



## Youth Section 2018/19 season and outlook for 2019/20

In recent seasons having 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 recently 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:

Section	Age Group	School Year
Mini *	U6 – U11	Reception – Year 6
Midi *	U12 – U13	Year 7 - 8
Girls	U13 – U18	Year 7 - 13
Juniors	U14 – U16	Year 9 - 11
Colts	U17 – U18	Year 12 & 13

*\*Mixed participation [Girls and Boys] until U13s when Girls will join the Girls Squad.*

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.
- Focus for children is on progressing through the youth sections and onto the adult game for club or beyond and at a level that suits the individual and increases players members
- 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 few challenges that we must manage 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



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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.

Paul Kealey; our Head of Minis, had had a great season in the role. His knowledge and understanding of both Mini and Junior rugby has proved a useful asset, and his methodical and objective approach will ensure that the Mini Section will continue to thrive during his tenure, and he is equally eager to rise to the future challenges of the Junior section in the near future. His value to the club has not gone unnoticed by the board who are keen to co-opt Paul to ensure the Youth Section has appropriate succession planning in place and continues to flourish.

The Constituent Body [D&W RFU] has reintroduced a competition at the U12 and U13 ages groups, which 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 and embraced 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. Also in recent seasons we've been very glad of all the hard work Mick Brown had done and the legacy he has left for us in his role of Club Coaching Coordinator, and we're sad that he has stepped down from that role and I would like to personally thank Mick for his contribution to our many successes.

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 another season goes by with zero discipline or reportable incidents from all Salisbury RFC Youth Sections. This is excellent as the skills, physicality, desire and commitment to win from players on the field of play was clear and did not compromise the 'core values' or our 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 particularly during the first half of 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 anon, 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 the spaces available is far less than many people may perceive. Of course, we want to continue to support those children where those opportunities do arise, and we will reiterate the other rugby opportunities at club and county level available to all players in the future. This will hopefully give any returning players a better understanding of those 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 has had a great season in terms of stability in numbers, although growth is something that is important to us. The section will continue to be led again by Manny Khan and supported by Sammy Scarr, and despite the section being in its infancy there have been several matches played and links forged at huddles. This is where clubs can get together with a 'pitch up and play' policy where they will sort competitive teams from those attending. There have also been several girls representing well at county level and with the skills coming from our club it's clear all the right bricks are in place and the section will flourish.

*TEAMWORK*

*RESPECT*

*ENJOYMENT*

*DISCIPLINE*

*SPORTSMANSHIP*

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Our Colts have had a great season with some big scalps taken and winning the County Bowl, and my sincere thanks go out to Nick Mould, Russell Jugg and Neil Jones who have done a great job during their tenure but alas they move on and are deserving of a rest. Although Nick moves to our senior set-up, having progressed through the coaching ranks and achieving his badges whilst on route. 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 last season U16s join the Colts for the coming season, we have some irons in the fire and will be confirming the Colts coaching set-up at the earliest opportunity.

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. 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 doing so again.

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 last season U16s Coaching and Management team [Sean Oliver, Mark Bairstow, Ben Brown et al] for the years of support then have given their charges during their rugby journey, and I'm hopeful that having enjoyed a few weeks off watching tennis, tour, football under their belts I might yet be able to reignite some embers and encourage a few back to assist with our Colts this coming season.

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

Steve Allen

Director of Youth Rugby - S

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