

## **Macclesfield RUFC**

### **AGM 2017 – Report of Mini and Junior Chairman**

#### **Mini and Junior Rugby - Executive Summary**

2016/17 season saw the first year of the Old Mutual Wealth Kids First rugby continuum mandated by the RFU. This has had a mixed response from coaches and clubs alike. The focus on “winning” is removed by ensuring that all competitions are true festivals from U7 to U10.

Under 11's and U12's have one waterfall tournament (Cheshire Festivals), and U12's their first stab at Cheshire Cup knockout competitions. U13's is the spearhead year for this format which means they have to cope with rule changes every year.

Whilst many of us see winning as the reason to play (Rugby is after all a competitive sport), it has been found the approach can (and does) produce a “win at all costs” mentality, and the cost comes at the expense of the development of Children into the game.

As coaches and parents, we have to remember that kids measure success differently to adults. Competition is important but to many kids this is not the measure by which they judge success, and this changes age by age.

I remember my Level 1 coach recounting a story of a 9 year-old having played a terrible game of rugby, dropping the ball, missed tackles, no tries and a big team defeat. He was ready to give the usual dressing down and in the clubhouse, he asked the lad “how do you think that game went?”. The lad replied – “It was awesome, I had great fun, I dropped that big lad and I got TWO meal tickets and crinkly chips”..... The lad still plays today.

The net result of this is that week to week games, whilst scores are kept, they are 100% training in the game, with a much greater inclusion of kids who are perhaps developing at a slower pace getting game time, and not left sitting on the bench.

As such I think we will see far more kids staying in the game longer, and we need to learn to measure the success of the section differently. As such in the individual reports from age groups below you will see a seed change in focus, and I think agree it reflects the development of the kids much more than perhaps previous seasons have especially at the mini age groups.

Highlights of my season, seeing the U6's come together and the way the boys and girls conducted themselves on Remembrance Sunday, where young Jake Jones (U11) read a passage as the boys (Macclesfield and Visitors) behaved impeccably.

The group has also invested in Coach Training both paid for courses (RFU Level 1 and 2, CPD courses and safeguarding), but also taking advantage of free Coach Educator courses with partners at Sale Sharks Community Coaches.

My thanks to all the coaches, volunteers, first aiders, admins and alickadoos from the section that make my role easier, and so rewarding.

Onto the individual age group reports – and check out the success of our section:

## **Under 6's**

Under 6's started out in September each child having different levels of skill, some had progressed from rugby tots but many of them had never played any form of rugby before.

The season started out with some help from Phil Mason for the first few weeks until a coaching team was identified, including myself there are 6 volunteered coaches.

We have 22 members of our team, some dropped out part way through the season and some joined but there have been 22 players consistently throughout the season.

Our season highlights - our first Family day where we played a match amongst ourselves during half time of a first team game in front of our first crowd, which some of the children found daunting - understandable at 6 years old - one of the lads thought he was playing against the "big boys".

Our final weekend of the season we invited Wilmslow down for a 'friendly' to try and assess where we were as a team compared to other clubs before starting competitive rugby at under 7's. Our efforts in training since September must have paid off as we were comparable if not better than Wilmslow. We played two 30 minute games and everyone loved it.

Every child was presented with a 1st Mini Season trophy, and a Certificate following our game against Wilmslow on the final day of the season.

As a coaching team and a young group of players we are excited to progress to the under 7's to play competitive rugby and be joining in with the festivals.

## **Under 7's**

The U7s have had a fantastic season and we're really lucky to have a great group of players, parents and coaches. On the coaches front we have 5 ex-players helping and having the experience is invaluable! This gives us a good span of control as we have between 20 – 24 players attending regularly.

## **Festivals**

The U7s had their first taste of (non) competitive rugby at the **Manchester Festival** in October – our players skill levels were higher than the other teams and out of 14 games we won all ours and the players were brilliant.

This set the tone for the rest of the season and we went from strength to strength keeping the ethos of playing mixed teams and focusing on ensuring the basic skills are mastered.

The next festival was the **Cheshire Festival** at Bowdon where a great days rugby was had for Macclesfield U7s! Brilliant performances from all the boys!! We entered 3 mixed teams played 15 games, won 11, drew 2 and lost just 2 and all without any subs and against streamed teams even at this age! Across the whole squad we won the trophy for most enjoyment and complementary Sale tickets for our Sportsmanship!

Every single player put everything into the tournament and made coaches and parents very proud a theme which was continued the following week at the **Wilmslow Festival!** We had 2 teams entered and won 8 out of 10 games with one loss and one draw. Our Tigers team won all their games and brought home the Group Trophy!

**Season stats** – wins were much higher than losses – probably 90 / 10, tries and tags - too many to count and fun and skill levels were off the scale!

### Awards

Most Improved	-	Charles Sampson
Coaches Player	-	Thomas Waller
Player's Players	-	Oscar Nuttall and Oscar Ransom

### Next Season

Summer training starts on the 6th of June and were already looking forward to the new season as the U8s rules suit our player down to the ground - we rarely knock on usually tag at least 7 times before anyone scores so we're going to see even more of the ball! Next season we want to have a consistent 25 players so will be doing some pre-season recruitment!

### **Under 8's**

U8's have had a very encouraging 2016-17 season, with a regular weekly turnout of 22 / 26 players, including several new additions. All members of the team have shown a marked improvement in their core rugby skills of passing, catching, tagging and running with the ball. We are even seeing dummy passes, side steps and the occasional hitch kick!!

Every player is fully aware of Rugby's core values, these being demonstrated at both matches and training sessions.

Our season culminated by hosting the Cheshire Festival at Priory Park. A Festival Committee made up of dedicated Parents ensured that this was a resounding success. 45 x visiting teams combined to play a total of 168 matches, each one starting and finishing on schedule. Macc U8's put out 3 teams, Cougars, Panthers & Tigers. Every player in each team played to the absolute best of their ability and, as ambassadors of their club, conducted themselves accordingly. Special thanks from the Coaches to all our players.

On a sadder note the Festival was overshadowed by the sudden and unexpected passing of Nick Evans, Head Coach for Winnington Park two weeks earlier. A small passage was read during the closing ceremony and MRUFC presented Winnington Park with the Fair Play Trophy in recognition of Nicks work. This was received by his son who plays for Winnington U8's.

The end of season tour saw 8 of our players travelling with the U10's for a weekend of Outdoor Pursuits and Rugby up in the North East. Fine weather on the Saturday ensured a

full day of activities. Darlington Rugby Club hosted their Festival on the Sunday with our U8's playing in a round-robin tournament against Sunderland, Richmond and Huddersfield.

The kids really excelled, perhaps benefitting from being in a smaller group than usual, and had the best of all their games with some direct running & good handling with the ball and some aggressive tagging & boundless covering without it. At the end of the tournament they took great joy in discarding their tag belts for the final time. Most then took the opportunity to watch the U10's complete their games & get a close-up view of the contact & tackle game that awaits them in September!!

### **Under 9's**

It was a big step up for the players with the introduction of tackling but the players took to it really well. The season started with a double header with festivals at Manchester and Stockport on the same day. The U9s were undefeated at the Manchester Festival and won most games at Stockport. The season played out in much the same way, in fact we got better and better as the season went on. We won almost all of our games during the year. We did not stream at any stage and when we came up against streamed teams we generally still beat them.

At one of our biggest events of the season, the Cheshire Festival, we entered two teams. One of which finished top of their pool and the other was not far behind in theirs.

Our first tour was enormously successful both off and on the pitch. The kids really enjoyed the whole weekend and we came away with the Festival Sportsmanship Award.

It was fantastic to watch the players progress so far in such a short space of time. By the season's end all the players were embracing the contact element of the game and worked brilliantly together in teams. During the whole season the core rugby values shone throughout - Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship and all involved should be very proud of the players; we are very lucky to have such a great group of players, parents, coaches and helpers.

### **Under 10's**

The Under 10s have gone from strength to strength this season with over 40 fully paid up members enabling us to consistently field 3 or 4 teams throughout the season and together with Stockport and Winnington Park be one of the strongest squads in Cheshire.

This season saw the introduction of some of the more technical facets of play including rucking, mauls and 3 man uncontested scrums. It's been a real pleasure seeing the lads take these new elements on board and progress through the season, culminating in some excellent performances at the Cheshire Festival and on tour.

### **Festival Highlights**

As you know our festivals were uncompetitive with each team put in a group, playing each side in that group and then that was that.

Manchester - 1 team entered - Played 5, Won 4, Drew 1 - undefeated.

Cheshire Festival - 3 teams entered - Played 15 in total, Won 11, Drew 1, Lost 3.

## **Tour**

We took 28 lads (with parents in tow) on tour to the North East at the end of the season.

Saturday saw lads and parents take part in various activities including zip wire, 3G swing, archery and an afternoon of bowling.

On Sunday we entered 3 teams in the Darlington Festival and saw some superb rugby:-

Played 15, Won 12, Drew 1, Lost 2.

Our end of season presentations are on the 28th at the Boobs v Balls.

I'd like to leave you with a note I recently received from a parent whose son had played rugby at Sandbach, quit over a year ago, but had decided to give it a go again at Macc towards the end of the season:-

*'Thanks for your coaching over the last weeks - I know Harry has not been with Macc long but he is certainly enjoying his time - the atmosphere is very positive and inclusive which is just as it should be. I watched him on Sunday and, you know, I have not seen him laugh and smile as much at Rugby before, ever, which is such a good testament to the whole set up you have got going here. We really do appreciate it.'*

## **Under 11's**

The Under 11's are in their penultimate year of Mini Rugby. Key rule changes this season saw the introduction of the contested strike, 2v2 at the ruck and maul. The age group has 38 regular attendees, meaning at 9 a-side we regularly have three teams to field, often more than our opposition.

The season commenced with the usual early festivals at Manchester and Stockport. The early festivals are a great way to allow clubs to baseline their squads at the start of the season, and see where they finish at the end. The U11's produced some outstanding flowing rugby beyond their years in both events, and relished their new ability to kick from the hands!

Opposition in the season week to week varied in strength, however it was clear that some teams had moved on with their fundamental skills significantly from previous encounters. As such the key theme of training this season has been development of core skills, and pushing the lads beyond their comfort zone.

This has been challenging due to the vast spread of development within the section meaning coaching needs to adapt and be flexible. I'm proud to report that every single one of them has pushed themselves, and given 110% every week.

The season culminated with two key festivals involving all the players. Matlock festival is well organised, and a fantastic setting to play lots of rugby against new teams from Derbyshire and the East Midlands.

The Cheshire Festival turned out to be competitive after all, and the team representing Macclesfield U11's were beyond reproach. After intense competition, the lads were undefeated from the group stages, and straight into the cup. Again undefeated in the knockout, the final was Macclesfield .v. Lymm, the tow clubs seem to have a seasonal clash at the cup final.

Macclesfield took the spoils beating Lymm 10 – 0 (using the usual 5 points per try scoring system). **A phenomenal demonstration of rugby, with Macclesfield scoring 22 tries – and conceding 0 on the day.**

Throughout the season the lads have all behaved as perfect ambassadors of the club, and values of the game both on and off the pitch. They continue to make the coaching team and the parents proud.

### **Under 13's**

The U13's had a transitional season. We started off with a squad on paper of around 25 players, but generally 15-20 show up each week. At this age, the boys must start prioritising which sports and activities they focus on.

The main thing before Xmas, was the pure physicality of some of the local sides as boys mature at different points and rates, so we took a few heavy drummings early in the season as our boys are generally small.

This focussed the coach's minds to work on core skills and tactics. This paid off in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the season, so that the team was competitive and culminated in us winning the Cheshire Shield on Finals Day at St. Anselmians, so the boys were buzzing which renewed confidence and swelling the Macc silverware cabinet.

In addition, 7 Macc lads were selected for the Sale DPP program with monthly sessions at St Ambrose College, Hale Barns on their astro pitches. This is a great achievement and reflection of the Macc set-up.

For next season, we are hoping some of the lads grow more over the summer, and are looking to consolidate the numbers and maybe pick up some more lads to bolster the squad. Our new rules should also be out soon, and will probably now be 15 a side proper rugby, but with un-contested line-outs.

Awards were: -

Coaches player – Thomas Stott

Most Improved player – Ed Ford

Players player – Ryan Newbigging

## **Under 14's**

Under 14s have a squad of 26 players with 11 representing Cheshire East in the DPP this season. We started off very well with convincing victories over some very good sides, then we started to dip off a little in the middle of the season. We suffered two heavy defeats and the lads needed some new direction. We entered the boys into a 10 a side competition which we thought would suit their fast, fluid style of rugby.

Coming up against some very strong sides from the Northwest, Midlands and North Wales down at Ellesmere School in Shropshire we wondered whether we had done the right thing! Anyway true to themselves the lads started throwing the ball around and the tries just kept coming. They scored over 200 points in 5 games and conceded just 30, beating a strong Warrington side in the final. This gave the lads the boost in confidence they needed and set them back on track.

They won the Cheshire Bowl (2nd tier of the competition), beating Ashton on Mersey by 50 points to 12, and at the end of the season they hosted a sevens comp at Macclesfield with teams from around the Northwest, Midlands and Scotland attending. The boys came a respectable 3rd in their first ever attempt, losing out to a tough Stoke side in the semis who eventually beat Warrington in the final.

The lads are a credit to the club, often coming up against much larger sides. They stick to their strengths moving the ball well, with a high skill set and confidence in their ability. They are a tight knit group who regularly punch above their weight and are already looking forward to next season, defending their 10s title, winning the Macclesfield Sevens and getting to the Cheshire Cup Final!

### **Awards**

Most Improved Player – Brandon Morgan

Coaches Forward – Cameron Dow

Coaches Back – Matthew Renshaw

Players Player – Carl Droy

## **Under 16's**

Macclesfield Rugby Club U16's has gone through the whole 2016 / 2017 undefeated, only losing the Cheshire Cup Semi Final due to a drawn game and the home team don't go through.

The playing record is

Played 25 games

Won 23 games

Drawn 2 games

Lost – NONE

Points for 936 (that's an average of 37 per game) Points against 206 (that's an average of 8 points per game)

We have a squad of 31 players, 3 played for Sale Sharks Academy, 7 played for Cheshire U16's & 7 have regularly played U18's School Rugby.

This season we have beaten Sedbergh School (the National Schools Champions at this age group – who have 2 England U16's players in their team) The Cayman Islands, every team in Cheshire at least once, the Lancashire Cup finalists, the U16's Munster Provincial finalists and The Staffordshire County Cup holders.

The team play as a real squad, every player is treated the same, they train hard, play hard and are a real credit to Macclesfield Rugby Club. 28 players have signed for next season (one who hasn't signed is moving to Belgium) we will be putting a Junior Colts team into the National Cup (if the league will allow) and helping support the senior colts.

Awards winners:

Most Improved Back – Alex Collins

Coaches Back – Will Davies

Most Improved forward – Ben Holden

Coaches forward – James Oliver

Coaches player – Sean Campbell

Players Player – Harry Oliver