

## **Welcome to TEAMtalk Special.**

Scottish Rugby is sending club members this special edition of the new **TEAMtalk** electronic newsletter to inform you of two areas of interest. Please pass this communication on to as many of your members as possible.

The two topics are:-

- The club ticketing strategy for the Bank of Scotland Corporate Autumn Tests in November 2006 and how this affects clubs
- Information to help inform debate ahead of this month's SRU Annual General Meeting on 30th June. We set the scene on some of the motions put forward, and include a selection of views from clubs on some of these motions.

## **BANK OF SCOTLAND CORPORATE AUTUMN TESTS 2006**

From Gordon McKie, Chief Executive of Scottish Rugby

You may be aware that the dates and times for the Bank of Scotland Corporate Autumn Tests in November 2006 have now been announced and on 2nd June tickets went on general public sale at the prices outlined in the PDF document below.

I can confirm that tickets, in favourable locations at Murrayfield, have been especially set aside specifically for sale to clubs. Club members can attend all three games this autumn for a total of just £30, or a total of just £60 for the best seats in the stadium. The special seats for clubs will be set aside until 31st August.

For Scotland's first match against Romania on Saturday 11th November, some 2,500 tickets in good locations have been reserved for clubs. The same is true for the Scotland v Pacific Islanders on 18th November.

For our final international in the series, on 25th November, Scotland take on the Wallabies. Scotland is currently ranked 7th in the IRB world rankings and Australia is ranked fourth. For this clash, 5,000 tickets have been set aside for sale exclusively to clubs. Clubs can of course also buy tickets in any other general area of the stadium.

The timings for international fixtures are often decided outwith the control of a governing body so I am particularly pleased that for November we have succeeded in negotiating favourable kick-off times and days of the week for all three of these internationals. They are all on Saturdays at 2.30pm.

I am confident this will help clubs plan their own kick off times for the 2006-07 season.

The Scotland players taking part in the November internationals hope club fixtures can be arranged to enable members to enjoy attending not only their own club games in November, but they will also be able to come to Murrayfield, to support the national squad.

So when you are planning your club fixtures for the season, please try to accommodate these three internationals at Murrayfield, so your members can get the best of both worlds - club and country.

I'm sure you will agree with me when I say the Scotland coach, Frank Hadden, and the Scotland players, have made tremendous progress in the space of a year. Frank is shaping the Scotland national squad into something every club in Scotland can feel proud of. Memories of the successes during the RBS 6 Nations and the heroic efforts against South Africa in Port Elizabeth this month, are still fresh in our minds.

As you can see, the ticket prices for the November internationals are very competitive, with even the most expensive tickets for the Australia game set at just £30. So please get behind your national squad and come to support them at Murrayfield and plan your club fixtures to allow your members to enjoy everything the sport has to offer next season. The club ticket application form, with a 31st August deadline, is below.

I wish you and your club good luck for next season,

Yours sincerely,

**Gordon McKie**  
Chief Executive, Scottish Rugby

[Autumn Tests Club ticket application form](#)

## SRU AGM

### **Guidance for clubs on motions for the Annual General Meeting, 30 June**

**The SRU's Annual General Meeting will be held at Murrayfield on Friday 30 June 2006. The meeting will formally re-elect Andy Irvine as President of the Union for a second year, and will also debate four motions put forward for consideration by the member clubs.**

The voting structure is as follows :-

134 Full Member clubs x two votes each (these can be anywhere in the structure from Premier One to in the regional leagues)

Four Associate bodies (referees, women, schools, pro-players) x two votes each

Six regional areas (for non Full Member Clubs) x two votes each

Fifteen Council members x one vote each

The four motions are:

**Motion One:** National League Championship, put forward by Stirling County and seconded by Ayr, Stewarts Melville FP and Dundee HSFP, seeks to reverse last year's decision to reduce the size of Premier one and from season 2007/8 return the Premiership to three leagues of twelve teams.

As a variation on this, Stirling County have also put forward an amendment which, if approved, would bring forward the change to the start of season 2006/7 and also offer the choice of all Premier and National Leagues to comprise of either 14 teams or 12 teams.

Commenting on the proposed changes, **Ray Mountford of Stirling County** said:

*"Stirling County have long pushed for expansion of the leagues to 14 teams, such that meaningful 15-a-side rugby can be played throughout the season. In putting forward motion one we recognised that, without a change to the Cup format, there were simply not enough weekends in the season to go to 14 teams. We therefore proposed a simple motion of*

*moving back to 12 teams at Premier One.*

*"We were informed that we would not gain support for any change without a 12 month notice period, although a number of clubs have commented that such a waiting period is nonsensical.*

*"On receiving the motions from the SRU, it was clear that if motion four was carried, then the opportunity was there to fill the void such a change would create with more league fixtures. Our amendment to motion one seeks to do that.*

*"However we recognise that not everyone may agree with our position on 14 team leagues and so we have offered two alternatives to stimulate the debate.*

*"Firstly, the 14 team league option, which we admit does favour us at the current time, and the second, the 12 team league option, which clearly does not favour us, versus our original motion (which would see three promoted from Premier two at the end of season 2006/7).*

*"This year's AGM is a critical point in the Scottish game. Whilst it is obvious to us at Stirling that five leagues of 14 at national level makes good financial and common sense, all we ask is that clubs seriously consider the motions and amendments we have tabled, such that a healthy debate can take place at the 30th June AGM and we all vote from a strength of knowledge, rather than hearsay and unsupported threats."*

**Keith Wallace of Haddington**, outgoing Premier two representative on the Scottish Rugby Council, said:

*"I believe that a twelve team league format is right for Scottish Rugby, and in the absence of a radical change to the format of the Cup, it provides the right number of fixtures across a season. With the current Cup competition, a fourteen team league is just impractical and would mean that many players and club members would be unable to attend Murrayfield to support the Scotland team.*

*"Getting clubs and their members behind the Scotland team and filling Murrayfield, is vital to the future of our game, both financially and in terms of future international performance.*

*"On a personal level, I can understand the desire of some clubs to make the change, such that it is in place for next season. However, the Championship rule requiring a season's notice before any change to the league structure, is there for a reason.*

*"It is important that clubs know what they are playing for at the start of each season and it strikes me as being wrong to change the goal posts after the event."*

**Kenny Hamilton of Glasgow Hawks** added:

*"Scottish Rugby is generally supported and administered by fair-minded people. And, I believe that no fair-minded person could possibly believe that changing the rules and prize for a competition 2 months after its completion could be considered fair.*

*"You can imagine what would be said if... "I'm sorry Mr Mickleson, the organisers of the US Masters have decided if you have already won a Green Jacket you cannot get a 2nd one. Could you hand your 2006 jacket back please?"*

*"It is simply not correct to change the rules of a sporting competition retrospectively. For this reason I do not believe that suggesting any change to league structure for 2006/7 should be supported.*

*"On the main motion, I would have to say that there is always a problem in considering single issues in Scottish Rugby without carefully considering*

*the knock-on or consequences for other elements. Short-term thinking and short-term solutions to issues have bedeviled Scottish Rugby over the past ten years.*

*"However, we agreed, at the Special General Meeting in the Spring of 2005, a strategic review process that was supposed to set the broad agenda for the period of the SRU's business plan over a four-year period. The approach was agreed last year and, as part of that we included a ten team Premier one league.*

*"This was part of the attempt to design out conflict within some elements of the game - by reducing the conflicting demands on a number of age group Internationals and to attempt to raise the standards at the top end of the club game and embark on a process of bringing it closer to the professional game.*

*"As suggested in the 'rationale' for this motion, some of the circumstances have changed - in particular the likely restructuring of age-grade International rugby.*

*"The exact detail of this is not yet known but it is for clubs to determine whether they believe a 12 team Premier 1 league is less likely to cut across the efforts of age-group structures than previously thought. However, some of the influencing factors such as the structure of the pro game and the detail of the age-group season are not known at this point.*

*"The other part of the rationale for the motion states, somewhat authoritatively, and incorrectly, that 'The SRU has told Premier one that it sees Premier one..... not within the performance arm.'*

*"There has been no policy change at this point and Premier one will participate in the Performance Forum as agreed at last year's AGM, while, clearly, maintaining a role and responsibility in the development of the community game along with all other clubs."*

**Motion Two:** Players Attached to Pro Teams, put forward by Glasgow Hawks and seconded by Heriot's, seeks to mandate that those players attached to the Pro Teams but not actually playing in the Pro Team 1st XV should be available to play for their clubs.

The motion, if not withdrawn and duly passed, would see the introduction of an appropriate protocol to manage the release of these players and also a working party to agree accountabilities, responsibilities and links between the parties. As noted below, at the time of writing, Glasgow Hawks and Heriot's were anticipating withdrawing their motion. Watch this space!

Explaining the background to this, **the SRU's Head of Player Development, Henry Edwards**, said:

*"I was very pleased earlier this year when the Union was able to announce that it was planning to increase its investment into both the Community game and the Union's Academy structure. I appreciate that, initially at least, there was some concern amongst Premier one clubs, that with the recruitment of apprentices to the Pro Teams, the club game would suffer - with the main concern being that these players would not be able to play for their clubs.*

*"I have now had the opportunity to meet with the clubs in Premier one to three to explain our plans for next season. They seem much more relaxed now that they understand that we are only intending six back up games per team and that we expect our apprentices to play week-in and week-out with their club teams.*

*"There is also a growing realisation amongst clubs, that the standard of club rugby should rise, with the best of the young talent now being offered full time training. Hopefully this will make consideration of motion two unnecessary.*

*"In discussing its plans with the wider rugby community, the Union's*

*proposal that the apprentices should continue to play with their 'Club of Origin' has also received a warm welcome. "*

**National League representative Archie Ferguson** added:

*"Clubs throughout the game contribute players to the professional teams. Whilst we support that players should strive to play at the highest possible level, it is also right that they are not pushed through too quickly.*

*"This proposal should allow players to develop at their own pace and continue to contribute to their original club until they are ready to move up."*

**NEWS FLASH...**

**Kenny Hamilton of Glasgow Hawks** added on the Hawks and Heriot's motion,

*"I am pleased to say that Hawks and Heriot's have agreed\* to withdraw this motion. The reason it was submitted was that a range of possible changes in Academy structure, back-up matches and league structure were presented to the P1 forum in March.*

*"The possible implications of all of this could have been far-reaching for the club game in Scotland yet there seemed to be no opportunity to discuss the implications of all of this in any detail.*

*"I am delighted to report that very constructive discussion has since followed. And the first meeting of the Performance Forum on 20th June will be another opportunity to maintain that dialogue. For these reasons we wish to withdraw the motion."*

\* Although Hawks and Heriot's have agreed to withdraw the motion, it has not yet been withdrawn so we have included all the details of the motion here in TEAMtalk for your information.

**Motion Three:** National Competition Rules, put forward by Cambuslang and seconded by West of Scotland, seeks to amend the current Championship rule in relation to the number of replacements allowed in matches featuring Premier three teams.

**Motion Four:** National Cup Competitions, put forward on behalf of the Scottish Rugby Board, seeks to enable a review of the format of the Cup by the Championship Committee, in order to minimise travel commitments, mismatches and increase the competitions commercial value. If approved, these changes could come in as early as season 2006/7.

Stirling County, supported by Stewart's Melville FP and Currie, have sought to amend this motion, such that members of the Championship Committee are specifically encouraged in their review to consider limiting the Cup to Premiership sides, the Shield to National League teams and the Bowl to Regional League sides.

Financial Statements and Annual Report: In a change from recent years, the 2006 AGM will not consider the annual Financial Statements, nor re-appoint the Auditor. These matters will, in future, be included within a separate Financial AGM, to be held towards the end of August each year.

This will be included in the SRU Annual Report, which will also be published in time for the Financial AGM. In place of the annual Financial Statements, the SRU Chief Executive, Gordon McKie, will provide the meeting in June with a financial update.

## BULLETIN BOARD

**TEAMtalk** wants to include your club news from around the country, all sorts of helpful news from Murrayfield, the latest from the BT Club of the Month Awards, what's happening in the community game through to elite rugby, including schools, university and women's rugby but please remember - this will be your **TEAMtalk**, so your regular contributions will

be what makes it a success. So why not help shape **TEAMtalk** right now by getting in touch?

All you need to do is e-mail us at [TEAMtalk@sru.org.uk](mailto:TEAMtalk@sru.org.uk) with your contributions, or, if you prefer, write to **TEAMtalk** at the SRU Communications Department, Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh EH12 5PJ. We look forward to hearing from you.