

TEAMtalk

December 2007

Message from Scottish Rugby Union President George Jack

It seems no time at all since I wrote to Clubs in August asking them to support me and pull together this year for the sake of Scottish Rugby.

Since then – in between Rugby World Cup duties – I've been visiting individual Premier Clubs on weekday evenings, meeting with a small group of their Committees and Club members to hear about the playing and development side of their Club and then moving on to discuss issues and concerns that they might have.

In this I've been well supported by Council and Board members who have come along with me. The meetings have been conducted in an atmosphere of openness and hopefully will have been considered worthwhile by Clubs. It has been quite a time-consuming approach but the plan is to have all 36 Premier Clubs visited by the end of the year.

The meetings have – as you might imagine – thrown up areas of general concern and I will be raising these with our Chairman, Allan Munro, to try to help Clubs by attempting to resolve some of the issues.

As well as this I'm using Saturdays to take in matches involving National League Clubs and am now more than halfway through seeing all of them. Hopefully, later on in the season, I'll manage to visit some Regional Clubs for it's been an absolute pleasure now that the season's well underway to meet with good, well-intentioned rugby men and women and just discuss the game we all enjoy so much.

As I've moved around I've come across ever so many examples of really good work taking place between Clubs, local authorities, schools and Scottish Rugby staff in partnership, boosting the development of rugby in our communities, auguring well for the future.

Thank you for your support.

George Jack

President, Scottish Rugby Union



UNION

SCOTTISH RUGBY TAKES STRATEGIC SHOW ON THE ROAD

A further 11,000 players recruited into the game over the next five years is the target set by Scottish Rugby in its new strategic plan. Entitled *Scottish Rugby : Growing locally, performing successfully, competing globally*, the plan sets out the governing body's vision across the four key areas of community rugby, rugby performance, financial and commercial, and governance and administration.

'Our plan is about evolution rather than revolution,' said Scottish Rugby's Chief Executive Gordon McKie, 'and aims to build on the success of the Genesis Report, which has been the basis on which we've done our annual business plans over the last two years.'

On the community game, Scottish Rugby plans to achieve a 35% increase in adult players and a 38% increase in youth players by 2012, so that the current 27,000 total player number reaches 38,000. This number includes male and female players. Targets for referees by 2012 would be for an increase from the current 423 qualified officials to a minimum of 1,000. The number of UKCC qualified coaches would have to more than quadruple from the current 424; and more than 8,000 people would be required as volunteers to ensure Scotland's rugby clubs could thrive.

On rugby performance, the plan has ten objectives committed to making the professional game in Scotland successful and ensuring that national teams can compete at the highest level. The plan will be measured against Rugby World Cup performance, world rankings for the national team, improving Six Nations win rates, standing in the Six Nations and benchmarks for the pro-teams such as finishing positions in the Magners League and knockout qualification in the Heineken Cup.

On financial and commercial, Scottish Rugby aims to remain financially sustainable and increase attendances at professional and national team matches. Meanwhile on governance and administration, the plan calls for Scottish Rugby to set new standards and drive sport forward in Scotland and to enhance and maintain partnerships with the Scottish Government and Glasgow 2014, among other bodies.

To share the vision, Scottish Rugby is taking its plan on the road with presentations at local clubs over the next few weeks. Kicking off at Jed-Forest RFC and Aberdeen in launch week, the roadshows continued in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth. A further event is planned for Inverness in January.

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVENS

In June 2007, the inaugural Emirates Airline Edinburgh 7s attracted nearly 30,000 spectators over the two days of competition, surpassing all expectations. With the 2007/08 IRB Sevens World Series now underway, Scottish Rugby is already looking to the final leg of the tournament, the second Emirates Airline Edinburgh 7s on 31 May/ 1 June 2008.



Sixteen top international sevens sides will battle it out at Murrayfield in the final event of the 2007/08 Series on the main pitch. Argentina, Australia, Canada, England, Fiji, France, Kenya, New Zealand, Samoa, Scotland, South Africa and core team newcomers Wales have already been confirmed with four more sides to be added. Meanwhile, the Martin Currie Festival of Rugby will again highlight all that's great in the community game and there'll be plenty of fun and games happening all around the stadium.

Tickets are already on sale, with special advance package deals on offer – buy a two-day pass or family ticket now and you'll pay no booking fee.

2-day adult ticket - £25

(can only be bought in advance – no sales on event weekend)

2-day concession ticket - £7.50

(can only be bought in advance – no sales on event weekend)

1-day adult ticket - £15

1-day concession ticket - £5

Family (2+2) - £50

(2-day pass) (can only be bought in advance – no sales on event weekend)

Family (2+2) - £30

(1-day pass) (can only be bought in advance – no sales on event weekend)

Tickets can be bought through the Scottish Rugby Ticket Office hotline on 0131-346 5100 (open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) or on the official event web site at www.edinburgh7s.com

DINNER DATE

Break open the 2008 diary, if you haven't already done so, and mark off Friday 16 May. Why? That's the date of Scottish Rugby's annual Awards Dinner at Murrayfield where the rugby community gathers to honour its own, from club to school to international level.

Further information about the event and how to access tickets will be available shortly.



INTERNATIONAL

THE SIX PACKS

The upcoming 2008 RBS 6 Nations Championship looks like being one of the most keenly fought – and least predictable – for years. The tournament starts on 2 February with the opener at Croke Park between Ireland and Italy, with Scotland's campaign kicking off the next day against France at Murrayfield. The full schedule is:

Saturday 2 February k/o 14:00 Ireland v Italy

Saturday 2 February k/o 16:30 England v Wales

Sunday 3 February k/o 15:00 Scotland v France
Saturday 9 February k/o 14:00 Wales v Scotland
Saturday 9 February k/o 16:00 France v Ireland
Sunday 10 February k/o 14:30 Italy v England
Saturday 23 February k/o 15:00 Wales v Italy
Saturday 23 February k/o 17:00 Ireland v Scotland
Saturday 23 February k/o 20:00 France v England
Saturday 8 March k/o 13:15 Ireland v Wales
Saturday 8 March k/o 15:15 Scotland v England
Sunday 9 March k/o 15:00 France v Italy
Saturday 15 March k/o 13:00 Italy v Scotland
Saturday 15 March k/o 15:00 England v Ireland
Saturday 15 March k/o 17:00 Wales v France

Tickets for Scotland 's game at Murrayfield against France on Sunday 3 February are now available. Contact the Scottish Rugby Ticket Office on 0131-346 5100 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). There will be no tickets on sale on match day.

Scotland A, coached by the east-west pairing of Andy Robinson and Sean Lineen, play two internationals during the Six Nations Championship – away to Italy A on Sunday 3 February and against Ireland A later that month – before competing in the Churchill Cup in North America in June 2008.

Meanwhile, Scotland U20 kick off their Six Nations campaign with a home tie against France U20 on 1 February, away to Wales U20 on 8 February and Ireland U20 on 22 February, back home to face England on 8 March and away for the final game in the series against Italy U20 on 14 March. They can then look forward to facing their counterparts from South Africa , Samoa and the United States in the IRB Junior World Championship to be staged in Wales next June.

Scotland will play all their pool games at the Racecourse Ground in Wrexham, north Wales, opening against Samoa on 6 June (7pm), with South Africa on 10 June (7pm), before concluding their pool against the USA on 14 June (3pm)

PARTNERSHIP PROGRESSING PERFORMANCE

The SWRU, working in partnership with Rugby Ecosse, sent a team to this year's Dubai 7s competition as part of its preparation for the first ever women's Rugby World Cup 7s taking place in Dubai in 2009.

Scottish Women's Rugby (SWRU) have struck up a strong partnership with the Weatherford's Pipeline & Specialty Services group (P&SS) who are pledging their support to them on the road to qualification for 2009 event.

The Weatherford's sponsored rugby club Rugby Ecosse and the SWRU combined resources to give players from the SWRU Performance Programme a valuable insight and important game time at the Dubai International Women's 7s rugby tournament recently, ahead of Scotland Women's World Cup qualification attempt this summer.

The Rugby Ecosse side have an excellent track record in the women's competition having made it to the final every time. In 2005 they won the coveted prize and in 2006 they were just pipped to the post by Greater Little Rock, USA.

This year saw Rugby Ecosse advance to the semi finals, losing out 0-43 to Las Bandidas, a side founded by a New Zealand expat living in Los Angeles that features USA-based players from the States and New Zealand.

NOT QUITE CRICKET!

The Scotland 7s squad, who kicked off their IRB Sevens World Series in Dubai and George earlier this month, prepared for their campaign by taking part in the Singapore Cricket Club International 7s on 27-28 October. The team of 11 National Academy players and one full-time professional player travelled to Singapore under the Rugby Ecosse banner, thanks to the sponsorship support of Weatherford Pipeline & Specialty Services.



During the week-long trip, the squad trained at the appropriate venue of St Andrew's Junior College, where they also held a clinic with some of the pupils – always as popular with players as it is with the children. The tournament itself took place over two humid days, providing the ideal preparation for the first tournament of the World Series in Dubai.

Day one saw the Rugby Ecosse team beat Tri-Line Academy 43-0 then emerge victorious over Thai Barbarians by exactly the same score. The third fixture produced a walkover after the unexpected non-appearance of the NZ Maori.

One of the quirks of satellite tournaments such as Singapore is the wonderful array of team names, often belying the fact that they are national representative sides. The first game on day two, for example, was against Mendee Minjals who were made up of players from the Papua New Guinea side. Rugby Ecosse won 27-0 with good defence again in evidence. The next game was against SA Vipers, which was virtually the South African 7s side. A spirited performance by Rugby Ecosse proved very popular with the crowd, but the eventual scoreline was 17-5 to the Vipers who went on to beat Ponsonby in the finals by 50 points to nil.

The semi final in the shield saw Rugby Ecosse pitted against the wonderfully named Te Papapapa Barbarians, a team containing current Tonga 7s and New Zealand NPC players. The eventual result was 16-14 against the Scots who came back from a half-time deficit but unfortunately could not quite make another score before the final hooter.

The tournament was a great experience in terms of preparation for the IRB Sevens World Series. Players were disappointed with their two losses but took heart from having played well.

In Dubai, the Scotland 7s team competed at the Exiles Club for the final time before it is knocked down to make way for a new rugby development for the Rugby World Cup 7s in 2009. Scotland lost 5-28 to Fiji in the Cup quarter-final and were then eliminated from the Plate semi-final 19-28 by Samoa. The Scots went on to lose out 7-38 to Samoa the following weekend in George, followed by pool fixtures wins over Australia (21-10) and Tunisia (21-14). A nail-biting Cup quarter final against South Africa saw the side leading with three seconds to go until a try from the host nation put paid to dreams of a Cup semi final slot. Scotland went on to narrowly lose 15-17 to Kenya in the Plate semi final.

O'CANADA

Scotland Women welcomed fourth-ranked Canada to Hughenden, Glasgow recently in their build-up to next year's Six Nations tournament. Currently sitting two places below their opponents in the world rankings, Scotland saw the visitors run in eight tries to score a comprehensive 45-3 victory over the home side.

Five new Scotland caps ran out before the 550-strong crowd to experience their first taste of international rugby in what coach Lee Adamson viewed as *'a very stern test against good opposition.'*



In response to requests from clubs, the fixture had moved west to the turf of Hillhead Jordanhill WRFC – an apt location as the premier women's club sports the most registered players in the country. As well as producing several internationalists, many members undertake voluntary coaching work in the community and the club is currently setting up a youth/girls' team.



Looking ahead, Scotland Women take part in the RBS 6 Nations Women's Championship 2008 on the following dates:

Sunday 3 Feb Scotland v France k/o 12.00 Meggetland, Edinburgh

Sunday 10 Feb Wales v Scotland k/o 13.00 Taffs Wells RFC, Cardiff

Friday 22 Feb Ireland v Scotland k/o 18.00 St Mary's RFC, Dublin

Saturday 8 Mar Scotland v England k/o 12.00 Meggetland, Edinburgh

CLUBS DOUBLE HEADER

Scotland's Club International side will face a double challenge when it takes on both Wales and Ireland in the space of a fortnight in February.

The Scots meet their Welsh counterparts at Caerphilly RFC on Friday 8 February (k/o 2.30pm) then take on Ireland at Donnybrook, Dublin on Friday 22 February (k/o 7.30pm). Dundee HSFP's Ian Rankin, who led the side to victory over Ireland last season, returns as head coach of the Scotland team. He stressed that team contenders would be considered from throughout the club game and that as in the previous two years since the club international fixtures began, trial matches would be likely.

George Breckenridge (assistant coach and currently Heriot's backs coach) and Grant Wilson (manager) complete the senior management trio.

RDM / PDM ROUND-UP

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGERS UPDATE:

TEAMtalk rounds up what's going on out and about in clubs and schools from the RDMs...

GRAMPIAN

Peter Young gives an overview of events in Grampian

Up for the World Cup

Rugby festivals took place in each Council area during the recent World Cup. In Moray, the Community Rugby group ran a coaching/playing event for S1/2 pupils, followed by a 7s festival in November and a coaching morning at West End Primary. In Aberdeen , a Secondary Schools 7s attracted four non rugby-playing schools although the Primary School event was postponed due to monsoon-like conditions. In Aberdeenshire a highly successful festival was organised at Garioch RFC by community coaches Rob Donaghue and Gareth Waldron, with help from club members, that saw more than 150 children joining in a Tag festival spread out over six pitches.



October Rugby Camp

Aberdeen Youth Rugby Association ran a three-day camp in October for club and non club players. Over 70 players took part, including more than 20 not currently members of a local club. A further one-day camp was run during the in-service day in mid November.



School Report

Last season's hard work by club development coaches and teachers/volunteers has led to a substantial increase in the number of school teams. Four new schools entered the Bell Lawrie National Schools cup – Kemnay Academy , Meldrum Academy , Elgin Schools (Elgin Academy and Elgin High) and Aberdeenshire South (Portlethan and Mackie Academies). In addition, Turriff academy has entered the North Schools cup for the first time and Westhill Academy has started up again. The successful NE schools' leagues, organised by George Webster at Mintlaw Academy , now have 11 schools taking part in fixtures at U15 and U18 level.

Go Coaches

In September coaches went through a joint foundation coaching and referee course hosted by Aberdeen Wanderers. More recently Colin Philips (Aberdeen Youth Rugby Development Officer) and Bob Easton (Referee Development Manager) welcomed 38 coaches to a similar event hosted by Garioch RFC. Another course is planned in Moray later in the spring. College students at Moray College and senior pupils at Elgin Academy have also completed foundation courses and will be able to help with schools and club coaching. The first UKCC Level 1 course took place at the end of November, hosted again by Garioch RFC, with a second planned for May in Forres.

Truly Scrum-tious

One lucky pupil and teacher from Bramble Brae Primary in Aberdeen had lunch at Murrayfield with the Scotland squad at the launch of Safe Food and Healthy Eating, involving Scottish Rugby and the Food Standards Agency Scotland (FSAS). Five schools in Aberdeen and three in Aberdeenshire have already started to roll out the programme which gives teachers resource materials to deliver sessions on healthy eating and food hygiene, complemented by a six-week block of rugby coaching for P5 and P6 pupils from the local rugby development staff



Ongoing Developments

There are currently five partnership agreements with local rugby clubs for Scottish Rugby to support local development staff at Aberdeen Youth Rugby Association (Aberdeen Grammar, Aberdeen Wanderers and Aberdeenshire), Garioch, Mackie, Ellon and Banff . All staff are working to provide opportunities for more young people to experience the game and to link them into the local clubs, together with supporting and developing club coaches and volunteers.

Mascots

After the recent draw for mascot places for the Six Nations home fixtures, Huntly and Garioch will be represented at the match with France and Buckie and Mackie will be lining up against England.

For more information on rugby in Grampian contact peter.young@sru.org.uk

TAYSIDE & FIFE

Neil Carrie outlines action and progress in Tayside & Fife

DOs Deliver

Doc McKelvey (Perthshire RFC) continues to deliver a huge schools and club rugby programme with his five SVQs. The team is also involved in the FSAS healthy eating programme with seven of Doc's primary schools. Meanwhile Colin Whittaker's (Dundee Eagles) focus has been on secondary schools with several successful tournaments involving Menzieshill HS, St Johns RC, Craigie HS and Grove Academy competing against more established teams at Harris Academy and High School of Dundee .

Elsewhere Kenny Christie (Angus Clubs) has staged the first schools' tournament there in over 20 years with seven of the eight secondary schools taking part in the initial S1/2 event at Strathmore RFC (won by Montrose Academy). Kenny also ran three big primary schools' festivals during the Rugby World Cup to boost participation at mini level in local clubs.

Over the last few months Phil Smith (Dunfermline RFC & West Fife) has developed a programme to get local primary and secondary schools more involved in rugby. The junior and youth coaches at the club are being actively supported, primary schools sessions are now in place and coaching clinics run in several local primaries.

Support Staff

Through Sport Tayside & Fife, I have launched a Coach Mentoring pilot. This has former pro team coach Phil Smith working with four selected club/school coaches over the coming year, where there is a clear need and opportunity to make an impact through more personalised coach education. Phil's support will, in turn, be passed to other coaches within the selected clubs/schools and it's hoped that this pilot will be rolled out on a bigger scale across other sports.

SVQs Hit Double Figures

The Tayside & Fife SVQ team has now grown to 10 with the addition of Adam Grassie (Morgan FP RFC, Dundee). Adam will work closely with Active Schools and Morgan Wasps to deliver a programme of schools' rugby. Linking with Dundee Eagles DO Colin Whittaker will ensure that Dundee 's festivals and tournaments are strengthened by the inclusion of new schools from Adam's programme.

A number of the SVQs have been selected for the Caledonia U18 squad – so good luck to Stuart Munro, Jason Hill and Tony McGinness.

Girls Show 'Howe' It's Done

On a wet November evening at Howe of Fife RFC 30 girls attended an SWRU U18 Development Day. Sessions were delivered by SWRU Midlands coordinator Chris Warburton, Dundee Eagles DO Colin Whittaker and Crieff SVQ Jason Hill, along with Scotland international winger Cara D'Silva who provided great inspiration and advice. The girls came from local schools including Beath HS, Lochgelly HS and Crieff HS and were undeterred by the 'damp' conditions. We hope to see them all again later in the season at the next Tayside & Fife Development Days.

For more information on Tayside & Fife, please contact neil.carrie@sru.org.uk

EDINBURGH CITY & MIDLOTHIAN

Greg Cann relates recent developments in Edinburgh City & Midlothian

Joined Up Working

Following the departure of Joe Edwards, BATs rugby has recruited former Borders professional Iain Bertinhussen as their Club Development Officer. Two new SVQ students (Neil McFarlane and Jamie Miller) will work with him and returning SVQ Lewis Niven. Meanwhile Boroughmuir RFC has appointed Ross Young as part-time DO for a six-month period. First year SVQs Andy Philip, Ross Marrins and Scott Lynes have been taken on at Royal High Corstorphine, Portobello RFC and Murrayfield Wanderers respectively while Lismore RFC awaits the arrival of Callyn Thompson from South Africa as its new SVQ student. Niall Clawson has been taken on by Forrester RFC and Merchiston Castle school to work alongside the development team in West Edinburgh with React-2-Rugby and Lasswade RFC have made the appointment of their CDO, Mark Billingham, full-time.

Qualifying Events

Recent Foundation, TAG and update courses have resulted in over 90 coaches attaining new qualifications; 20 teachers getting TAG rugby-specific training to allow delivery in schools; and over 25 club coaches attending coaching updates on 'Managing the Contact Area' as part of a new coach development programme run in partnership with PDMs. Over 50 volunteers have also attended and gained a relevant refereeing qualification through courses organised by Colin Brett (SRU Referee Development Manager).

Special Deliveries

High schools from the west of the city have been taking part in the inaugural West Edinburgh Schools League at S1/2 and S3/4 levels while other schools have been involved in the City Development-run RWC 10s event (see below). Primary school cluster clubs have been linked in to local clubs, resulting in increased numbers in those clubs. Development staff have also been working to involve new schools. Sessions at Drummond, Gracemount and Castlebrae aim to get the high schools involved in a small competition later in December. Meanwhile a focus on high school rugby in Midlothian saw a 10s event attended by most local schools.

Target schools in Edinburgh and Midlothian will also benefit from Scottish Rugby's partnership with Food Standards Agency Scotland early next year. Primary 5 and 6 pupils in Currie/Balerno and eight schools in Gorebridge/Mayfield will receive extra rugby sessions linked to healthy lifestyle messages.

Edinburgh Festival

Coinciding with the recent Rugby World Cup, the development teams linked a number of their local festivals to a RWC theme attracting over 1000 youngsters of Primary and Secondary age. Ben Fisher (City RDO) organised one of the biggest events at Edinburgh 's Inverleith Park with the support of Club Development Staff from BATS, Currie RFC, Lismore RFC, Portobello, Boroughmuir RFC and the SRU.



Players from Royal High, Boroughmuir, Queensferry, St Thomas, Currie, Balerno, Portobello, Firhill and Forrester HS took part. The event was split in S1 (two pools) and S2 (round-robin) competitions with games lasting nine minutes and each school allocated a 'country' to represent. The top teams from each pool contested the final with Royal High School (NZ) beating Portobello (Arg). In the S2 event Boroughmuir (Sco) and Queensferry (Sth Africa), top after the round-robin, met in the final which Boroughmuir won.

'It was fantastic to see so many schools in the city playing rugby and buying into the idea of a World Cup event,' says Ben, 'with credit to the teachers and club development staff for doing such a good job. It was a great opportunity for these schools to play in a fun competitive environment with the added excitement of the World Cup theme.'

To discuss any aspect of rugby development in the City of Edinburgh or Midlothian contact greg.cann@sru.org.uk

BORDERS & EAST LOTHIAN

Brian Renwick rounds up events in the Borders and East Lothian

Back to Schools

The recent focus has been the player recruitment phase of the development plan, particularly in Primary schools. In September, the 13 local development officers delivered 306 school sessions in 63 primary schools to 2232 children.

The development team from Musselburgh, Ross High, Haddington, Preston Lodge, Berwick, Kelso, Jed, Hawick, Langholm, Melrose, Gala and Peebles helped PE staff in the secondary schools and, during September, delivered 115 sessions in 12 secondary schools to 734 children. Most of these schools have been competing in the Bell Lawrie Schools Cup at both U15 and U18.

Best of the Fest

In conjunction with the World Cup, 13 mini world cup festivals saw 2630 children enjoy a morning of fun and excitement with the chance to put their skills to work. In some Borders areas these festivals were linked to hockey events – a great success that also reduced the cost of transport for schools.

A Bit of a DO

Selkirk RFC is interested in recruiting a club development officer for the area and thanks to Dennis Henderson and John Rutherford, the club will soon be advertising the position. This will take the total of club DOs in the region (including East Lothian Council) to 14, testament to the pro-active nature of the clubs and the willingness to develop rugby within their cluster areas.



Cluster Muster

One major success in East Lothian is within the Ross High cluster, following the recruitment of a club development officer. After establishing a mini section at the club for the first time in years, they have now 20 mini players turning out every Sunday morning.

The Hawick cluster saw successful completion of the Keown Trophy, a competition established in 1968 for all primary schools in the area. This year 130 Primary 5 to Primary 7 children competed in eight teams with Drumlanrig Primary School emerging as winners.

For more information on work in the area contact brian.renwick@sru.org.uk

GLASGOW SOUTH

Glen Tippett looks back on recent work in the Glasgow South region

Success Stories

Looking to build on last year's 29% increase in youngsters playing and 8% increased adult participation, much good work has been done by club and school volunteers in support of Development Officers and SVQ Rugby Apprentices.

In Ayrshire, a secondary schools' competition at U15 and U18 levels had more than eight schools in each section. Dumfries RFC has seen an increase in numbers with 25 new players at midi level. Irvine has started a Sunday mini section this season, with 30 new players, and Renfrew rugby club has welcomed 10 new adult players. Kilmarnock and Ayr have both seen significant increases in their mini and midi sections while the Ayr U16s have won their league, being undefeated in the process. There are 19 new mini players at Whitecraigs and Cumnock are running four midi teams instead of three, for the first time.

New Developments

Club development officers have recently been appointed at Ayr (Damien Kelly) and Whitecraigs (Boyd Carswell). Both have a wealth of experience in delivering and coaching rugby in the community and I'm sure each club will welcome the benefits of their work.

Coaching Notes

Duncan Hodge's recent coaching update on kicking was well received by 50 attendees in Ayr. A scrummaging session from Brian Hislop and lineout jumping and lifting session from Hugh Campbell at Dumfries were equally popular. Another successful UKCC Level 1 course was held at Largs earlier in the autumn and over the coming months more will be held in Glasgow, Stewartry and Largs.

Over the season, DOs will be delivering coaching updates to club and school coaches and will be in direct contact with them to organise dates. Topics to be focused on are early hand catch and ball presentation in the contact area.

For details on how to attend any National Updates, Foundation or UKCC coaching courses, click on the Coach link on the SRU web site home page.

Festival Fun and Games

Festivals were held over the World Cup at Cumnock, Kilmarnock , Dumfries , Irvine , Stewartry, Birkmyre, Newton Stewart and Wigtownshire. These were mostly New Image events with 2000 Primary 5 to Primary 7 children taking part and having fun. Players received mini Scotland rugby balls, posters and even T-shirts. A success story on the back of the festival has been Murray Richardson (Stewartry CDO) welcoming 30 new players to the club.

Raising Standards

In partnership with the Food Standards Agency Scotland, we'll be delivering a pilot programme to 500 Primary 5 and 6 students in East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, Dumfries and Prestwick . The food hygiene and healthy eating lessons, combined with rugby activities, will link strongly to Health Promoting schools and provide evidence of physical activity, diet and nutrition and encouraging a healthy lifestyle.

For further details on Glasgow South rugby contact glen.tippett@sru.org.uk

GLASGOW NORTH

Kenny Murray relates recent activity in Glasgow North

Peter for Allan

Allan Glens RFC in East Dunbartonshire has appointed Peter McCartin, former SRU Modern Apprentice of the Year, as Club Development Officer. The post is a three-year partnership between Allan Glens RFC and Scottish Rugby and will focus on increasing participation within the local community. A key target for Peter will be to develop sustainable links with local secondary schools Turnbull HS and Bishopbriggs HS.

Two New SVQs

Hillhead/Jordanhill RFC and Dalziel RFC have appointed SVQ Community Coaches to help grow the game at their clubs and within their local communities. Steven Longwell (Hillhead/Jordanhill) and Alan Lynch (Dalziel) have already delivered local school programmes involving targeted primary and secondary schools. As well as increasing numbers within the youth section at the club, Steven has also played a major role in starting up a junior girls section that will feed into the existing Ladies' section.

Festival Introduction

More than 250 S1/S2 pupils from over 10 local secondary schools took part in a Lanarkshire Secondary School Festival in November, aimed at introducing new players to the game. The pupils played 13-a-side in a format organised by local Development Officers Ali McCall and Fraser Stott as part of their developing programme to increase participation in secondary schools.

As part of the recent Rugby World Cup promotional campaign, Glasgow North also hosted a series of festivals aimed at encouraging new players to take up the sport. Events at Oban, Kintyre, Hamilton Palace , Dalziel and Lenzie attracted over 500 children, with all players receiving RWC goodies.

Warriors Warm-ups

Glasgow Warriors are running a series of coaching clinics before their Magners League and Heineken Cup home matches. Over 140 youngsters have so far taken part in three clinics – the latest, at Hillhead/Jordanhill RFC, involved around 80 players from clubs/schools including Marr RFC, Duncannig School , GHK RFC and Oban RFC. Aimed at Primary 4 to S2, the sessions look to develop key individual skills and allow children to be coached by Warriors players before attending the match to support their heroes. For further information on this please contact Colin Ireland on 07738420737.

Here's The Plan

Following the success of last season's UKCC Level 1 courses in Glasgow , this season's series of courses has almost been finalised. Exact dates and venues are still to be confirmed but the courses will take place at Hillhead/Jordanhill (January), Isle of Mull RFC (February), Dumfries & Galloway (April), Glasgow Hawks (June) and Inverclyde National Sports Centre (September).

Mull 's Month

Congratulations to Isle of Mull RFC who were awarded Scottish Rugby Hydro Electric Club of the Month for September. The club is extremely pro-active at promoting rugby in the local community and has formed five mini satellite clubs on the island to grow the game. In addition Fergus Whyte, youth rugby volunteer, recently led an S1 team from Tobermory High School to victory at the Murrayfield Festival of Rugby

You Bute !

The Argyll & Bute midi club gatherings continue to grow with the most recent event, at Isle of Mull RFC in October, attracting 80 players from Kintyre RFC, Mull RFC, Oban RFC and Mid Argyll RFC. The boys received a coaching session before playing a series of games. Argyll & Bute clubs are very interested in playing S2 and U16 teams from outwith their area. If your club would be interested in a fixture, please contact Kenny Murray (07764178909)

Bankies Draft in Recruits

Clydebank RFC recently started a new mini rugby section and now has around 30 new players. Thanks to Gordon McCombe and other club volunteers, the section is growing weekly and the club has targeted attracting at least 40 new players before Christmas. The club already has a number of midi players which this new section will augment in the years to come.

Reinforcing the Foundations

Over the last few months 120 new coaches – including some as young as 16 – have taken part in Foundation Courses at Cartha RFC, Uddingston RFC, St Maurice's High School, West of Scotland RFC, Cowal RFC and Jordanhill College. Many of these coaches will now be working with mini sections and school teams throughout the area.

Rugrats Raise Rugby Numbers

A new initiative in South Lanarkshire is proving to be a big hit. The Rugrats programme, set up by local Rugby Development Officer Fraser Stott, is aimed at players from Primaries 1 to 4. Five Rugrats clubs are already up and running in Hamilton, East Kilbride, Lanark and Cambuslang attracting over 120 children each week many different schools. Rugby clubs have already seen an increase in their mini sections due to the programme. To find out more, contact Fraser Stott (01698476115).

To find out more about rugby in the region, contact kenny.murray@sru.org.uk

CENTRAL & WEST

John Manson covers developments in his expanded region of Central and West Lothian

Change Central

Recent reorganisation has seen West Lothian added to my remit. The two clubs in the area, Linlithgow and Livingston have very close links with the Falkirk and Grangemouth clubs, all of whom fund their Club Development Officers with support from the Young's Youth Rugby Trust. Other changes have seen Mark McKenzie move on to become PDM for the Midlands – his Clackmannanshire Rugby Development Officer role has been filled by Ben Hanvey who has just moved over from Northern Ireland where he worked as part of the Ulster Rugby Development Team.

The Apprentices

Four new SVQ Apprentices are now in post in Central. Jason Morgan and Ashley Ireland are part of the Clackmannanshire Rugby Development Team while Christian Wallace and Emma Stark, both from Grangemouth Rugby Club, will work alongside Graham Lindsay (Falkirk Clubs' Development Officer). These appointments, along with four Apprentices staying into a second year, will support the Club Development Officers across the areas.

Former SVQ Apprentices David Grainey (Alloa RFC) and Kris Burney (Hillfoots) attended their graduation ceremony recently. Sponsored by Clackmannanshire Council, supported by their rugby clubs and working in tandem with the Clackmannanshire Rugby Development Officer, both have delivered the rugby experience to hundreds of schoolchildren on a weekly basis. Glasgow captain Alastair Kellock and flanker Stevie Swindall (a former SVQ) presented the graduation scrolls at the ceremony at Cartha Queen's Park rugby club in Glasgow .



On Top Of The World

Club Development Officers were busy during the first school term delivering coaching sessions and Rugby World Cup festivals at local schools and clubs. Alloa RFC, Hillfoots RFC, Grangemouth RFC, Livingston RFC, Linlithgow RFC, McLaren RFC and Bannockburn RFC hosted festivals for over 1000 children who received a Scotland poster, foam rugby ball and skills card. On duty at the festivals in Clackmannanshire, Scotland Team Mascot Scottie Dog is



pictured here with former Clackmannanshire Rugby Development Officer Mark McKenzie and pupils from Muckhart Primary School .

Mascot Fantastic



The Community Mascots places given to all RDMs by the Community Marketing team have been very well received. Central Clubs had mascots present at each of the August Tests and will have a further five mascots at the home Six Nations matches against France and England next year. Pictured here are Alloa RFC player Lewis McIntyre (in front of Dan Parks) and Hillfoots RFC player Duncan Arthur (in front of Dave Callam and Andy Henderson) before the Scotland v South Africa International.

Best of the Fests

The Central Rugby Festival Programme, with monthly P4/5, P6/7 and S1/2 events hosted by three Central clubs, is underway. It's hoped the scheduling – September to December and March to May – will reduce the number of fixtures cancelled due to bad weather and that the locality will reduce time and travel expenditure for clubs, coaches and volunteers. Over 300 players have taken part so far with upcoming events on 30 March (P4/5 at Alloa RFC, P6/7 at Bannockburn RFC and S1/2 at Grangemouth RFC); 27 April (P4/5 at Grangemouth RFC, P6/7 at Stirling County RFC and S1/2 at Stirling County 10s tournament); and 25 May (P6/7 at Hillfoots RFC and S1/2 at Falkirk RFC). Whilst the festivals are focussed on player development all clubs are free to organise fixtures, competitive or otherwise, to fill the rest of their calendar.



Meanwhile the Midlands S1 and S2 Tournament, hosted by Stirling County in November, had 13 teams taking part. Stirling County beat Howe of Fife in an excellent S2 final while the S1 competition saw Dundee Eagles draw with Howe of Fife but were awarded the trophy as a result of scoring the first try.

Ladies in the Lead

Grangemouth Ladies RFC has had an encouraging start to their Division 2 campaign, now has six girls attending the U16 training on a Tuesday evening and is currently trying to recruit from the surrounding schools. The club is also delighted to report that Mairi Forsyth has been selected for the Scotland U18 Squad. Congratulations from all the Rugby Development Staff!



Competition Corner

Central and West Lothian Schools were heavily involved in the early rounds of the Bell Lawrie U15 and U18 School Competitions. A tie that exemplifies the fantastic opportunities of these events is the recent Alva Academy fixture against George Heriot's School, at Hillfoots RFC. I'm sure the young Alva squad enjoyed the opportunity to test themselves against one of the traditionally strongest school teams in the country even though they lost narrowly. Queen Victoria School, Linlithgow Academy, Wallace HS and Balfron HS will all compete in the quarter-finals of the U18 Plate.

For more on Central & West Lothian rugby contact john.manson@sru.org.uk

HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS

Brian Bell outlines ongoing work in Highlands & Islands

Partnerships Working

Lochaber RFC is the latest club to have entered into a partnership with Scottish Rugby. With the help of additional funding from Lochaber Sports Council, a coach is being employed to visit Lochaber HS weekly to develop S1/S2 rugby, with players encouraged to make links to their local club. After a very successful 'come and try' event, the signs are positive. A game against Kingussie HS is already organised with other fixtures in the pipeline.

Thanks to the efforts of local Active School Co-ordinators, primary school children in both Invergordon and Alness now have the opportunity to take part in after school clubs. With Out of School Hours funding and support from Scottish Rugby, a coach from Ross Sutherland Rugby Club takes the clubs.

SVQs News

After a season without any SVQs working in the region, there are now two. William Thomson (Orkney RFC) and Craig Findlater (Highland RFC) are hard at work coaching in primary schools and attending the regular training courses at Murrayfield.

Mascot Slot

Mini rugby players in the Highlands & Islands are again getting the chance to be Scotland team mascots at the home Six Nations 2008 fixtures, with Stornoway RFC and Nairn Minis on duty at the France fixture and Orkney RFC and Ross Sutherland RFC featuring at the Calcutta Cup.

Highland Fling

Having recently completed an SRU Foundation Coaching Course, the latest intake of Inverness College HNC Sports Coaching students were able to put their new-found skills to the test when over 120 primary school pupils from the Inverness area attended October's Highland 2007 Celtic Games day. Plans are afoot with Highland Council to run similar events next year.

Ladies' Days

The latest in the series of development days took place recently at Nairn Academy with a good number of girls from across the Highlands enjoying coaching and small-sided games. The next development day is planned for 27 January at Grantown GS. Through these days – and also with Nairn Academy and Grantown GS entering the SWRU Youth Cup – girls' rugby in the region continues to grow.



Small World

Thanks to clubs and Active Schools Co-ordinators who ran events for primary children across the region during the Rugby World Cup. Festivals and 'come and try' sessions were held in Orkney, Caithness, Skye, Inverness and Stornoway, introducing over 620 children to rugby. Indications are that club attendances have grown as a result.

Also during RWC year Alness Academy, along with 15 other schools across the UK, was involved with the British Council and partner schools in France in bringing an international dimension to education through sport. By establishing sustainable school partnerships around the theme of rugby and the World Cup, two pupils from each school helped organise a mini sports festival for primary school children in Paris. To see a video of the wonderful event they helped organise and also see the Scottish pupils and teachers meeting Scotland's World Cup Squad prior to the quarter-final log on to <http://fr.youtube.com/watch?v=dLEB0suN3HY>

Fest Success

Following establishment of the Highlands & Islands Mini/Midi Festival Calendar, festivals are going well. Focussed on participation rather than winning trophies, Highland, Lochaber, Orkney, Kinloss and Moray have all hosted successful festivals. Particularly satisfying are the efforts made by clubs to attend and support these events, particularly Lochaber, Highland, Ross Sutherland and Caithness who all made the trip to Orkney. The next Midi Festivals are planned for Lochaber, Nairn and Ross Sutherland with the next Mini Festival in Nairn in the Spring.

Word of Mouth

The project between the Food Standards Agency Scotland and Scottish Rugby to educate children on the importance of food hygiene and healthy eating, using rugby to reinforce these messages, is shaping up well. Two primary schools in the Western Isles, Sandwick and Back, have started the programme with others in Shetland, Orkney and the Highland Councils kicking off the new year.

Cup, Coe and Coaching

Schools rugby participation continues to grow with players from across the region competing in the Bell Lawrie Scottish Schools Cup. Despite mixed results I'm sure the experience gained by these young players will stand them in good stead for years and competitions to come. Meanwhile Morris Dillon (Dingwall Academy) organised the first Highland S1/S2 schools tournament for the MacRobert Cup that resulted in nine schools of varying levels of experience having a great time at a very well organised event.

During the October holidays the Craig Maclean Centre, Grantown-on-Spey was officially opened by Lord Coe. As part of the activities surrounding his visit, Lord Coe was able to see some of the Grantown players being put through their paces by Lindsey Booth (SWRU Development Officer) and myself. Elsewhere, by



attending one the 2006 Autumn Internationals, Charleston Academy won a coaching session with none other than Frank Hadden. The session took place recently with the national coach casting his expert eye over the school's rugby players.

Go Coach

Fifty-three volunteers completed the combined foundation courses for refereeing and coaching held recently at Ross Sutherland RFC, in Stornoway and at Caithness RFC. A Foundation Coaching Course, funded by Coaching Highland, was also held in Portree. Both senior and junior coaches have also been able to attend Coaching Updates lead by Duncan Hodge (kicking) and Peter Wright (scrum attack/defence). With participants returning to share their skills back at their clubs, Highlands & Islands is increasing its capacity to cope with the rising numbers wishing to participate in rugby.

Regular Coaching Updates, more Foundation Courses and UKCC Level 1 Courses continue to be arranged, so keep checking the SRU web site at www.scottishrugby.org/sru/be-part-of-it/coach/courses.cfm . Coaches are also reminded that rugby is a core sport within Coaching Highland with funding available to support your attendance at coaching, first-aid and child protection courses.

For more on rugby in Highlands & Islands contact brian.bell@srug.org.uk

PDM ROUND-UP

TEAMtalk tours the regions to find out the latest on player and coaching developments from the Performance Development Management (PDM) team...

Looking to the Long Term

Internal consultation is almost complete on long term player development (LTPD) and during the early part of 2008 we'll share with clubs and schools what the working party has produced so far, *says Henry Edwards (Head of Player Development)*. LTPD is not only about producing players who may go on to represent the National team. In fact, its main thrust is developing male and female players who can strengthen the various levels of our club rugby.

MIDLANDS

To develop players we must first develop coaches, so the focus in Midlands recently has been on coach development, reports Andy Henderson.

Foundation Coaching / Refereeing and UKCC Level 1 courses were recently held in Tulligarth (Alloa) and Strathendrick RFC respectively with 39 coaches now on track to receive their new qualifications.

There's also been a focus on specialist coaching, in conjunction with Hugh Campbell – notably kicking, featuring Duncan Hodge (the Scotland kicking coach). Two sessions were held at Strathallan School in Perthshire along with a game-sense update at Tulligarth, delivered by Colin Ireland. Regular player development sessions have also been held, where talented youngsters are given one-to-one sessions with experienced specialised coaches; Graham Lindsay has worked with several scrum halves and Quentin Sanft has worked with inside backs, focusing on the role of first receiver.

The Caledonia Age Grade selection phase is complete with squads cut to around 26 players at U16, U17 and U18 levels, in the run up to the Inter District Championship. For the second year running in the Caledonia U15 and U16 Pathway Programme both the Central Crusaders U15 and U16 squads completed their playing programme undefeated. The squads played against North East Hurricanes, Highland & Islands Highlanders, Tayside Tigers and Fife Mavericks & Fife Mustangs.



In conjunction with Sport Central, The Scottish Institute of Sports gym at Stirling University has been made available one night a week. With support from Val Houston and Ken McEwan, SVQ Apprentice Andrew Simpson has set up the Central



Individual Player Development Programme where qualified coaches give strength and conditioning training to nearly 40 boys per week.

On a similar note, an initiative by sportscotland – called the Generic Support Services Programme – will be rolled out from January 2008 in partnership with Sport Central and Sport Tayside & Fife. The multi-sport programme will cater for 60 boys aged 15 and 16 in Central, 60 boys in Tayside and 60 in



Fife , incorporating all the U15 and U16 Pathway squads in these areas. This is a fantastic initiative that will introduce our most talented players to strength and conditioning at an early age. Once this programme is launched we will then look to use the Stirling facility to offer strength and conditioning to U17 and U18 age groups and after initial discussions with Sport Tayside and Fife , a similar arrangement may be possible. This program is a massive step in the right direction and we are sure to reap the benefits before long.

Other changes have seen Mark McKenzie move on to become the Performance Development Manager for the Midlands (Central Tayside & Fife).

Contact mark.mckenzie@sru.org.uk for more on developments in Midlands

EDINBURGH, WEST & MIDLOTHIAN

After a very positive U15 and U16 Pathway Development programme at the end of the summer, October saw our S2 and U15 Development Squads along with our U16 and U18 Integrated Programmes swing into action, says Grant McKelvey, PDM for Edinburgh, West and Mid Lothian.

After a very successful U15 Pathway Development Programme prior to the Club / School Season starting, it was agreed that our U15 Player Pathway should be expanded and further sessions added to the programme. To that end, we had 77 players from the current U15 group attending two squad sessions at Meggetland, Edinburgh delivered by myself and Edinburgh City Council Rugby Development Officer, Ben Fisher. It was very encouraging to see so many boys who had missed out on initial selection during the summer now improved to the point of challenging for places for next season's squad.

Following the U16 Player Pathway Development programme that included four weekends of matches / squad sessions and an Edinburgh HMC Schools Trial, an extended squad of 55 players has been put through its paces by the Edinburgh U16 Management Team of Mark Burgess (Head Coach), Sean Scott / Duncan Harrison (Coaches) and Owen Downes (Physio). Four sessions over two days focused on Key National Themes of Playing with Width, Handcatch and Ball Presentation. The squad returned in November for another two sessions and trial game. This programme has been supported by a Mental Skills Training (MST) pilot scheme, funded by the Scottish Institute of Sport Foundation and delivered by Mark Holland and Charlotte Woodcock from Birmingham University . The MST team will follow the programme throughout the season and we look forward to their future input.

The Edinburgh U18 programme also started to gather speed during the October holiday. Prior to selection for the two-day camp many matches from the Edinburgh U18 Club League and Edinburgh HMC Schools have been watched and a squad of 38 players selected at this stage. This squad will also move through various selection phases including regular squad sessions, a fixture against Newcastle Falcons and the annual U18 Inter District Championship. This year's management team includes Kevin Brown , from the Edinburgh U16 programme, to supplement the excellent coaching of Mark Appleson and Gordon Henderson.

To round off the October week our new crop of Pathway talent from this year's S2 programme descended on Meggetland for three days of rugby sessions and development games. 95 players, nominated by their schools and clubs, were coached by an excellent group of volunteer coaches, SVQ students and Club Development Officers. Supporters and parents who attended the final day of development games were entertained by all four teams showing evidence of the core skills they had learnt during the sessions. Huge thanks to all our volunteers who support the Edinburgh Pathway Programme without whom we could not deliver the standard of programme we do.

For more information on developments in Edinburgh, West and Mid Lothian contact Grant.McKelvey@sru.org.uk

BORDERS & EAST LOTHIAN

With the season well into its third month, much has been going on in the East 1 Region (The Borders and East Lothian) recounts PDM Bryan Easson.

Clark Laidlaw, our new East Lothian Rugby Development Officer, has been working hard in the East Lothian clubs and schools and worked with the new S2 and U15 Pathway groups over the October holiday.

As part of the National Player Pathway Programme, nominated players in S2 were invited to attend specific skill development Pathway camps in their area. Over 130 players attended and they will be invited back in February and April before squads are cut down prior to the Pathway games next August.

All Pathway players in the programme are now being coached specific skills – the main areas are hand catching, passing and contact skills – to help their individual development. To ensure that players are confident in these skills prior to attending Pathway camps, I have been working closely with Brian Renwick (East 1 RDM) and have been running coach updates on these skills for the club Development Officers. Each DO will then take the lesson learnt and update their club and school coaches.

It's encouraging to see so many young players here attending weekly strength and conditioning sessions in their own areas. With the backing of Telford College and Borders College , up to 150 U15 players are working extremely hard with trained coaches on the lifting and safety techniques required.

At this stage of the season all club and school teams are well into their respective programmes, with U16, U18 leagues and Bell Lawrie cups heading for a climax. All the District U16, U17 and U18 management teams and myself watch these games each week, so we're well on the way to being ready for the District Programmes ahead.

To help prepare for these Programmes, nominated players have attended monthly skill development sessions with the District U18 coaches (Kev Barrie and Clark Laidlaw) and the U17 coaches (Gerry McGuinness and Jimmy McFarlane) leading the sessions. Players have also taken specialist skills sessions – props led by 'Bomber Hislop', kickers working with myself, throwers with Stevie Scott and scrum halves with Clark Laidlaw.

For further information on Pathway squads or District squads within the Borders and East Lothian please contact bryan.easson@sru.org.uk

GLASGOW SOUTH

My first year here has been a huge challenge but one I have relished while climbing my way up a massive learning curve, adds Adam Gray,PDM in Glasgow South.

To understand my area – covering Inverclyde, Renfrewshire, Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway – I've travelling thousands of miles, visiting the clubs to find out what they're doing, who's involved and how I can support them.

My first year of Pathway at U15 and U16 was completed in September and through player nominations from the U15 Pathway, a Glasgow South U15 Development Squad has begun training.

At U16 level, Pathway nominations have been collated and the nominees have taken part in a three day training exercise to help select the Glasgow U16 squad. Selection has also taken place at U17 and U18 and players will begin training at three skills sessions before Christmas. The main focus is now on S2. Nearly 100 players have been nominated from the Glasgow South clubs and have started training in their regions over a four-week block, concentrating entirely on improving handling skills.

Other areas of attention have been supporting club coaches in Renfrewshire and Inverclyde and working with four players through the Individual Player Development program, concentrating on areas of the game they need to improve on, to aid their progress to a national level.

For more information on work in the area contact Adam.Gray@sru.org.uk

GLASGOW NORTH

The recruitment process for the post vacated by Jamie Dempsey as PDM for Glasgow North is ongoing. Scottish Rugby would like to thank Jamie for all the good work he was involved in and wish him the very best in his new role at Cumbernauld College , says Henry Edwards (Head of Player Development)



NORTH

The Caledonia U15/U16 Pathway has recently been completed with teams from Fife , Central, Tayside, Highlands & Islands and the North East competing against each other over a four-week period, reports North PDM , David Ross.

This round of games was hugely entertaining for supporters, players and coaches alike and the style of rugby played by all teams was very encouraging for the future.

Caledonia squads at U16, U17 and U18 have been selected and will be training monthly between now and the beginning of the Inter District Championship in early 2008. Squad lists can be found on the Caledonia homepage on www.scottishrugby.org

The North has been very fortunate to receive some excellent help with identified players through the specialist coaching programme. Experts in their field have delivered sessions on various topics to improve not only the players ability but also the coaches' understanding of new techniques.

Topics like lineout throwing, jumping, lifting, individual tackle technique, kicking and front row play have been delivered by Hugh Campbell, Stevie Scott and Duncan Hodge.

For more information contact David.Ross@sru.org.uk

SCOTTISH EXILES

The Scottish Exiles, one of Scottish Rugby 's district organisations, was established to provide a pathway for players to move from clubs or schools through to possible international recognition with Scotland, explains Exiles PDM Rob Brierley.

Previously known as the Anglo Scots, the organisation has existed for many years. During 2007 it was rejuvenated by Scottish Rugby who employed a PDM to be responsible for the programme. A new structure is now being put in place across England and Wales to identify and develop talented eligible players.

Regional development groups for the purposes of monitoring and further development are being formed at six venues. To help with this, links have been made with key clubs in each region of the country, such as Leeds Carnegie and Bath . The London Scottish academy has also been tremendously helpful in establishing the network. Sessions have already been held throughout the country.

Individuals from the groups will be invited to the second stage of the Pathway process, namely Scottish Exiles age grade representative matches. Games have been played at U18 (against the Irish Exiles and North Wales) and U20 (against the Scottish Districts) this season so far, with many players showing the potential to interest Scottish international selectors.

From a new beginning – but with a long way to go – the future looks good for the Exiles. Contact [**Rob.Brierley@sru.org.uk**](mailto:Rob.Brierley@sru.org.uk) for more information

UKCC

Coach Education marches onwards this quarter, with plenty of opportunities for coaches to develop, says Jock Peggie (UKCC Development Manager)

With our commitment to ensure that every mini rugby coach has a foundation coaching certificate (as a minimum), Joint Foundation Courses continue to be popular. Over the last 12 months more than 440 coaches have attended the new UKCC Level 1 courses and Scottish Rugby recently piloted the Level 2 course to 25 coaches. This new resource will be rolled out later in the season. The Level 3 course has been submitted for endorsement by SportscoachUK and, once achieved, we will roll out as soon as possible. For details of further UKCC courses, see the home page of the coaching web site at [**www.scottishrugby.org/sru/be-part-of-it/coach/coaching-home.cfm**](http://www.scottishrugby.org/sru/be-part-of-it/coach/coaching-home.cfm)

This season's coaching update programme will differ slightly from previous years. Local Coaching Updates, targeted at mini and midi coaches, will be delivered by our Jointly Funded Development Staff and will cover national themes as well as locally identified areas of concern.

National Coaching Updates are also being run this season – these are aimed at youth and adult coaches and will be delivered by National, Age Grade, Pro-team and Academy coaches on themes identified from last year's programme. Details of these and further planned updates will be announced through the regional network and on the Coaching Updates section of the web site.

As coach education and development grows we're recruiting an administration assistant and a coach development officer to support the work with UKCC qualifications and that involved in becoming a trailblazer sport for UKCF (United Kingdom Coaching Framework).

Scottish Rugby has also been involved in the creation of Rugby Ready. Developed and produced by the IRB, with assistance from Scottish Rugby staff, this new resource aims to help all involved to be safety aware when playing, coaching or refereeing.

With good practice models for physical conditioning, technique, injury prevention and injury management, Rugby Ready is a web-based learning resource at [**www.irbrugbyready.com**](http://www.irbrugbyready.com), a handbook and DVD. Available free to all involved in the game, it will be integrated into Scottish Rugby 's Coach Education and Development programmes. We would encourage all involved in the game at your club or school to complete the web-based learning and achieve certification.

Please forward the link to Rugby Ready and our coaching homepage to fellow coaches at your club or schools so we can continue to help them develop.

Better Coaches – Better Players

WOMEN

The first ever SWRU Schools Talent Identification day at Murrayfield was a great success with 65 girls attending – one from Devon ! – and 42 girls going through to the next round of selection for the SWRU U18 Development Squad, says Jo Hull, SWRU Performance Development Manager

Out of the 42 girls identified here, 35 players were then invited to attend a training camp in early November where the management team selected a squad of 22 to compete against England Colleges in February 2008.

The Development Squad is based around the Long Term Player Development principles of identifying and nurturing talented young rugby players for the 2010/2014/2018 Rugby World Cups. In addition to a rugby education, the U18 programme features information about lifestyle, nutrition and sports psychology.

Selection is ongoing within the SWRU U18 Development squad with players selected through a series of talent identification days and tournaments throughout the year.

PROFESSIONAL

EDINBURGH RUGBY CLUB

Kings of the Castle

The development of Edinburgh 's vibrant young squad has been called 'a work in progress' with new head coach Andy Robinson keen to manage expectation levels as he lays down the foundations for long-term success.

Nevertheless, the team's phenomenal potential was there for all to see during the second half of Edinburgh 's Heineken Cup Pool Six opener against Toulouse at Murrayfield when the French side were given an almighty scare.



Now the primary objective for the Edinburgh squad, handed the working title of 'Robbo's Rookies', is to carry on that same degree of self-belief and momentum for the rest of the season.

Since Robinson was appointed in early October, both the team's performances and the attendances at home games have visibly improved.

But the former Bath and England coach is keen to point out that an overnight revolution will not take place in the Scottish capital, although he has already been bowled over by the enthusiasm and professionalism shown by the players.



Highlights of the season so far include convincing wins over Ulster and Llanelli, a creditable draw against Ospreys and only narrow defeats against European superpowers Munster and Toulouse in successive weeks.

But as the team's education continues, Robinson acknowledges that mistakes are inevitable, an aspect perfectly illustrated by the harsh lesson learned at Leicester with Edinburgh losing 39-0 in the Heineken Cup.

Yet with most clubs competing in the Heineken Cup, the on-field decision makers are battle-hardened warriors who have extensive knowledge and years of game management at the very highest level.

At Edinburgh, however, the first team captain Allister Hogg is 24, the club captain, Simon Cross is 26 and neither of the half-back pairing of brothers, Mike and David Blair are over 30.

Nevertheless the squad's youngsters are maturing and learning valuable lessons from playing against teams like Munster , Toulouse and Leicester .

It will be interesting to see how the remainder of Edinburgh 's Heineken Cup campaign pans out and with the Leicester Tigers (January) yet to visit The Castle, a few pleasant surprises could be in store.

Edinburgh players who have really caught the eye so far this season include up-and-coming centre Nick De Luca, tipped to win his first Scotland cap in 2008, rookie John Houston who scored against Toulouse on his Heineken Cup debut and Mike Blair, widely regarded as being one of the best scrum-halves in Britain.



With an average age of just over 25 and only five foreign players on the club's books, Edinburgh prides itself on being a club bursting with young Scottish talent and with players on show in the Magners League having a strong possibility of becoming future stars of the national team.

A day out at The Castle provides fantastic value for rugby enthusiasts with concession prices as low as just £5 while adult prices are only £15. And with the local derby against Glasgow Warriors happening on Friday 28 December (kick off 7.30pm), Edinburgh 's 2007 promises to end with a bang.

GLASGOW WARRIORS

Enter the Arena

After seven competitive Magners League and Heineken Cup matches at the Firhill Arena, Glasgow Warriors remain undefeated. Biarritz Olympique, Connacht , Cardiff Blues, Ulster, Viadana and Magners League leaders Leinster have all returned home defeated with only Munster managing a battling draw in a game the Warriors should have won.

This fine home form has seen the Warriors keep pace with the leading clubs at the top of the Magners League and occupy second place in Pool 4 of the Heineken Cup after a home win over Biarritz , a narrow away defeat to Saracens and a bonus point home win over Italian league leaders Viadana.



Heineken Cup games, such as the recent victory over Biarritz affords fans the opportunity to sample Heineken Cup action and Warriors hospitality by buying a hospitality package. To find out more, contact Nicola Sturgeon, Pro Team Administrator on 0141 946 6924.



Glasgow Warriors recently launched a new community programme to all local schools and rugby clubs. The Champion Warriors scheme allows clubs to sign up to support the Warriors and in return, the Warriors reciprocate by undertaking player appearances, offering places in their pre-match coaching clinics and providing space in the official matchday programme so that participating clubs and schools can highlight their activities, undertake coach education classes and organise their own Champion Warriors touch rugby tournament. To date 30 clubs and schools have signed up with more anticipated in the next few weeks. For further information or to download the Champion Warriors application form log on to



Glasgow Warriors Remaining Home Fixtures

ML Friday 4 Jan 2008
Warriors v Newport Gwent Dragons (k/o 7.30 pm)

HC 15/16/17 Jan 2008
Warriors v Saracens (k/o tbc)

ML Friday 29 Feb 2008
Warriors v Neath Swansea Ospreys(k/o 7.30 pm)

ML 11/12/13 April 2008
Warriors v Edinburgh (k/o tbc)

ML 18/19/20 April 2008
Warriors v Llanelli Scarlets (k/o tbc)

Ticket Hotline Number 0844 800 3490

CLUB RUGBY

BERWICK EGGS ON YOUTH

Fowl play was suspected at Berwick rugby club at the start of National Egg Week when a large chicken appeared in front of the clubhouse. Fortunately the bird was there to provide breakfast for over 120 local children who play in the club's youth section. Donated by local suppliers, the eggs and cooked eggbread were part of Berwick's campaign to show youngsters the importance of a healthy lifestyle, a balanced diet and correct nutrition.

Meanwhile Berwick's youth policy continues to bring representative honours. Matthew Hackett, Arran Hall and Marcel Crolla have been selected for Northumberland U18 county team while Guy Skivington-Jones has been selected for the Edinburgh Schools U16 Integrated side.



The club has also extended their highly regarded youth structure by recruiting a player who suffers from a visual disability. Seventeen-year-old Adain Innes who attends the Royal Blind School in Edinburgh now plays on the wing for the Berwick Colts XV and has scored three tries this season! Wearing special contact lenses, Adain can only see the ball from twenty yards but aims to study sports science at university and continue his rugby there.

Contact Berwick rugby club on 01289 302141 or log on to its web site at



CURRIE FAVOURS HEALTHY EATING

Currie RFC has picked up a major national award for catering making it easier for its Minis members to eat healthier food. The first sports club of any kind to have achieved the prestigious healthy living award, Currie RFC is among over 150 establishments from throughout Scotland to have achieved the award, launched by the Scottish Consumer Council last year.

And it all started when three of the mums – Kim Haggart, Sheelagh Jones and Lesley Dunleavy – took over the post-match catering and wanted to transform the provision on offer, mainly traditional rugby club fare of sausage rolls and pies. *'In an effort to change the children's eating habits, we now offer filled rolls and salad, fruit pots and in the colder weather, homemade soup and pasta Bolognese,'* Kim explains. *'The new menu took a bit of getting used to by the kids but they now accept it as the norm. The visiting teams are also impressed and enjoy the food as well. We have 160 children in the minis section and, on match days, we can be catering for up to 350 children.'*

Currie RFC achieved the award after adopting a range of healthier practices including reducing levels of fat, salt and sugar in food and making fruit and vegetables more easily available.

Claire Brown (Project Manager of the healthy living award) adds, *'We are particularly pleased to see a number of outlets that cater for children achieving the award, especially those like Currie RFC that have turned their back on the stereotypical children's menu and are doing something much more innovative.'*

To find out more about the club's healthy eating programme contact:

kim_haggart@btinternet.com,
sheelagh.jones@hotmail.co.uk
lesleydunleavy@blueyonder.co.uk

DUMFRIES LAKES THE OPPOSITION

Dumfries U18s, who recently clinched the Glasgow Division 1 title, have just returned from a successful tour to Italy. Staying in Lecco, on the banks of Lake Como, they played two matches against Italian opposition while enjoying excellent hospitality from their hosts. The touring side played two games in two days – the first, against RC Lecco was a physical and hard-fought game that saw the Dumfries side winning through 17-10. Next day, they took on Monza and in an easier game, came through to win 53-5.



HARRIS GETS SHIRTY

Dundee's venerable Harris Academy FP Rugby Club, reborn this year after a nine-year absence, launched their new playing jerseys before their Caledonia Two league game against Strathspey.

The famous maroon, black and gold is still to the fore but in a 21st century style. Club President Butch Sinclair adds, *'The new strips reflect the re-emergence of our Club - which has been a remarkable story. We are grateful to sponsors Ross & Bonnyman Ltd, Quest (Scotland) Ltd and our own Former Pupils Association for their support of our club this season.'*



And did the new strips lead to match success? After an 18 – 3 lead at the interval, Harris strolled to a final 45 – 3 win with tries from Wilson, Bruce, Yeaman, Quinn, Swan, Dalrymple and Stewart.

HAWKS EYE CLUB DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Glasgow Hawks has recently employed a full-time Club Development Manager as part of its ambitious plans to establish a high quality Rugby Development Programme aimed at producing top quality players who will hopefully move up to the professional ranks. The scheme will offer a high quality training and development environment for aspiring young players from both the private and state school sectors.



Through a sponsorship deal with Bank of Ireland, believed to be one of the biggest single financial contributions to youth rugby in Scotland, the Club has employed former Scottish Rugby Development Officer, Grant Talbot, to the post. Grant has considerable experience in community development having also worked with top English Premiership side, Leicester Tigers.



Grant will work in partnership with Glasgow City Council Active Schools' co-ordinators to develop links with local cluster primary and secondary schools in North and West Glasgow, as well as expand its programmes with current feeder clubs, GHK and Glasgow Academicals and their associated schools.

'Hawks have shown great commitment to the game and the community by employing me full-time and I am excited about the challenges ahead,' says Grant. *'Increasing participation in rugby in the wider community is a core part of my job and working in partnership with the local state schools, as well as our current feeder schools, will help promote the game to a new audience.'*

A recent visit by Hyndland Primary to a VIP day at Hawks before the match with Dundee reinforces the value of the new role. *'The children had a fabulous time and Grant Talbot delivered a brilliant coaching session,'* says Fiona Kerr from Hyndland Primary. *'Once again the players themselves made the day all the more special by taking time out to chat to the children after the match. I know this must have been tough after such a close defeat but it was really appreciated.'*

IRVINE'S HAT-TRICK

Irvine Rugby Club recently announced that it would be embarking on a youth development programme to take rugby into each of the 23 Primary and three Secondary Schools in the local Irvine area.

Thanks to a major investment by Chemring Energetics UK Ltd – which triggered a matching investment from *Sportsmatch*, Scottish Rugby and North Ayrshire Education – Irvine are employing three club-based community development officers to deliver a programme of rugby coaching. Two of these local community development officers – John Muir and Jonathan Hale, both of whom play for Irvine RFC – are already in place and the third will be appointed shortly.

A development pathway will be introduced to provide rugby coaching from Primary 4 to Primary 6 and S1 to U18 at Irvine Rugby Club to encourage sporting involvement, fitness, health and exercise by young people across the broadest possible spectrum.

'The future playing strength of any rugby club lies in encouraging young people to become involved in the sport and creating this partnership with Chemring demonstrates our commitment towards young people in the Irvine Area,' said Graham Maxwell (Irvine RFC President). *'Being able to employ our own club development officers means that we can provide regular coaching for young people within the local community at a level never possible previously.'*

As part of the partnership agreement, the Irvine 1st XV will carry the Chemring name on their team shirts and the day-to-day kit worn by the three community coaches will be similarly branded.

OBAN IN ACTION

The Rugby World Cup came to Oban in October, albeit in a reduced format, when Oban Lorne Rugby Club held a touch rugby tournament. Aimed at giving pupils from local primaries and Oban High School the chance to try a non contact version of the game, players and coaches from Oban Lorne were on hand to share their expertise. Over 40 children from Primary 5 to S5 were divided into Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales teams and player/coaches allocated to look after each country. Each team had some coaching and practice runs before taking the field to play for its adopted country. During the afternoon of rugby the kids really got into the world cup spirit performing their own hakas and playing their hearts out. There were lots of great handling and running skills on show during the games and considering many of the kids were trying rugby for the very first time, skill levels were very high. The tournament was won by Ireland with England and Wales in joint second place and Scotland getting the wooden spoon.

The Oban U15 team was in action at Hughenden prior to the recent Glasgow Warriors v Ulster match. A coaching event had been organised with four pro players, Kenny Murray and several other DOs on hand to help the 80 club youth players. The boys all then took in a great game of rugby at Firhill with Glasgow winning in style. All the youth players took part in a half time touchline parade with each club being announced over the PA system. Thanks to Billy Thomson and George Hamilton of Oban who took the boys down to Glasgow by mini bus.

CANTERBURY TALE

After several years of struggling in district leagues and failing to fulfil fixtures, a new league has been developed for students wishing to play Saturday rugby for their University. The Canterbury University Development League, which kicked off in October, provides students with regular competition against fellow students and avoids the pitfalls of playing outside term and during exam time.

This season nine University Clubs are competing in the Canterbury University Development League, with the competition being split into two pools (Caledonia and Glasgow) and teams playing home and away between October and December. After Christmas, the top two teams in each pool will join to form a Championship Pool whilst the other teams will form the Trophy Pool. The winners of the Championship Pool will receive a generous kit supply from the League sponsor. In the Glasgow pool, Glasgow University is the early pace setter with four wins out of four and are yet to concede any points. Aberdeen University is leading the Caledonia pool but faces stiff competition from St Andrews and Dundee Universities. With other Universities, who are not involved this season, already looking to join in season 2008/09, the future of the Canterbury University Development League looks bright.

With the University League season well underway and new recruits settled in to their clubs, attention has turned to the Scottish Universities' Representative Programme for this season.

In the men's team trials were held at Perthshire RFC in October, with over 70 players turning out for their chance to be involved in this season's programme. From this initial trial, 50 players were invited back to a training session at St Andrews University on 11 November. Further training sessions are planned for 10 February (Dundee), 17 February (Stirling) and 2 March (Edinburgh). From these sessions the squads to face Irish Colleges (22 February, Belfast), England Students (7 March, Edinburgh) and Combined Services U23 (14 March, Edinburgh) will be chosen.

The women's representative programme will be combined with the SWRU Academy programme for season 2007/08. The first session took place at Lasswade RFC in November, where 60 players competed for a chance to be part of the squad for this season. A training squad of 26 players was selected after a very competitive session and these players will now be led by coaches Donna Kennedy and Chris McCaskie towards a match in April 2008.

For more information on University and College rugby in Scotland, please contact Andrew Macpherson (University and College Retention Manager) at

PEEBLES' NEW OFFICER OF THE LAWS

The post of the Peebles RFC Development Officer was resurrected in 2007 following a gap of over two years when the previous post holder, James White, returned to his native New Zealand. The club secured the necessary funding through sponsors First XV Rugby Store, Sportsmatch and the Scottish Rugby Union in order to create a part-time vacancy.

Following interviews the former player, 2nd XV coach and current Colts coach, Graeme Paterson, was appointed to the role. He would combine his rugby duties with that of his other occupation – a police officer – and look to develop rugby within the region.



As he says, *'My first priority was to re-establish curriculum based rugby activity within the local primary schools to create as wide an audience as possible at this grass-roots level.'* This was achieved in collaboration with the area's Active Schools co-ordinator, Paul Murray, and a structured programme is now in place throughout the Peeblesshire Primary Schools with all pupils from P4 upwards receiving rugby within the school environment. This has led directly to the successful re-structuring of the Peebles Mini Rugby set-up, The Piranhas, with increased interest in the game generated by these school visits.

Three local training centres have been established, with another soon to follow, in a player/coach/volunteer/parent friendly scheme to cut down on travelling commitments in previous years. This has resulted in a tremendous increase in numbers of players and volunteers – a recent Games Day attracted over 100 players with numerous coaches/helpers in attendance.

The links with Peebles High School, the largest in the Scottish Borders, are vital to Graeme's work in securing the rugby players of the future, not only in Peebles but throughout the country. He assists the PE staff at many of the lunchtime training sessions for S1 – S6 age groups as well as running after school training sessions for S1 – S4. *'Peebles is getting more populated every year – easily seen by the numbers in our local schools – and it is vital that I maintain these strong links with all the Primary Schools and Peebles High School where I have found all staff and pupils most receptive to rugby,'* he adds.

Another new venture in the area is girls' rugby, which has been introduced at Peebles High School alongside the current SWRU drive to recruit more girls at secondary schools into the game. Graeme explains, *'I have set up a lunchtime based training group at the High School which has been well supported by the girls and encourage them all to take part in this new SWRU coaching programme running throughout the country, with our local centre based at Gala. The girls really enjoy taking part in the sessions and I'm sure many will continue playing the game.'*

Time management is a big issue for Graeme as he currently works part-time as Development Officer and has reduced his police hours to part-time status in order to fulfil his dream of working in rugby as a career. *'There are so many different areas and projects that I would like to explore in respect of rugby in the Peeblesshire area, however it comes down to prioritising my workload and budgets! This is especially vital when your hours are restricted but I think we as a club have made a good start to this venture. By concentrating on the base layers of the age-group pyramid I am confident it will be successful for the long-term game. I am thoroughly enjoying my time as Development Officer. It's great working with all the kids and seeing them getting involved during the classes, progressing as individuals and as groups, but most of all enjoying themselves.'*

ELECTRIC PERFORMANCES FROM CLUBS OF THE MONTH

The Scottish Hydro Electric Club of the Month competition continues to honour the hard work of Scotland's rugby clubs. Each month, the club that has impressed in the areas of playing performances, fair play and development of the game will receive a commemorative certificate and £500 prize money.

Recent awardees are Isle of Mull RFC (September) – the first time the award has gone to an island club – and Boroughmuir (October).

The Isle of Mull 7s is a well established and popular end-of-season tournament with the most recent running attracting 16 men's teams and 10 women's. The Club of the Month selection panel also considered Mull's energy and enterprise in growing the game, a recent example being a Tag Rugby Roadshow that led to a series of satellite Tag clubs being set up throughout the island. Mull is also an enthusiastic supporter of the Argyll and Bute youth rugby gatherings, sending teams to the events regardless of the traveling involved, and two Mull players are in the Glasgow U16 training squad.

Meanwhile Boroughmuir posted a string of victories throughout October and demonstrated impressive activity at youth level. The award was fitting tribute to former player and Scotland and British Lions full back and wing, Bruce Hay, who had passed away at the start of the month. Anna Crampin, Scottish Hydro Electric sponsorship manager, said, *'Bruce Hay's commitment to developing rugby at Boroughmuir is a hard act to follow but clearly his attitude has rubbed off on a club that is setting a formidable pace – and not just at first XV level.'*

Nominations for future Scottish Hydro Electric Club of the Month should be sent to Scottish Rugby no later than the last day of each month.

WOMEN REGISTERING SUCCESS

All senior women's clubs are now using the online player registration system. This is the first time ever that all clubs affiliated/insured and players have registered online prior to the opening league games of the season.

'We started the overall online process about six years ago, when player registration involved lots of time spent filling out lots of forms,' explains John Thorburn (SRU member services co-ordinator). *'We don't want player*

registration to be a hindrance and have been trying to encourage clubs to use the online system, for their own benefit as well. The women are a good example. They have about 1000 players and all successfully registered online by the start of the season.

'We have streamlined the process,' continues John, 'and are going to be rolling out the plan to clubs in early December about getting full registration from all the clubs. We'll be going into discussions with schools, aiming to get all their players registered and looking to get referees and coaches, volunteers on to the system so that, eventually if you're looking, for example, for all Edinburgh's U18 players, you can find them at the click of a button.'

YOUTH & SCHOOLS

FOR WHOM THE BELL LAWRIE TOLLS

The 2007-08 Bell Lawrie U15 and U18 Scottish Schools Cups draw towards their climax, in a season that saw a new record of over 200 schools taking part in the competitions.

Thirty-one new schools, all from the state sector across Scotland's eight regions, have joined the tournaments. Bell Lawrie started sponsoring the Schools Cup in 2001 in the hope of encouraging more schoolchildren to take part in competitive rugby and to produce more talented young players.

The draw for the semi-finals of the Bell Lawrie Scottish Schools U18 Cup is Merchiston Castle School v George Heriot's School and Robert Gordon's College v George Watson's College.

The draw for the semi-finals of the Bell Lawrie Scottish Schools U15 Cup is George Heriot's School v Edinburgh Academy and St Aloysians College or Hutchesons' Grammar School v George Watson's College.

The season's finals of both the U15 and U18 tournaments will be held on the international pitch at Murrayfield on Friday 25 January 2008 .

GLASGOW GIRLS TAKE THE BALL AND RUN

This season, more schools in Scotland have affiliated for girls' rugby than ever before – 45 compared to five last year. A good case in point is Notre Dame High School , an all-girls' school in Glasgow that is delivering rugby for the first time through a partnership with Hillhead Jordanhill Ladies. Teacher Neil Johnson explains how it all came about.

'When I joined the school in mid August I discovered there was no rugby provision for the girls so I set about introducing it into the school with the support of the senior management team and the PE department.

A dozen or so girls came along to the initial session and it's grown from there. We went to a development day at Murrayfield with Jo Wells, a tournament in Glasgow and have played our first games. The girls are mainly from S5 and the training is run as an after-school activity on a Tuesday at 5.30pm at Hughenden where the Hillhead Jordanhill club has been very welcoming and supportive to us.

We now have 20 girls training on a regular basis with coach Lindsey Smith who has been instrumental from taking the girls from knowing nothing about rugby to really getting involved in the game. As well as playing, they're also being socialised into rugby, reading about it, watching games and looking up information on the web site – some of them have been ball girls for Glasgow Warriors and the recent Scotland Women v Canada Women game and we're planning to come through and watch the Six Nations home games in the Spring.

Over the past few months the girls have achieved greater levels of physical fitness, their confidence is growing and they're really learning to work as a team.'

GENERAL

REFEREE ROUND-UP

A number of younger officials are starting to show real promise – with the Academy recruits progressing well – and the high performance referees busy with appointments in the Magners League, Heineken Cup and RFU exchanges. The SRU panel of referees has been active with Graham Knox in an exchange with the RFU in National 1 and as Touch Judge for the fixture between Russia and Romania , and Andrew McMenemy on duty for Wales Women v Canada Women. Back at the office Rachel Blake

arrives to take up the position of Referee Co-ordinator, replacing Rebecca Ardrey who has returned to Australia.

CALEDONIA

Level 1 Refereeing Courses in Dundee and Stirling attracted 20 participants with Joint Foundation Coaching and Refereeing Courses held in Forfar, Murrayfield, Invergordon, Aberdeen, Stornoway, Thurso, Tulligarth and Inverurie for 159.

Neil Paterson experienced his first European Challenge Cup appointment at Montauban and has had two exchanges with the RFU to Doncaster and Moseley. Meanwhile Paul Wood has been refereeing at Premier 3 and is being considered for promotion to the SRU panel. Charles Samson and Andy Moss – members of the National Refereeing Academy – are now refereeing at National 1, Grade 5, and will soon be ready for nomination to be allocated games at Premier 3.



Mhairi Hay is also progressing well and is now refereeing at National 1.

Aberdeen has had two referee society meetings – one involving a general discussion on problem areas and the other a technical session on Contact Area – while Midlands has had technical sessions on Touch Judging, Contact Area and Scrums. In addition to a technical session, Highlands held a Q&A with SRU Referees Manager Roy McCombe. Midlands also held their annual dinner in November, at Howe of Fife, clubrooms with speakers Jim Fleming and Ian Heard for guests including three referees from the Manchester Society who were on exchange.

Caledonia Referees have also exchanged personnel with West of Scotland and Borders, all gaining valuable experience from refereeing at different levels of rugby.

EDINBURGH

The season got underway on the 1 September with over 50 games kicking off in Edinburgh and the Lothians. From the Level 1 course held in August, the Society was fortunate enough to gain six new recruits who have been regularly refereeing games at weekends.

Edinburgh Referees Society was fortunate enough to have three referees selected as members of the new National Referees Academy. The feedback from all has been positive and they feel that the system in place has helped them enhance their knowledge and skills as a referee.

The development of referees this season has seen the weekly fitness and technical sessions continue to grow in numbers as well as enjoyment. Technical sessions hosted by international referees, such as Peter Allan and Jim Fleming, and fitness sessions held by a qualified fitness instructor have proved a valuable source of help to newcomers as well as those more experienced referees.

There have also been live monthly technical sessions where referees can take control of specific situations on the training field. This is an opportunity not only to referee in a training environment but also to help the referee learn new skills to improve confidence levels.

SCOTTISH BORDERS

An extremely busy first three months in post for Iain Heard has seen referees training nights now up and running with numbers steady. The sessions have been varied and have included the dreaded fitness tests – the good news is that all those attending seem to be getting fitter.

The Society enjoyed a very successful exchange with the Manchester Society that saw Colin Reavley and Craig Smith travel to referee games in Manchester. The games went very well for both of them, they enjoyed their experience and have gained a great deal of confidence from the trip.

Andrew McMenemy was rewarded for his performances in his first two Premier 1 games with the appointment to referee Wales Women v Canada Women in November. David Crudge and Cammy Rudkin are performing well at Premier 3 and 2 respectively while Norman Jackson and Stuart Ramsay have handled their first Premier 3 games well.

NATIONAL REFEREES ACADEMY

The new National Referees Academy – aiming to provide referees with more focused coaching and development – is well underway and involves James Matthew, Kevin McGhee and Brett Williams (all Edinburgh), Charles Samson (Midlands) and Andy Moss (North).

All the referees have been busy with local appointments and have been reviewing these games themselves as well as receiving coaching reports from the nominated coaches. In general, feedback on all these referees has been good bearing in mind they all have less than two years' experience.

Preparations are also underway for a proposed exchange where all of the referees and support group will travel to officiate in an area outwith Scotland .

RWC 2007 - THE 'OFFICIAL' VIEW

The fifth Rugby World Cup has just finished with the winner's glory going to South Africa , but as a total of 4 billion TV viewers will testify, there were plaudits to be handed out to so many participants. This Cup will be remembered for its unpredictability – with perhaps six nations in with a genuine chance of lifting the Webb Ellis Cup – along with the structured and competitive rugby played by the emerging nations. For Scotland 's Match Official Malcolm Changleng, too, the tournament marked a high point in his officiating career.



'As Match Officials we were very aware that all fixtures were going to demand concentration, focus and the best refereeing skills we had in our repertoire. Pre-tournament we enjoyed a week's camp in Tignes, Southern France where we built up the bonds we would need to work as effective refereeing teams in the weeks to come. Following our team building we went into three days of seminars where we looked at all aspects of refereeing the modern game. As much as possible, we were determined to come to a consensus on how we, as the world's top 25 Match Officials, would interpret rugby's law book. These views were comprehensively debated and then we met with all the captains and coaches of the participating nations to outline our thoughts.



In total, I touched-judged or video-refereed 10 of the 40 pool matches, visiting six of the eight host cities. The team hotel near the Gare de Lyon in Paris was the perfect location to begin our lightning travels by TGV to Lyon , Bordeaux and the southern rugby heartland of Toulouse . We worked in groups of four officials with many different experiences on each mini adventure. I fully appreciated the chance to talk rugby and refereeing to the world's top officials, combined with the best culture and ambiance that France could offer.

The stadiums were magnificent. France filled its world-class football arenas with between 40 to 80 thousand fans apiece. Stade de France, Le Stade Toulouse and Marseilles Velodrome, in particular, created truly memorable rugby occasions of which all referees loved being a part.

My abiding memories will be of friendships forged with good men from the refereeing world, testing my refereeing skills as Habana hared ahead, Johnny jousted or McCaw mauled, and the culmination of four years' work as a professional referee being truly worthwhile.'

ROUGH CALL FOR REF!

In a slight juxtapose to the player being removed from the field by the official, referee Austin Ramage is stretchered off by St Boswells and Meggetland RFC!

Mark Greene of Meggetland RFC caught the shot here, in the first round SHE Scottish Cup fixture when the referee collided with a player and sustained a knee injury. As the accident happened late in the game, with Meggetland winning 81-0, the result stood and Meggetland earned a home tie against North Berwick in the second round. Luckily the injury wasn't as serious as first thought and Austin is well on the mend.



SCRUM ON DOWN

The latest edition of **The SCRUM**, the Scottish Club Rugby Union magazine that covers every angle of club and schools rugby in the country, is out now.



In the latest issue Dundee HSFP, Hamilton and Gala are the featured clubs while there are the usual columns from charities Hearts and Balls and the Wooden Spoon Society. There is further insight into Scottish referee Malcolm Changleng's experiences at the Rugby World Cup while John Manson keeps everyone up to date with developments in the Central region. A special report from a schools' World Cup event run in Inverleith Park in Edinburgh is also in there along with club news, the latest from the Bell Lawrie Schools Cup action and a fitness page focusing on the warm-up.

To find out more please visit www.scrummagazine.com or ask at your club or school about how to get your hands on a copy.

SUNDAY SIX PACK!

STV's Scotsport Rugby Sunday is now well into its stride, with the half-hour show on Sunday at 6pm bringing you Edinburgh and Glasgow Warriors in Magners League action, club rugby highlights from the Scottish Hydro Electric Premiership and lots of other rugby-related action from the women's, schools and sevens game, plus more.

The show is the newest spin-off from the longest running sports programme in the world – with its first programme broadcast on 18 September 1957, fifty-year-old Scotsport is in the Guinness Book of Records! Presenter of the new show is ex Scotland age-grade international player and coach, Richie Gray who'll be joined by the likes of legendary lock Doddie Weir and other famous rugby faces.

Running until the end of January, the show will also be 'simulcast' on www.itv.com. Viewers in the Borders will be able to catch the show on ITV Border at midnight on Tuesdays.

WEAVING WEBS WITH RUGBY REUNITED.COM

Turning the negative of injury into the positive of a business venture was the inspiration for a new rugby networking site. The brainchild of then-injured Saracens back Dan Scarbrough, team mate Alex Sanderson and the side's Strength and Conditioning coach Craig McFarlane, Rugby Reunited.com was devised.

'The project has proved to be a godsend,' adds Dan, 'as it gave me something positive to focus on throughout the frustrations of injury and a way of engaging my brain outside of rugby when I was back at full fitness, rather than sitting around watching TV.'

Evolving into the online space for rugby, the site allows like-minded people to have fun and communicate with their peers individually or as a team, group or tour party. The team pages offer users an outlet to voice opinions about the running of the club they play for or support. Exclusive content is provided by those in and around top-level competition including training tips from the stars with video tuition and nutrition tips.

The future of the site will be controlled by the demands of its users with grassroots rugby a major focus to allow everyone involved a voice. Rugby Reunited is looking to get everyone on board and along with Edinburgh Rugby and Glasgow Warriors impressing in the Heineken Cup and the national team showing great strength, it's looking for more Scottish members!

If you want your team to be featured by the Rugby Reunited team contact them through the site at www.rugbyreunited.com and log on. You may even find that pretty-boy fullback you once played with, the dirty old flanker you went on tour with in Hong Kong or a whole wealth of nasty hookers you engaged with!