

Honorary Secretary

The 2019-20 season will undoubtedly be remembered for the year of the Coronavirus pandemic, which affected not only our rugby but all aspects of our lives – as it continues to do. However, up to 14 March 2020 when competitive rugby had to cease DRUFC had seen a successful season on the pitch. The 1st XV stood in fourth place in the North One East league with 4 games yet to be played and the RFU assessment for the likely outcome of those games left us in that fourth slot at the end of a shortened season.

The other senior men's teams finished with 2nd XV fifth in their league, 3rd XV in top position and the 4th team in 3rd position. The women's team were unbeaten in the season and must be congratulated on their fine win of the Women's NC2 North (East) league.

The senior rugby squad continues to be in the main to be home-grown and fuelled by the ever-strong mini/junior section at the club. As ever though, thanks are due to the untiring efforts of Bash who identifies the potential gaps or deficiencies in potential 1st team squad strength and we have yet again benefitted from the established connection with Southern Districts, Australia with their utility back Ryan Longville spending the season with us. On behalf of all supporters I congratulate the entire coaching team as the fruit of their efforts was some enjoyable and often very close, entertaining encounters at 1st team level, along with attractive rugby being played and producing success throughout the club.

The coaches should also be commended for continuing to provide training programmes that are as entertaining and engaging as the prevalent health guidelines will permit. They and the committee have been very mindful of both the need to retain players at the club, and provide them with physical and mental wellbeing.

The Covid-19 lockdown from March 2020 meant the loss of revenue from two 1st team home game sponsorships and all income from bookings and events which would otherwise have taken place up to the financial year end – and of course beyond. The use of the clubhouse by ERYC as a foodbank fortunately went a long way to covering the essential costs of continuing to run the club, which still needed cleaning/maintenance and the grass continued to grow! Swift and prudent business decisions regarding staffing included taking advantage of the furlough system. Additional government Covid-19 support funding of £35,000 will be seen in the annual accounts. We are in the fortunate position of having been able to ride the Covid storm up to the end of the last financial year and hold these funds in support of the continuing difficult times.

From the summer, the Executive committee could clearly foresee the reduction in rugby-related and other trading activity revenue for the forthcoming season (and the full impact of this is now known with the whole season having been confirmed as written off). Difficulties were seen as the club being unable to offer any meaningful facilities to its members, but potential loss of sponsorship revenue would mean members' financial support would be more crucial than ever. Players would be able to take advantage of whatever physical activities we were able to provide, but until games could be played the decision was taken to ask that players paid their annual club membership for season 2020-21 (but not that element of annual fees which normally equated to playing fees).

The Executive Committee have met virtually since the first lockdown. The office and club administration has been continued by Veronica Hampson. All personnel have continued to ensure the smooth running and financial wellbeing of the club, but I would like to convey the thanks of all of us to the Chairman, Dominic



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Thompson, who has implemented all of the measures that needed to be put in place to deal with this exceptional period in the club's history.

On a final sad note, the club lost one of its Vice Presidents, John Wright who passed away during last season.