



# SALISBURY RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

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[www.salisburyrfc.org](http://www.salisburyrfc.org)



## Director of Rugby AGM Report July 2022

This was hoped to be the first full and un-interrupted season post the global pandemic that had affected our sport in such an unprecedented way.

After 2 turbulent seasons that saw the clubs 1<sup>st</sup> XV relegated to tier 7, I had aimed to achieve a number of goals;

- Maintain 3 playing sides
- Appoint a new Head Coach
- Integrate a new playing squad
- Implement a playing style that reflected the nature skill base of the players
- 1<sup>st</sup> XV to gain promotion back to Tier 6
- Increase and improve the medical provision
- Win the league or a cup competition

I am very pleased to confirm that SFRC were one of the few clubs not to reduce its playing sides this season and we maintained our 3 team status within all the leagues. This was an extremely difficult situation in the early part of the season as the sport had been challenged with a reduction in player numbers due 2 seasons of players leaving the sport (retirements etc) and this also reflected within our club together with 2 season of very few in new players joining the sport. This was also compounded with a much smaller number of Colts being fed into the senior teams as with previous seasons.

I discussed the option of Gareth Blackbarow (aka Donk) taking on the role as Head Coach and he was appointed during the pre-season, Dave 'Jonah' Thorpe was also appointed as 1<sup>st</sup> Team coach to support Gareth on match days when he was still needed to play. The appointment was well received by the players and quickly saw an increase in training numbers with a new energy in pre-season training. Henry Carter, with a Masters in Strength and Conditioning also supported pre-season training with our aim to increase fitness and reduction in injuries which had been a common place in previous seasons. As the playing squad had little or no playing history together, an emphasis on developing a new style of play that reflected our strength needed to be implemented and embedded before the first game of the season against Swanage and Wareham. Pre-season games had progressed well and the new more fluid attack play opposed to structured, strike moves working well with teams finding it difficult to defend against this style of play.

The season started well with just 1 loss until the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of January 2022 when we suffered our 2<sup>nd</sup> and final defeat of the season. We continue to develop our core skills, being led by Jonah within our training sessions. Christmas saw more challenges with COVID within the sport and the club being effected by player availability due to the virus. The decision was made that due to the situation a number of games had to be postponed and rearranged later in the season.



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I am pleased to confirm that SRFC 1<sup>st</sup> XV has been promoted back to Tier 6 and finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the league behind Devizes, a team that we have beaten, both home and away during the seasons. Salisbury RFC came within 1 point of winning the title, but congratulations must be given to Devizes for winning the league.

A new 2<sup>nd</sup> Team physio, Warrick Schmidt was appointed, and joined Alex Becks who continued with her excellent support of the 1<sup>st</sup> team. New protocols for spinal and neck injuries were introduced, and EAD to be taken to all 1<sup>st</sup> team games. Entonox and O2 were purchased for more acute match day injuries. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Alex and Warrick for their contribution this season. Their skill, support and guidance to myself, the coaches but most importantly the players has decreased the amount of injuries and considerably reduced the number of players having repeat injuries.

The 2nds and 3rds had very challenging starts to the season, with most weekends, both sides contended with new players and partnerships. A huge amount of credit and recognition should be given to both Captains, Scotty Nicol's and Jamie Grey for their commitment during the early part of the season and keeping the players very focused, supported and enjoying the game, even with some heavy defeats. However, as the season progressed and the reverse fixtures were being played, a clear change could be seen in our play and mentality on the pitch, with wins coming for both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> teams. This culminated in all 3 sides winning their last games of the season (with myself and Russ Jugg also making an appearance for the 3rds on the last day of the league season!!!) I would also like to take this opportunity in thanking both Wheatsheaf and Amesbury for making some players available to us through the season. Without the support of these teams, we may have struggled some weekends to field 3 teams. At the end of the season with the much improved relationships with both teams, SRFC held a joint training session with Amesbury, which was very well received by all players and coaches from both sides

As the season drew towards its conclusion our 1<sup>st</sup> XV had reached the final of the cup and were due to play Wimborne. This game was finally scheduled to be played on the 30<sup>th</sup> April as a result of the games that had been postponed over the Christmas period needing to be played. This was much later than planned and as a result many of our players had arranged other commitments, family holidays etc at this time. We sadly lost in the final, but huge congratulations to the players on the day, including all 3 of our team's captains, Miles Thompson, Scotty Nicol's and Jamie Grey, all playing together for this game.

Overall we also increased our playing squad through the season and whilst, sadly we did not win the league or cup, we have now re-established our club, as a friendly, welcoming, skilled and well coached place for players to enjoy the game we all love so much

Next season sees us return to Tier 6, under a new league structure, with the aim to reduce the amount of travel, and more local derby's that include, Newbury, Marlborough, Devizes, Swindon and Tottonians. I am sure that we are very well placed to see another positive season for the club off the back of a very successful season for our players, coaches, members and increasing supporters.



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Finally, I would like to thank the massive contribution that the following people have made this season, in delivering on our objectives for the season

Russ Jugg, Chairman

Vinnie Hayward and the Club House team

Dave Veal, 2<sup>nd</sup> Team Manager, and selection committee

Barry White, Chair of selectors

Gareth Blackbarow, Head Coach

Jonah Thorpe, 1<sup>st</sup> Team Coach

Alex Becks, 1<sup>st</sup> Team physio

Miles Thompson, 1<sup>st</sup> Team Captain

Scotty Nicol's, 2<sup>nd</sup> Team Captain

Jamie Grey, 3<sup>rd</sup> Team Captain

Neil Bowditch, who without doubt has contributed so much over this, and many seasons to the success we have had.

And finally every single member of our players. Their commitment and dedication to change our playing style, have greater respect to the referees, (something that has been commented on many occasions to myself from the referees themselves this season led by Captains) and the respect for the opposition needs to be recognised.