

Mini/Midi/Junior/Girls/Colts 2017/18 season and outlook for 2018/19

In recent seasons we have seen the introduction of 'Shaping the Game' which was initially aimed at the U7, U8 and U9 age groups, this was followed by the introduction of the 'New Rules of Play' covering all age groups in the Mini Section and then 'Age Grade Rugby Review' with our coaching community fully embracing the changes and associated requirements. All age groups coped well with those changes and playing numbers have continued to grow, which is a key indication of the players enjoying their rugby at the club. More recent was the introduction of the 'Age Grades Codes Of Practice' [<http://www.englandrugby.com/my-rugby/players/age-grade-rugby/codes-of-practice/>] which provides practical support and details of best practices and standards required of those delivering the Age Grade game. Full details can be viewed at the England RFU website.

As a result of the 'Age Grade Codes of Practice' which covers all youth age groups [U6 to U18] the age groupings are as follows:

- Mini Section - U6 to U11
- Midi Section - U12 and U13
- Junior Section – U14 to U16
- Girls Section – U13 to U18
- Colts U17 and U18

Some of our long term objectives are as follows:

- Encourage less structure (encourage skills and discourage fear of failure)
- Make the game easier to understand and referee
- Less emphasis on contact and more on continuity in early years
- Rewarding intention to tackle in early years as much as ability to tackle
- Provide a progressive player pathway that will enhance the way in which our players are developed in a more incremental manner
- Provide a game which is in line with the principles of Child Development based on extensive research and expertise
- Ensure all age groups have an equitable approach for awards, team and DPP selection that clearly considers all children in the age group and will stand up to scrutiny
- Emphasis on competitive performance not competitive outcome although in Junior/Girls/Colts this will be supported by D&W RFU competition.
- Main focus for children to be on playing the adult game for club in the future
- Provide all coaches and other volunteers with the support to gain appropriate qualifications and DBS clearance where required
- Continue to support the club's fund raising so as to further develop the 'One Club' ethos and enhance club facilities and opportunities

The full details of the aims and objectives will be confirmed and published on the Club Website at the beginning of the season and will be communicated to our membership. As in every season there are a number of challenges that we have to be managed in the Mini ,Midi and Junior sections. In the Minis the emphasis has and continues to be on providing equally matched teams/squads with children of varying abilities, and not to intentionally set out to hone elite teams/squads that will win everything in sight. The benefits of this is that many more children get the ball in hand and have the opportunity to run at the opposition, and this has helped their confidence and enjoyment of the game with their friends. This has led to a growth in our numbers in both the Mini and Midi section, and the retention of those players.

We're very fortunate and pleased to announce that Paul Kealey has accepted the role of Head of the Minis Section. Paul has a very good knowledge of both Mini and Junior rugby, and his methodical and objective approach will ensure that the Mini Section will continue to thrive during his tenure.

The Constituent Body [D&W RFU] has reintroduced a competition at the U12 and U13 ages groups, and entry will be at the Lead Coach's discretion. While we're happy to enter these competitions it's not to be to the detriment of the good work achieved in previous seasons and as such the 'Half Game

Rule' will be applied and the minutes played by players will be monitored over the season to ensure that where reasonably possible everyone gains equal game time. The fair and equitable involvement/treatment of our players is more important to children, their parents and the club than a trophy, as a happy rugby playing child is more likely to convert to a rugby playing adult.

As a club we are very fortunate to have such a dedicated and committed group of volunteer coaches who have seen the benefits of the changes to the game in the youth sections, and they are fully supportive of those changes which have helped grow youth section membership numbers. We're very glad of the continued support from Mick Brown [Club Coaching Coordinator] who provides very valuable support and guidance to coaches regarding the most suitable Coaching Pathway for them. Both club and D&W RFU continue to support our coaches to gain more qualifications with more coaches having achieved RFU qualifications than any time in the past.

The Junior Section have had a great season with the U14s, U15s and U16s competing very well in their respective competitions while honouring our commitment to player development and equal game time. There was and will continue to be a strong focus on discipline and 'core values'; be that on the pitch, touchline or spectators and I'm pleased to let you know that there were zero discipline or reportable incidents from Salisbury RFC Youth Sections. This is excellent as the skills, physicality, desire and commitment from players on the field of play was clearly evident and did not compromise the 'core values' or discipline expectation.

There were a variety of rugby related factors [school rugby, DPP, county and academy representation] which would have affected our Junior and Colts age groups numbers availability during the season, and that coupled with external factors like social life, work and education etc, it is a real credit to everyone involved in the age groups that their performances were so good and disciplined. Long may it continue.

An area that I intend focusing on this coming season anon is the mindset of players and parents when it gets to the DPP nomination stage, as it's clear the conversion rate from the Academies to the elite game is minimal and at the early stages of the youth section the numbers attending are high only to be drastically cut at the latter stages of the youth section. That's not because those players are not good players, it's simply that the spaces available are far less than people may perceive. Of course we want to continue to support those children where those opportunities do arise, and we will emphasise the other rugby opportunities at club level available to all players in the future. This with give any returning players a better understanding of the opportunities [and hopefully desire] to continue in the game as player or coach, and no less importantly that their continued participation in rugby will be greatly valued here at Salisbury RFC.

The Girls Section will continue and this season will be led by Manny Khan and supported by Sammy Scarr, and Geoff Wilman will be on-hand to offer support if needed although is stepping down as coach to focus on other activities.

Despite our Colts being predominantly U17s this season Nick Mould, Russell Jugg and Neil Jones have done a great job and we're very fortunate that they will continue as the coaching and management team for the Colts this coming season. The Colts have been a wonderful group to observe and follow, playing a good open expansive running game. Early in the season they were on the receiving end of some results that would have tested the resolve of the hardest of players, but they stuck together as a squad and had belief that a team would emerge and that it did by overturning some of those early results during the latter part of the season. We're really looking forward to seeing a good group of this season's U16s join the Colts for the coming season, which should strengthen them and give them the opportunity to be more competitive early in the new season.

There have been a few members in our sections that have welcomed the club's continued support through our 'Hardship Policy' and thankfully those children are benefitting from playing rugby, and it's possible that had it not been for this support they may not be playing in sport outside of school. Other activities have been the charity work that our Mini section has helped provide a rugby program for the Splash Project which is a community based project for underprivileged children in the local community, this was very successful and we had some excellent feedback from the Splash personnel about how the course and our coaches had positively influenced the children that attended as well as picking up new members as a direct result of this project. We have again supported the Salisbury All

Schools Rugby Events and an excellent and profitable festival which was well attended by so many clubs, and we look forward to continuing to do so in the future.

Nearly all age groups arranged and had successful tours, there were great end of season dinners, lots of festivals, leagues and competitions entered, and in summary a great season was had by all and we are really looking forward to yet another one to come.

Lastly, on behalf of the board and personally I would like to thank Geoff Wilman [Girls Coach] Richard Knight [U16s Coach], Dave Murley [U16s Coach] and John Chaddock [U16s Admin Manager], who after many years of volunteering finish their time with their respective age group. Their contribution and support of their age group and club is greatly appreciated by so many.

'The Future's Bright, The Future Is Green And White'

Steve Allen

Director of Youth Rugby - SRFC