

## November 2014

The past month has been very busy with a lot of good work being done in our clubs, schools, colleges and universities. Here are just a few examples from across the country.

### North Yorkshire – Young Referees

Young Referees in Harrogate received their bright and bold referees' shirts after completing their Level 1 Refereeing course. Support from Yorkshire RFU has allowed these young referees to assist with local school competitions and they have been especially useful in refereeing the girls' competitions. The Level 2 course is now a possibility in the area as 8 of these candidates all want to achieve the next level. One young man was quoted as saying: 'When I grow up I want to be just like you' pointing at Will Halford (the 'referee guru' for Area 6).



### Bristol – All Schools

St Bernadettes Old Boys RFC and Bridge Learning Campus now have a joint after-school club, which is increasing the rugby offer for the school and its students, with the club benefiting from the all-weather facilities in a two year agreement. Due to the hard work of many club members, especially the Junior Chairman who has been a lead coach in the All Schools programme, they have been offered a 30 year lease instead of the rolling 12 month lease for all the hard work they do in the community.

### Hertfordshire – Concussion Awareness



Area Training Manager Clive Cashell delivered a "Headcase" workshop to the Hertfordshire Society of Referees. The invitation was extended to the wider club network and resulted in over 60 people turning up to the event at the University of Hertfordshire - from mini coaches, through to club referees and volunteers. It was clear that concussion awareness is a really important topic and over half of Hertfordshire's clubs were represented on the night. The RDO reports that she now has over 40 extra people aware of the training that Hertfordshire Referees Society provide on a monthly basis.

### Hampshire – XV-A-Side Rugby

Following focus groups with senior clubs on the Isle of Wight last season, it was identified that many players were being lost due to lack of game time. Thanks to investment in floodlights and social spaces, a series of 'Friday Night Lights' events were organised to keep players engaged when fixtures are cancelled due to travel costs or low numbers. On one weekend in early November all 4 merit level teams had free/cancelled fixtures and so 40 players from 3 island clubs attended the first Friday Night Lights event. Two clubs welcomed back returning players or those with Saturday commitments. The most important outcome was that any intra-island rivalry was put to one side in the bar afterwards, with clubs now proactively looking to communicate with each other before cancelling fixtures in future. Future events have been penciled in for free/international weekends when cancelled fixtures are most common.



## Greater Manchester - Pitch Up and Play

Broughton Park RUFC hosted two Pitch Up and Play events: Developing Colleges - 4 colleges took part with 2 colleges doubling their numbers from the last event and one bringing 14 new players. The teams were put through a coaching carousel with RFU staff, then into games with society referees; Manchester Students Women's Pitch Up and Play - Manchester Metropolitan University and University of Manchester 2<sup>nd</sup> XV (their 1<sup>st</sup> XV was playing a BUCS match) sent 25 players to take part, of these only 8 had played rugby before September. Players were encouraged to join local clubs for more rugby and told about future events.

## Dorset – Continuing Professional Development



At Weymouth RFC, the RDO ran a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) session with coaches and managers from Under 16s to seniors, alongside a Kids First CPD. In the afternoon, the Player Development Officer worked with the club on the development of their O2 Touch Base which is recruiting new players to the club. All of this work will support the delivery of a long, medium and short term legacy.

## Lancashire – Girls Rugby

Over 50 girls took part in a Pitch Up and Play style festival at Widnes RUFC with the Women's World Cup Trophy taking centre stage. Widnes had been trying to start a girls' team for nearly a season but to no avail and not for the lack of trying, so a festival day provided a great rugby experience for girls from Years 7 to 11, who all had great fun. There were some keen club volunteers in attendance as well as the Club President and Council Member Rob Briers. The club hopes this is the start of something big at Widnes!



## North East – Colleges and Sixth Form Schools



The North East and Cumbria Area 6 team held a Tens festival at Kingston Park for colleges and school sixth formers prior to a Newcastle Falcons LV= Cup match. Fifteen teams entered with around 225 under 18 players taking part, from 4 counties - Northumberland, Durham, Cumbria and Teesside. The opportunity to play on a new 3G Premiership pitch was a great experience for all the players, some of whom have only just started playing rugby this season. At half-time the 15 team captains had the opportunity to meet Andy Tuilagi from the Falcons. Some great work from the Area 6 team of RDOs and CRCs, the Northumberland and Durham Referee Societies who officiated at the event and the Newcastle Falcons Community team who provided the opportunity to use Kingston Park. All the players and staff are looking forward to the next event.



## West Yorkshire – Young Rugby Ambassadors

Keighley College hosted a Young Rugby Ambassadors (YRA) event with 70 students attending. This resulted in 31 students committing to the YRA programme and they are now busy planning events around Rugby World Cup 2015.



## Lancashire – Retaining Players

Orrell RUFC has already achieved two 'firsts' this season. In October they fielded a Touch team against Crewe & Nantwich RUFC as a curtain-raiser to their 1<sup>st</sup> XV league match. Then at the start of November, Orrell RUFC 'Vets' team with 25 players faced West Park 4<sup>th</sup> XV, and won 46 - 19. These fixtures were set up as part of the development plan to 'retain adults in club rugby' based on building continuity from the club's Summer Touch programme that attracts around 50 players every week, with a lot of potential for senior recruitment. Moving forward, weekly touch sessions have been set up alongside 1st XV training and after junior and colts training to connect all club teams as much as possible. There are currently 20 players regularly training with numbers growing every week. These sessions brought in an ex-England Touch player who has stepped forward to take on sustaining the Orrell Touch side with extra training now set up on Friday evenings.

## Birmingham – Women's Rugby



A Pitch Up and Play event saw 16 women from universities across Birmingham come together to support the growth of a new women's team at Sutton Coldfield RFC. After training and playing together during the afternoon 10 players stayed on to train with Sutton Ladies, with 5 players signing up to play for the club on the following weekend. All who attended the event also enjoyed the chance to see the Women's Rugby World Cup up close.

## Lincolnshire – Schools

At Bourne Grammar School (BGS) rugby is now on the curriculum for the first time for all year groups. Together with the RFU CRC, the staff has launched after-school rugby for Years 7 and 8 which has now had to split to two different nights as 47 students turned up. The school's Sixth formers also train on Tuesdays and often assist with the younger students. In addition, 3 teachers have completed the Level 2 Coaching course. The school is hosting a 4- school festival for Years 7 and 8, with coaches from the local club coming in to referee and help coach. And to finish off a great term, 50 students from BGS are coming to Twickenham on 15th December for the day on a tour. The trip sold out in one day!

## Norfolk – Social Spaces

Fakenham RUFC officially opened their 'Transforming Social Spaces' project with the help of a £10,000 RFU grant which contributed to their overall project costs of £22,000. The club has enjoyed a resurgence of interest by the town's community and a number of other local groups are interested in using their facilities. The updated clubhouse has created a more welcoming environment that will appeal to a changing membership, which includes a number of young families.



## Cheshire – Women’s Rugby

The launch of Crewe & Nantwich RUFC women’s section created quite a stir as over 50 people turned up to either sign up to play or offer their support. The CRC has been generating a real ‘buzz’ around a new, women’s section and working hard with the club to put things in place. There are now 5 coaches and 2 managers to support the 32 women who turned up to register their interest. Over 20 other Crewe & Nantwich club members also turned up to pledge their support, including players from the men’s 1<sup>st</sup> XV, the Club President, Chairman and Secretary – and the Women’s Rugby World Cup was there to add a bit of sparkle!

## Durham and Yorkshire – Schools and Colleges

Two schools and a college were presented with new rugby shirts and kit, with the staff and pupils from King James School Knaresborough, Northallerton College and Stockton Sixth Form College all delighted with the RFU involvement in their new rugby programmes. The new shirts were put straight into use 3 hours later by Northallerton Year 11 playing in a festival at Northallerton RUFC. Stockton Sixth Form College wore theirs the following day at Kingston Park when they played before the Newcastle Falcons match against Cardiff Blues.



## North Midlands - XV-A-Side Rugby

Strong links between Aston University and Veseyans RFC have resulted in the club recruiting enough players to complete a 2<sup>nd</sup> XV and also start a development team. The link between the club and university is strong, with the club hosting training and providing a coach for the university team. On one weekend, there were 3 students playing in Veseyans 1<sup>st</sup> XV, 5 in Veseyans 2<sup>nd</sup> XV, a further 8 supporting a new 3<sup>rd</sup> XV and a 6 more strengthening Veseyans Colts.

Bromyard RFC hosted the first fixture of their 'Floodlit Cup'. The club invited 3 local clubs (Clee Hill, Greyhound and Tenbury RFC) to play fixtures under their lights in a short league format on Tuesday nights. The aim is to provide local players an opportunity to play competitive rugby if Saturday games are proving difficult to attend. The first evening proved to be successful, albeit a little wet and chilly, with both sides fielding players that haven't played many or even any, weekend games.

## Lancashire – Girls’ Rugby



A pre-season meeting 14 months ago at Southport RFC resulted in the decision to set up a girls’ section to focus on players coming through minis and juniors, and to support the already successful Ladies team. Through the work of the RFU CRC, schools coaching and Sunday fixtures (including Pitch Up and Play and cup competitions), there has been good quality competitive playing experiences for Girls at under 15 and under 18. This has resulted in a total of 16 players registered & regularly attending training. In recognition of these achievements, Lancashire County RFU has given Southport RFC the under 15 & under 18 County fixtures for first time. This is especially encouraging for the club as 5 of

its players have since been selected to represent Lancashire, 2 at under 18 and 3 at under 15, and they will therefore play on home turf. Amazingly 3 of these girls first picked up a rugby ball just 14 months ago.

