	556	-426	2	2	13
8	 Crewe & Nantwich Ladies	14	2	0	12	118	606	-488	2	1	6

Women's NC 2 Midlands (West)

#	TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	TB	LB	Pts
1	 Bournville Womens	14	13	0	1	485	142	343	0	0	66
2	 Stafford Women	14	9	2	3	404	316	88	0	0	57
3	 Old Halesonians Women	14	8	2	4	413	188	225	0	0	54
4	 Clee Hill Women	14	7	2	5	284	209	75	0	0	51
5	 Burton Ladies	14	7	2	5	337	364	-27	0	0	51
6	 Tamworth Ladies	14	3	0	11	269	449	-180	0	0	36
7	 Telford Hornets Women	14	3	0	11	224	412	-188	0	0	35
8	 Stourbridge Panthers Ladies	14	2	0	12	234	570	-336	0	0	34

Women's NC 3 Midlands (West)

#	TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	TB	LB	Pts
1	 Kidderminster Carolians Ladies	12	11	0	1	426	141	285	0	0	56
2	 Luctonians Women	12	9	0	3	334	151	183	0	0	51
3	 Shrewsbury Ladies	12	9	0	3	386	224	162	0	0	51
4	 Dudley Kingswinford Ladies	12	4	0	8	232	307	-75	0	0	35
5	 Camp Hill Ladies	12	2	0	10	139	461	-322	0	0	22
6	 Barkers Butts Women	11	2	0	9	164	356	-192	0	0	21
7	 Stone Ladies	11	4	0	7	254	295	-41	0	0	17