



### Youth Section 2019/20 season and outlook for 2020/21

The season was progressing well with all areas of the section enjoying their rugby and our coaches fully embracing the 'Age Grades 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 [<http://www.englandrugby.com/my-rugby/players/age-grade-rugby/codes-of-practice/>]. One of the main areas that our membership has benefitted from would be the 'half game rule', where all selected squad members for a team is guaranteed a minimum of half a game. This is irrespective of the score or perceived seriousness of the match and has helped more children develop the rugby skills, and individual confidence by being playing more match time.

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>School Year</b>
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 U12s when Girls will join the Girls Squad.*

We had set out to encourage less formal structure and set piece plays, and actively encourage team and individual skills, while not being fearful of not achieving the desired result. The importance being individual and team development, so that these young players go on to enjoy the game as adults.

In the Minis the emphasis is and will continue to be providing a safe and enjoyable rugby experience for all the youngsters and gently encourage them to play fixtures and festivals, where they will part of a team of children with varying abilities and the emphasis is the team. The children need to firstly enjoy themselves and the rest will most certainly come with time over the following years. Richard Bendell [Head of Minis] has been doing a great job in ensuring the everyone involved in the Minis is focused on player development, and most importantly that they enjoy themselves. Richard has also been focused on where the opportunities are to further improve our Mini Section coaching skills through RFU courses. However, be assured standard of our coaches continues to be excellent and seen as the standard to be achieved by their peers from other clubs.

The Midi and Junior Section have had a great season with all age groups performing well in their fixtures and D&W competitions. It's important to note the 'Age Grades Codes Of Practice' still apply and our coaches are fully on board with this, and as a result have had good numbers in all age groups and their squads develop into committed teams with strong character, better skilled, with a great team ethos and core values. This is evident by their in their respective fixtures and competitions which are available on the on the England rugby website [<https://www.englandrugby.com/fixtures-and-results/browse-competitions>]. While we are focused on team development and helping all our players to improve as individuals, it clear that this policy hasn't impacted the stream of Salisbury RFC Youth that are invited to trial for the Developing Player Program (DPP), and in cases go on to progress to the



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Player Development Group [PDG] and even on to the Academy. Our D&W Juniors sides also have several Salisbury players selected and playing. So, the commitment, desire, enthusiasm is all there and all this with no serious issues discipline issues in the section. For that I thank our coaches, players, and their parents for continuing support Salisbury RFC by encouraging our players to be good rugby people as well as the best players they can be.

Our Girls Squad have been training well and attending clusters, and we were very nearly at the point where our numbers will be sufficient for them to have a side. Until then though we will continue to look at recruitment opportunities and help by supporting the girls by hosting clusters at the club to improve the profile of the Women's Game, and hopefully in doing so increase awareness of the girls squad at the club.

There is no masking the fact that we had had a baron season in the Colts, most of which was due to the same external factors affecting many other clubs with Colts. To his credit Ben Brown remained resolute in providing a weekly training for the small number of Colts that made themselves available, throughout the season and up to lockdown. In the winter the Colts and U16s were doing combined training sessions and with the numbers of U16s moving up to Colts, under the guidance of Hans Dobson, Ben Brown and Julia Doig I'm predicting a change in fortunes for our Colts in the coming season/s. At this point and on behalf of the board I would like to say thank you to Ben for his efforts in the face of adversity. I would also like to say a huge thank you to Eddie Large for all he has done for the club and his charges during his long and industrious stint as ref, coach and mentor. Due to a change in school Bertie will not be at the club and as such Eddie will be focusing his attention on his thriving business. We wish both Bertie and Eddie all the very best wishes and look forward to seeing you both in the future.

So, for the coming season, it will be different. That said, what won't be though is our commitment to provide as good a rugby experience for all while following the RFU Community Game Guidance and the Return to Rugby Road Map. Our coaching teams will need to 'adapt, improvise and overcome', which we will and at some time in the future we will be ready for when we our children can get back to playing rugby as before. Previously there have been a few members in our sections that have welcomed the club's continued support through our 'Hardship Policy' and we will continue to provide the appropriate support where applicable to ensure children can continue to play rugby with their friends.

Steve Allen

Director of Youth Rugby - SRFC