



## Director of Youth Rugby Report – July 2024

### Overview

The past season marked yet another period of remarkable growth for our youth section, welcoming approximately 26 additional players across all age groups. This increase in membership reflects our ongoing commitment to fostering a thriving community of young rugby enthusiasts, providing them with opportunities to develop their skills, forge lifelong friendships, and embody the values of sportsmanship and camaraderie. The current membership per age group is in the tables below.

### Boys – playing members

Age Group	U12	U13	U14	U15	U16	U18	Total
2023/24	30	33	44	44	40	45	236
2022/23	30	30	45	35	40	40	220

### Girls – playing numbers

Age Group	U12	U14	U16	U18	Total
2023/24	4	21	16	9	50
2022/23	10	10	10	10	40

### League Challenges:

Our journey this season was not without its hurdles. Early on, disruptions arose in league structures due to the unfortunate behaviour of some D&W clubs, particularly concerning adherence to RFU mixed ability and game time directives. Consequently, the league structure for our U12-U16s was halted until January. Despite this setback, our resilient team of Team Managers and Lead Coaches stepped up admirably, ensuring our players remained engaged and active throughout the hiatus. Following the league's resumption in January,

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our U14, U15, and U16 teams seized the opportunity to participate in the D&W League, with notable successes and commendable performances. The challenges encountered along the way served as invaluable lessons in resilience, adaptability, and teamwork, reinforcing the importance of unity and determination in overcoming adversity.

### **Boys:**

The boys' section witnessed significant growth, with a collective total of 273 players spanning the U12-U18 age groups. Despite the challenges posed by league disruptions, our boys showcased resilience and determination, participating in age-appropriate events and displaying commendable performances. The dedication of our coaching staff and the unwavering support of parents and volunteers have been instrumental in nurturing a culture of excellence and camaraderie within our youth teams. As we celebrate the achievements of our young athletes, we also recognise the invaluable role played by mentors and role models in shaping their journey, instilling values of discipline, perseverance, and teamwork that will serve them well both on and off the field.

We also hosted a very successful Bath RFC Premiership Rugby Defender Cup event at the end of April. We even had the Premiership Cup and Two Bath Senior Team Players on site too. Due to the feedback and success of the day we have been asked to host again next season.

### **Colts:**

A shining highlight of the season was the impressive performance of our Colts, whose journey culminated in a hard-fought battle in the D&W U18s Final, narrowly missing out on victory. The dedication and talent displayed by our Colts team members have not gone unnoticed, with several players now transitioning to senior rugby, marking a significant milestone in their sporting careers. The Colts' journey was celebrated during a memorable Colts Graduation Match, bidding farewell to these rising stars as they embark on the next chapter of their rugby endeavours. This success story serves as a testament to the unwavering commitment of our coaching staff and the resilience of our young athletes, inspiring future generations to strive for excellence both on and off the field.

### **Academy Development:**

The inception of the SRFC Academy marked a significant milestone in our youth development journey, bringing together talented individuals from our U16 and Colts teams. With a total of 80 boys enrolled in the academy, joint training sessions and occasional interactions with senior players have fostered a sense of camaraderie and mentorship, strengthening the bonds between our youth and senior teams. As our academy continues to evolve, we look forward to nurturing the next generation of rugby stars and fostering a

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culture of excellence and sportsmanship within our club. With a focus on holistic development, we are committed to providing our academy players with the skills, knowledge, and support they need to excel both on and off the field, equipping them with the tools they need to succeed in rugby and in life. Looking to next season we are aiming to provide access to a strength and conditioning coach and a nutritionist.

### **Girls':**

Amidst challenges, our girls' section showcased remarkable resilience and determination, gradually rebuilding its presence throughout the season. Initially faced with lower returning numbers, our commitment to inclusivity and encouragement has yielded promising results, culminating in the formation of competitive 10/12 a-side teams in our U14 & U16 categories. Despite these achievements, there remains ongoing work to entice younger girls to embrace rugby, a goal we actively pursue through targeted outreach programs and collaborative efforts with local schools and community organisations. The revival of our girls' section stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of our club and the unwavering dedication of our coaches and volunteers in nurturing a supportive and inclusive environment for all.

Buoyed by the unwavering support of coaches and volunteers, our girls' section emerged stronger and more determined than ever. Leading to a gradual increase in participation. From 7s festivals to Clusters and even a prestigious match against Bath counterparts at The Rec, our girls have seized every opportunity to showcase their talent and passion for the game. With high hopes for the future, we remain steadfast in our commitment to nurturing and empowering the next generation of female rugby stars. Our goal is to provide them with the resources and support they need to thrive both on and off the field. As we look ahead, we are excited to continue expanding our girls' section, creating a vibrant and inclusive community where every player has the opportunity to reach their full potential and create lasting memories on the rugby field.

### **Community Rugby Project:**

Our dedication to community engagement remained unwavering with the continuation of our Community Rugby Project. Collaborating with JK Rugby Coaching and Mentoring, we successfully delivered taster sessions in 10 schools, introducing the joy of rugby to approximately 1000 children and igniting a passion for the sport in the hearts of the next generation. Through our commitment to community engagement, we have yielded significant results, providing over £1000 worth of kit, membership, and transport support to children who need it in school years 3-9. Looking ahead, plans are underway to expand our outreach efforts, targeting younger children aged 5+ with a particular focus on encouraging girls to join our ranks, thereby creating a sustainable pipeline for our girls' squads and future

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women's teams. By harnessing the power of rugby as a force for good, we are committed to building stronger, healthier, and more inclusive communities where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and succeed, both on and off the field. Additionally, our longstanding support for the Ugandan 'Twinned' Team continues, with plans underway for their upcoming tour of the UK and Ireland, promising exciting cultural exchanges and memorable rugby encounters.

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## **S6C:**

This season has also seen the initiation of a Yr 12&13 (6th Form) Sports Academy at the local Salisbury 6th Form College (S6C). This team is mainly made up from SRFC players but also has players from other local clubs as they attend S6C for their studies. This season they have been mainly playing 15 a-side friendlies with local grammar and 6th Form Colleges. Their training and team management is carried out by JK Rugby Coaching and Mentoring and SRFC have supported S6C by providing access to pitches and lighting, if needed, along with post match meals and use of a minibus. They had a very successful 15s season, playing excellent rugby, and coming out winners in the vast majority of their games. They also entered two 7s events, one a local D&W schools event where they ran out winners and a more prestigious and challenging 7s event run by UR7s. This was a tough ask yet they performed well and took lots of learning away from it. Next season they are looking to enter the School National 15s Competition, the Rosslyn Park 7s Plate event as well as play some friendlies. S6C are also looking to start a girls rugby squad too.

## **2024-25 Season**

Looking forward we aim to retain and maintain the number of boys playing rugby but we will look to continue to grow the number of girls at the club from all ages U6-U18. We aim to have enough females that we can field a regular ladies squad in 2026.

We will continue to deliver our Community Project, but hopefully grow it so that we can put on School Touch/Tag days/festivals at the club and support the Star and Bath Foundation to deliver events at the club and in schools.

We will continue to support S6C with the drive to have a full boys and girls rugby academy and with the aim to be competitive against all local school/college teams and to grow rugby in the local community.

## **Volunteers**

As ever we are always looking for more support. Please consider if you can volunteer anytime to support the current coaches, Team Managers and First Aiders. It doesn't have to be every week and it doesn't have to be on a Sunday; we are also looking for people to support areas such as the website management, Social Media posting, Facilities management and repair, raising sponsorship etc.....

Thank you very much to all those that have contributed to making this season the success it has been.

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