Appendix IV

1ST XV 2025-26 Review

Executive Summary

The club's senior rugby programme delivered a season of significant achievement, resilience, and progress. The First XV recorded one of the strongest campaigns in over a decade, while the Second XV and Third XV battled through challenging player availability. Throughout, the leadership and determination of James Keep and Russ Tomlinson were instrumental in rallying squads, ensuring teams took the field even in the face of adversity.

First XV Season Review

The First XV produced a standout season:

• Record: 20 wins, 6 losses

• Points Scored: Over 1,000

• League Points: 103

• Final Position: 3rd — narrowly missing the playoff place

This represents the club's highest league finish since 2014, when we competed in National 1.

The second half of the season brought a dip in form, driven by:

• A demanding run of away fixtures against top-six opposition

• A small but impactful injury list affecting key players

Despite this, the squad maintained competitive standards and continued to play an exciting brand of rugby.

The support at home was exceptional. Attendance increased, and the atmosphere created by our fans turned matchdays into genuine events. Their commitment remains a cornerstone of our progress.

Leadership & Coaching

The club extends sincere thanks to:

• Rhys Davies — whose leadership of the coaching team continues to elevate standards

• Steve Burnage — Chairman of Rugby, who has filled virtually every role imaginable this season

• Rob Oliver — whose work in generating sponsorship income has been vital to sustaining the club's ambitions

Their combined efforts underpin the stability and competitiveness of our senior rugby programme.

Player Highlights

A special mention must go to Harry Oliver, who made national headlines by finishing as the top points scorer across all of English rugby during the 2025/26 season. His performances were explosive, consistent, and central to our attacking success.

Harry has chosen to test himself at Championship level with Caldy. We thank him for his outstanding contribution and wish him every success.

Post-Season Review & Future Planning

A full post-season survey has been completed, identifying areas for improvement across performance, culture, and operations. Actions are already underway.

Key priorities include:

• Strengthening First XV engagement with Minis, Juniors, and club-wide sponsorship events

• Rebuilding squad depth and cohesion across all senior teams

• Ensuring we avoid remaining in the West league, given the significant impact it has on player retention, recruitment, and club finances.

Second XV & Third XV

The 2s and 3s faced a difficult year, with low player numbers affecting consistency and competitiveness. Despite this, the commitment of players and organisers — especially the tireless efforts of James Keep and Russ Tomlinson — ensured teams continued to take the field.

Their ability to rouse the troops, week after week, often under challenging circumstances, deserves special recognition. Their work embodies the spirit of the club.

A major focus of the summer will be to reinvigorate participation in both squads, rebuild depth, and restore momentum.

As. you have heard both the coaches of these teams are working with me to identify the best way to move forward and address the composition of their squads.

Closing Remarks

The club stands at an important moment: strong on the field, ambitious off it, and determined to continue progressing. With renewed structures, strengthened engagement, and the continued passion of our volunteers, coaches, players, and supporters, we are well-placed to build on this season's achievements.

I have had multiple conversations with multiple members of the committee about what our aim as a club is, and where our 1st Team sits as a priority in the club so i can plan as such. We have explored the oneclub ideology and i believe that is correct, but I feel Rob Oliver has given the best indication of the outlook we should have which was to aim to be like the likes of Preston, Sedgley and Chester, where they have strong 1st teams established at the National League level, but also are self-sufficient as businesses and field at least 3 thriving senior teams and a women's team. The balance between paid players and developing our own is a difficult one to master as there are so many clubs around us who pay higher.

If there is any question about my ability to perform this role i am happy to step aside for more appropriate personnel.