

OLD REIGATIAN RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB LIMITED  
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Any review of the 2007-2008 season must conclude that at 1<sup>st</sup> team level we were fortunate to survive the “dogfight” to avoid relegation that developed in early 2008. That we managed to retain our status in London 3 South West owed much to the commendable individual effort of skipper Tyrone Long and the support that he received from seasoned 1<sup>st</sup> XV players including James Podbury, Mark Reid, Charlie Merry, James Espin and David and Richard O’Hanlon. Ultimately success also depended upon the significant contribution that eventually materialised from South Africa in mid season in the form of Mirvin Manus, Andre Botha, Jonathan Schalkwyk and Alrich Muller. Our hopes that the South African influence might have been available for the entire season had been thwarted by difficulties in obtaining visas.

The season commenced in familiar fashion with a shortage of front row forwards. Arron Simmons and Pete Slaughter were both injured and failed to play any part throughout the season, Nick Barrett received a serious injury in the early season encounter with Andover and for much of the season we were reliant on under 21’s Ollie du Jardin, Matt Taylor and Jack Wheeler to anchor the scrum. Their contribution was enormous and while we were often under pressure up front there was no doubt regarding their effort and commitment.

During the course of the season Ed Bartlett emerged as a versatile player packing down in the second row or the back row as required and James Campbell showed what a talented footballer he is in the back row. Besides du Jardin, Wheeler, Taylor and Campbell other under 21 players that featured during the season included Nick Grant, Tom Collard, Alex Forsyth, Jon Davies, Michael Layzell and Rory Evans reflecting the benefit of the development of the Minis and Juniors and hopefully ensuring what should become a regular source of players for the future.

The 1<sup>st</sup> XV player of the year award was given to James Podbury in recognition of his unstinting efforts throughout the season.

For the new season we welcome a new coach in Stephan Theron and new opposition as a result of a “level transfer” from London South West 3 to London South East 3. We are advised that the result of the level transfer, which is designed to avoid the previous iniquities of the cascade relegation system, will save some 100 miles travelling through the season. We therefore look forward to the prospect of fixtures against the likes of Aylesford Bulls, Lordswood, Hove and Old Dunstonians besides the more familiar opponents of Purley John Fisher and Warlingham who have been similarly transferred.

The A XV under the enthusiastic guidance of Chris Morgan enjoyed a magnificent season culminating in their becoming Conference 1 Champions following victory over Old Glynonians in the final league fixture of the season. In the first league fixture of the season Old Glynonians had racked up 50 points against us which made victory over them in a winner takes all final league fixture all the sweeter and reflected the enormous transformation effected during the season. Although Chris will be unable to devote the same amount of time to the A XV following his appointment as head of sport at Tonbridge School it is hoped that his influence will remain. Chris fully justified winning the “Club Man of the Year” award.

The challenge for the coming season will be to maintain and build on this success and hopefully to resurrect the Extra A XV on a regular basis. Stuart Ware has volunteered for the role of captain of the Extra A XV.

The under 21s were unable to repeat their success of last year finishing fourth in the extended Surrey under 21 competition. It is however the development of players from this level to 1<sup>st</sup> and A XV’s that represents the most positive aspect of this age-group.

The highlight of the season on the social front was a magnificent Christmas Ball masterminded by Debbie Lee and a team of helpers. Bruce Chapman organised a series of successful pre league match lunches through the season. It is planned to organise more regular social and fund raising events in the new season.

James Picking stands down this year as Chairman of the Minis and Juniors. Both James and Emma are to be commended for their considerable efforts in quietly and efficiently co-ordinating the development of the Minis and Juniors. The age-group reports indicate that there have been some extremely successful sides and as a

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club we are very fortunate to have a large, and increasing, number of volunteer parents whose efforts are much appreciated. The club accounts bear testimony to the importance and significance of the Mini and Junior sections.

Peter Harrison continues to drive the planned club-house development. In the past year our planning permission has been altered to remove restrictions that would have impacted upon the club's ability to maximise the use of the proposed facility. It is intended that development will commence during the course of the next season and hopefully will be operating by the start of the 2009-2010 season.

As a club we are always appreciative of the financial and other support offered by our sponsors including Savills, Simply Sports, Chapman and Partners International, The Cage, SOS, Edenbrook and Bond Davidson.

Sadly during the season Brian Gatford died. Brian played for a number of years for the club before turning his attention to refereeing. Brian was a Vice President and was a great OR's supporter. He died shortly before a very successful club dinner that he had organised. In the event the dinner was held in his memory and was attended by this widow Cynthia. Tristan Griffiths, a diminutive but fierce scrum half who played with distinction for the club as a Mini died during his A Levels. Our thoughts and prayers are with their family and friends.

1<sup>st</sup> XV – Dave Wiggins

Played	Won	Lost	Drew	Points For	Points Against
26	10	15	1	390	463

Unfortunately this was not a happy season and no amount of window dressing can hide that fact.

The pre season training was a disjointed affair with a lack of attendance from senior players. This had a knock on effect that saw basic unit and team skills being developed well into October. This coupled with the fact that the front row was under staffed consistently, meant that the set piece play was at best adequate. The first of only two scrummage sessions took place on January 17 2008!

The early season standard of back play was low, to such an extent, that the squad were forced to adopt a game plan that relied on ball retention by the forwards. This in turn meant slow ball being driven and then rolled infield, hopefully, backs at this stage would have identified an area to attack and then do so, sadly, this rarely occurred.

Due to the lack of ability at scrum time, strike moves, although called, were not utilised because invariably the scrummage was pushed back.

Although the results meant that up to Christmas the squad were hardly out of the bottom three, they were only soundly beaten on two occasions, this by London Cornish (H) and the last game at Cobham (A).

In January a players meeting was convened. It was decided that players would make themselves available for training and would strive to save the squad from looming relegation. In this they were very successful and results took a turn for the better. The squad began to play with more conviction and losses to higher ranked teams rarely exceeded two scores. It is to their credit that the squad did survive.

The following points are worthy of note:

1. In the early stages there was a lack of commitment from senior players, some arriving 45 minutes before a game, there were many Friday evening cry - offs, however, this situation did improve.
2. There was (and still is) a serious lack of infra structure, there was no squad management in place and the problems this caused were left to the Captain to deal with.

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3. The fixture list at the time did not provide games other than for league or cup. This led to a lack of continuity and also to a culture where players thought they need only be involved at league time. This meant that some senior players were not training for up 2 weeks before the next game.

4. The problem with props persisted throughout the season, although after the players meeting two students featured regularly, however, they were unavailable to train due to university commitments. This meant that the squad at no time trained with the selected forward pack prior to a game.

5. Defence improved throughout the season. The squad adopted a very aggressive, 'up and in' system and this proved very successful. Many games, if not won, were kept within touch by the defence on their line. There was an acceptance that defence had to make up for any possible attack deficiencies, this made life difficult for many opposition teams.

6. The second part of the season saw the arrival of 3 backs from South Africa. This had an immediate impact on training and also results. Their abilities enthused the squad and they were instrumental in the survival of the group. To date, they appear to have settled in well and represent a wise investment for the future.

At this stage, I would like to record my thanks to Tyrone Long and Chris Hammond. It was a very frustrating season from a coaching and management point of view. As a team we were often faced with last minute problems and these were frequently surmounted with no small effort by Tyrone. It was an interesting exercise in how to survive with limited resources and abilities. In my opinion, this was a job well done.

From my own perspective at no time did I feel that I was extended. Coaching is in many ways similar to playing, in that one needs to be tested. I have never in my career been involved with any club where this has not happened - It will not happen again.

A XV – Chris Morgan

Played	Won	Lost	Drew	For	Against
24	18	5	1	691	333

The 2nd team started slowly and lost the 50 game of the season by 50 points to the impressive Old Glynonians and things looked ominous. But after a heavy recruitment drive and influx of new players things started to look up. We soon went on winning ways winning 12 consecutive games and blowing all opposition aside. There were some tough games along the way though and the side showed lots of character, the climax of the season beating Old Glynonians 10 - 0 in the return fixture at Park Lane.

Throughout the season the sides success was built on playing an attractive brand of rugby, nicknamed "champagne" by all who saw us. After the first 4 games we never struggled for players and regularly had squads of 22 or more players on match days. Everybody in the side enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and we even got some players through the system in the 1st team like, Ed Bartlett, James Campbell and Matt Taylor.

There were many outstanding performances but Toby Walker at 8, whenever he played was a real handful (as you would expect from someone who has played in the European cup!), Dave Fry at 7 or 12 was a powerhouse and never stopped running. Millsy at 10 was superb in every aspect of the game and offered us control and was a brave leader in defence as well as being prolific in attack whether it be scoring tries or kicking goals. There were many other brave soldiers that deserve a mention, but their success comes from knowing that they helped win the league!!!! Come on Reigatiaaaaaaaaaannnnssss!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

An awesome season and hopefully the beginning of an era.

NONDESCRIPTS XV – Hamish Turnbull

Played	Won	Lost	Drew	Points For	Points Against

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4	0	3	1	32	120
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On the strength of last seasons successful and enthusiastic campaign where we benefited strength in numbers on the playing books with the introduction of a good number of 'Fresh legged Mini's Dads' came of age and joined the fold. The season promised much more but with the inevitable injury build-up we somewhat fizzled out in the second half of our season, only managing one game in 2008. The fact was we came up against one of the better sides in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round match of the Evergreen Cup Plate – Haywards Heath who sent our boys home licking their wounds after a 3 - 57 points defeat. The Six Nations commenced and that was our season shortened to only 4 games. (who won the 6 Nations again . . . . ??? Okay, well done SP, Bella et all Taffs!)

06/10/07            OR's Nondes 17    v    Stoke Park 31

We welcomed our Guildford crew from Stoke Park back over to kick off our season again – these guys are going to miss the old clubhouse more than us when it goes. This was to be third time lucky for them as they ran up their first victory, helped mainly due to several of their 2nds players gate crashing. We had 2 Nondes 'debut' that day in David Holder who I think played in the pack, and one J. Fava who I recall having a fine game at flanker. Richie Davieson announced that was probably his 500<sup>th</sup> game for the club but sadly it would be his final game. Thanks Richie for all the memories and we trust you'll keep dropping in from time to time.

20/10/07            OR's Nondes 7            v    Battersea Ironsides 7

The Battersea Ironside match was all a bit of a blur but probably had more to do with it being World Cup Final day and I still couldn't comprehend how England had made the Final before Scotland !!! As I recall our students stepped in and saved the day as the numbers dwindled on the run-in to WC Final. The only genuine Nondes 'debut' that day was Matthew Wheatley on the wing. Then we had the weirdest run of injuries with the ambulance crew on the touch attending to several players simultaneously. I do remember a fine player by the name of Joe Tanner who scored our try in what was a very competitive match – and in the evening history (sadly) didn't repeat itself (Phew!)

04/11/07            Dorking Derelicts 25 v    OR's Nondes 6 (1<sup>st</sup> Round Evergreen Cup)

Next up was the eagerly awaited Evergreens Cup opener with our friendly neighbours. On the main pitch in front of a huge crowd the Derelicts were in their element with a few 'auld diehards' who shall remain nameless, came across a stuffy Nondes side well up to giving them a run for their money. We had 5 Evergreen Cup debutants in Chris Simms, David Tinn, Bernard Kenny, Richard John & Richard Woodford. We should have gone in at half time holding a commanding lead but for a couple of forced errors which cost us 2 late tries and which turned the tie. Despite some heroic performances in the pack and Simon Peacock displaying all his skills in the unfamiliar stand-off position they ground us down with some added 'questionable refereeing?' we bowed out, battered, defeated but not down hearted.

Toby Biggs as many of you will recall had the misfortune to suffer a 'freak' injury in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half where he severed his superior patella tendon which meant that his knee cap ended half way up his thigh was rushed to hospital. I'm pleased to report Toby has been making steady progress over the past 6 months and has been fit enough to take part in a sponsored cycle run as part of his rehabilitation. It will come as little surprise to learn that Toby announced his official retirement not long after that game. Toby we extend our best wishes for a full recovery and thank him not only for his services to the Nondes but again for a playing career that extended over 25 years where he played at all levels through the club. We know we can rely on seeing Toby down on the touchline in the near future.

17/02/08            OR's Nondes 3            v    Haywards Heath 57            (1st Round Evergreen Plate)

This has to be one of our heaviest defeats sustained in our distinguished 'Nondes' career. Not taking anything away from Haywards Heath but we were only 3 tries down after the hour mark. Classic case of inferior fitness and giving too many years to well drilled side. I expect they went on to win the Plate and will be competing with the best in the Cup draw next season. Russell White made his 'debut' with a competent performance at No 8 and Steve Allen came off the bench as sub for his debut. The rest we'd rather forget.

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Extended thanks goes to all you regular guys for your continued support. To all new debutants it was great to have you on board – but lets make it good habit and see more of you next season.

Thanks to Nick Harrison for his kind sponsorship for providing the great new kit.

Bella for her continued support as Nondes top Physio (and boy do we keep her busy!)

Here's to whatever 2008/09 season brings. (new club . . . ! !)

Under 21s – Euan Grimstone

Played	Won	Lost	Drew	Points For	Points Against
5	1	4	0	44	96

Old Reigatians	8	15	Dorking
Dorking	25	10	Old Reigatians
Old Reigatians	11	10	Effingham and Leatherhead
Sutton and Epsom	34	12	Old Reigatians
Dorking	12	3	Old Reigatians

*The Matches*

Entering the 2007/08 season expectations were high. Coming off the back of a season in which the Reigatian side went unbeaten in competitive matches fans and critics alike had strong hopes for this talented side. Doubts were cast however after the retirement of such luminaries as skipper and leader Euan Grimstone, who had now taken up a coaching role, and Thomas Wiltshire who citing age restrictions had decided on a big money move to Cardiff.

However the bulk of the squad were still entering the season a year more experienced and battle hardened. Captain Thomas Collard had dropped his academic interests to focus solely on rugby and had recovered from a minor leg injury that had plagued the previous season. Mark Chesterton fresh from a hard preseason with both club and university looked sharp and fit; whilst James Campbell's troublesome shoulder had recovered over the summer. Exciting prospect Jack Wheeler finally was able to claim his rightful place at hooker and big name signing Matthew Bartlett came into the squad to add depth and control to the side.

A home game against local rivals Dorking presented a surprise opening fixture as the side were expecting to play minnows Old Walcountians. Fielding a strong side, including star fly-half Nick Grant with the prolific Christopher Ellis on the wing set to Dorking early, forgetting the summer rustiness. A glorious try from Stuart Frith in the 8<sup>th</sup> minute seemed to signal the beginning of an onslaught of running rugby and fans were already searching for a cricket scoreboard. Unfortunately a combination of mistakes, complacency, and a lack of fitness ensured that never materialised. By the end of the game a strong Dorking comeback gave the visitors a begrudgingly dogged comeback win albeit one against the play.

Desperate for revenge after the home embarrassment an injury ravaged squad travelled over to Dorking days later for a return fixture. Emotional leader Mark Chesterton was out as was star playmaker Nick Grant. James Campbell was carrying a minor injury whilst hard hitting grafter James Lindley was away on tour duty. The irresistible Matthew Lea was still out and the back five in the forwards appeared light.

The injuries however allowed youngsters a chance to shine in one of the hardest fixtures of the season. Within minutes one of the youngsters Jo Tanner had to be taken of with a terrible concussion. Despite the depleted side, the hostile crowd and poor conditions Reigatians put in a strong and combatative performance, particularly led by Jack Wheeler, Matthew Bartlett and James Campbell, all offering tempestuous performances that drew showers of applause even from the Dorking faithful. Whilst Dorking deserved their win, critics from both sides of the Mole Valley shared the belief that the game was far more tightly contested than the final score suggests.

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Despite having lost two games, both were friendly games and Reigatians were top of their group on the basis of an awarded victory against Old Walcountians and with one game to play against Effingham and Leatherhead. Last season's whipping boys arrived at Park Lane which many of the same squad but bolstered by an extra year of experience and a strong burst of youth. This year's band of young pretenders proved to be a challenging, awkward side capable of turning over any opposition in the competition.

Reigate, supported by a partisan home crowd led by inspirational former player Gary Baker and a bag of Stella Artois, initially struggled with their unfavoured opposition, with poor ball retention and poor conditions threatening the running rugby that had brought rich rewards in previous seasons. However good defence kept Reigate in the game and when William Tame broke free along the right hand wing, he was able to beat the covering tackle and touch down in the corner. The try was the defining point in a match that never truly got started and Effingham and Leatherhead were never able to recover.

That victory was enough to bring forth an away adventure against Sutton and Epsom, however a list of absentees as long as the one that rocked the Reigatian squad before this semi-final fixture seldom can relate into victories. Throughout the game the side worked hard and tirelessly against a well drilled, well orchestrated side and the final score albeit one sided should be of great credit not embarrassment to the visiting side.

A final game against Dorking in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> placed playoff ensued, but the game was low key and rather mundane at times. It did however offer the fans a first glimpse at new signing Zach Frey and Robert Forsyth's return from injury. Both were a reassuring sight for the travelling masses.

#### *Summary*

Many people would regard this U21 season as a large disappointment, but hidden within these results were the simple fact that Reigate played 4 of 5 games against the 2 best sides in the county. Moreover in 3 of these games the Reigate side was largely depleted of team leaders and star players. Excuses are rife in this win first culture but in containing the dangerous Dorking backline or a backup pack dominating the Sutton and Epsom thunderous forwards showed that in truth Reigate may still class themselves within the top 3 sides in the area.

Unfortunate or not the results were disappointing as the squad always believes in the talent therein and expect trophies at each tournament but this year was not to be. Of far greater excitement to the Park Lane faithful will be the progression of several key players. Alexander Forsyth advanced into the senior first team making regular and highly commended performances. James Campbell too followed a similar path in the first team, his ability so noteworthy that James was able to break the first team training only policy due to his exceptional circumstances. Oliver Du Jardin and Jack Wheeler also played nearly every week for the first team adding greatly to the front row rotation and Jack's throwing improved throughout the season, and coach Edward Bartlett described Jack's throwing as potentially the best in Surrey- truly wise words from a wise man. New signings such as Matthew Bartlett and Zach Frey and the emergence of top quality talent in Joe Tanner, William Tame, James Lindley and Edward Forsyth, suggest that the season was neither wasted and that future success lies in wait for this side. Potential prospects Simon Dugate, William Godwin, Andrew Furness and Alex Dixon will further push for their debuts next season as the famed Reigatian talent conveyor belt continues to churn out outstanding talent and these players' success in the academy suggest further success.

#### *Awards*

This season nominations for **Player of the Season** were shared between four key players:

- Alexander Forsyth, *Scrum Half*
- James Campbell, *Flanker*
- Oliver Du Jardin, *Prop*
- Jack Wheeler, *Hooker*

All four put in performances that richly deserved the top prize but this year Christopher Ellis will be passing the green jacket onto fellow Exetorian and housemate **Alexander Forsyth** for his enormous contribution to the side, his outstanding leadership and high work rate that exemplified the side.

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This season's nominations for **Rookie of the Season** were also shared between five players:

- § Matthew Bartlett, *Second Row/Back Row*
- § Joe Tanner, *Second Row/Back Row*
- § James Snelling, *Hooker*
- § William Tame, *Wing*
- § Edward Forsyth, *Scrum Half*

Another tightly contested award could have easily gone to all five, but ultimately **Joe Tanner** offered the side a glimpse of the future. Whilst most fans are doubtlessly fearful of the balance of the back row without Mark Chesterton, Joe has proven himself the apprentice, ready and waiting to take over the number 8 shirt with strength, mobility, technique and drive so that the Reigatian backrow will not miss a beat.

Finally **Try of the Season** was to be chosen from the following tries:

- Christopher "Mickey" Ellis, vs Sutton and Epsom
- William Tame, vs Effingham and Leatherhead
- Christopher "Mickey" Ellis, vs Sutton and Epsom (*Second Try*)

**Chris's second try against Sutton and Epsom** proved to be the outstanding try of the season. Gritty defence and a opportunistic turnover by Robert Forsyth gave Reigatians a platform at half way. Scrum Half replacement Edward Forsyth fired a pass to James Campbell running blind, beating the first player. Half tackled he unloaded to Christopher Ellis, but the ball fell behind Mickey. Fortunately his running motion by luck or by choice flicked the ball over Chris's head into the hands of Edward Forsyth, who drew the full back and passed back inside to Chris to run in the try. It was a brilliant try which exemplified the opportunistic nature of Christopher "Mickey" Ellis.

Under 18s – Euan Grimstone

Played	Won	Lost	Drew	Points For	Points Against
8	4	3	1	194	83

Farnham	5	5	Old Reigatians
Old Reigatians	52	5	Cranleigh
Effingham and Leatherhead	7	12	Old Reigatians
Old Reigatians	23	11	London Irish
Warlingham	12	10	Old Reigatians
Old Reigatians	77	0	Weybridge Vandals
Old Reigatians	0	7	Esher
Old Reigatians	15	36	Old Alleynians

During the summer of 2007 much was made of the controversial decision to bring in the youthful, inexperienced, yet unashamedly handsome coaching staff of Euan Grimstone and Thomas Collard. Citing a complete lack of coaching experience, underachieving playing careers and rumours of alcohol problems critics were quick to doubt the talented pair.

On the field previous seasons were marked by a small squad, inconsistent selection and under performing big name players. As a result little was expected of the Reigatian side heading into the new season. Few foresaw what would be a dramatic, glorious but ultimately unsuccessful fight for the league title.

*The Matches*

On a cold, windswept, wet, muddy December day the Reigatian U18 started their 2007/08 season away at Farnham. Atrocious conditions and even worse officiating threatened throughout this game to ruin what turned out to be a wonderful spectacle of rugby. An early unconverted try set up Reigate for the battle of a

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second half that ensued. Fighting bizarre refereeing decisions and a howling wind, the Reigate side struggled to get out of their half. Once inspirational leader Joe Tanner was sin binned the team finally buckled, after brutal defence. Reigate finished the game on top, pushing for a winning score, but it never came and the visiting side left with a richly deserved but slightly disappointing draw.

The disappointment did not last long however, due to a stunning thrashing of Cranleigh back at Park Lane. The team completely dominated the visiting side front start to finish; scoring 10 tries, with Sebastian Du Jardin and Dominic Johnson both picking up two tries. Brilliant performances from Du Jardin, Alexander and Simon Dungate and Andrew Furness invigorated the home support in anticipation of harder games to come.

Upon the frozen tundra of Effingham and Leatherhead, the travelling side threw down a gauntlet to the rest of the league with an epic comeback. When all was lost tries from Mike Parker and Andrew Furness cast aside the following spectators' doubts and poor refereeing decisions to triumph in terrible circumstances.

Another victory against London Irish followed, brilliant attack and forceful defence created a surprise victory that truly set up the Reigatian side for an epic second half of the season. Pundits and critics throughout the rugby world started to describe this side as potential champions. However a poor performance away at Warlingham broke down the undefeated season, quickly supporters questioned the side's desire and ability to play under pressure. Truth be told injuries to key players such as William Tame and Joe Tanner stripped the side of their most influential players and Warlingham fought hard for their victory.

On the back of a defeat, the return of the team spiritual leader, Euan Grimstone, from holiday prompted a new driven atmosphere around the team camp. In addition the promotion of William Godwin and Simon Dungate into starting positions in the side from the younger development sides coincided in one of the biggest wins of the season. A 77-0 thrashing of Weybridge Vandals, starring 11 conversions by James Watts and an amazing 5 tries from William Godwin. In truth the whole side played with aggression, drive and cohesion.

Unfortunately this was to prove the last win of the season as final defeats by Esher and Old Alleynians on home turf provided a somewhat disappointing end to the season, as the side was not able to surmount Old Alleynians from the top of the table. For the season to end as it did was a huge disappointment to the whole side. It was particularly taken badly by ex-coach Thomas Collard who was pictured in several tabloids drinking heavily in a Reigate bar, citing his resignation midseason having possibly cost the team a chance at the championship.

#### *Summary*

Throughout the season the team played with an unforeseen cohesion, something that shocked the rugby world, breaking down the previously insurmountable Reigate Grammar /St Bede's boundary. Further proof of the side's success was to be the brilliant play from Sebastian Du Jardin, buoyed on from the support from the sidelines from the inspirational maestro Euan Grimstone who midseason declared Sebastian to be: "The most promising natural finisher at the Old Reigatians since Christopher "Mickey" Ellis".

Skipper Edward Forsyth led the team brilliantly throughout the season fighting hard to inspire his team, whilst still doing a wonderful job of looking like his coach Thomas Collard, particularly around the waist. His hard work was hugely appreciated by his team, who looked up to him for his work rate and organisational skills.

Pack leader Joe Tanner added power, passion and drive to the team whenever his injuries allowed him to play. His brutal style of play and destructive defence frequently caused mass panic amongst opposing sides. Man of the Match on frequent occasions he was another player who was hugely appreciated by the team and the coaches. He was aided in the back row with rangy blindside forward Mike Ford who was a brilliant option at the lineout and Nathan Lucas who played with the burst of an inside centre but with the work rate of a classic openside flanker. Appearances by William Handley and Nathan Lucas were equally combatative and rarely did the side find itself out of sorts after a substitution.

In the front row Thomas Brown dominated teams throughout the season, able to compete against even the biggest opposition and able to make game changing hits, Tom will be a leader of the 18s side next year, his age giving him another year in the 18s a fact that the coaching staff find quite remarkable. Mike Parker and

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Dominic Johnson aided Tom in the front row and between the three of them presented opposing sides with a horrible, turbulent, attritional force. For Mike and Dominic to also pop up on the scoresheet was a graphic demonstration of their work rate around the field and not their selfishness. To their great credit Thomas Hepburn and Nathan Jones stepped in occasionally in the front row and did themselves great favours in every appearance. It was players such as these that seemed to ease side selection and made the side far easier to manage. To play without complaint often adding to the side rather than subtracting says a lot about two characters that were extremely self depreciating but well appreciated by their teammates.

In the second row Alex Dungate was quietly one of the best players of the season. Never one to complain, always dependable and always mobile, Alex added a great lineout option, good hands and an intense desire to win. John Chitty, Cameron, Richard Johns and Lance Lohse also frequently came in the second row and provided great technical scrummaging and rucking, able to put their head where most people would not even chance their feet all were great players to coach throughout the season and more importantly of great help to the side. Lance in particular will be another to graduate next season into a leader of the side as his youth allows him a second year with the 18s.

At 10 Rowan Mclean was a metronomic presence throughout the season. Happiest with his hands on the ball, Rowan had the eye to spot a gap and the acceleration to take advantage of it. His runs frequently set up great counter attacking opportunities for the side, despite his questionable temperament. Outside him James Watts and William Tame shared an almost fraternal intuition that the side always benefitted from. Never the weak links in defence despite their diminutive frame that clamour from some time in the gym. Andrew Furness throughout the season was always one to play anywhere in the backline, fullback, fly half, centres. He was constantly in charge, displayed great sartorial elegance and a brilliant lid, Andrew was a coaching favourite. He will have many opportunities to shine in the U21 set up if he chooses to. Simon Dungate in his few appearances looked to be a player of great ability and a favourite with the female fans. Pundits and journalists suggest he may have the impact on rugby that David Beckham has had on football. Outside Alex Dixon, Brad Jepson, the aforementioned Sebastian Du Jardin and Gwilym Owen were dangerous throughout, particularly Dixon who was one of the most dangerous wingers in the league. Brad Jepson's fleeting appearances offered a thought of what could be to come for the young prospect.

There were others who contributed throughout, and a measure of skipper Edward Forsyth's organisational skills that some could be forgotten in the great list of players this season. The players fought hard throughout, defended like titans and rarely complained (Mclean aside). Good looking coaching guru Euan Grimstone later commenting on his pledges, said: "The boys have been a pleasure to coach".

#### *Awards*

##### The Nominations for **Player of the Season 2007/8**

- Joe Tanner, *Number 8*
- Edward Forsyth, *Scrum-Half*
- Andrew Furness, *Fly-Half/Full Back*
- Alex Dixon, *Winger*

Only players playing their final year of U18 rugby were considered. All four were brilliant throughout the season but finally **Andrew Furness** was the team's Player of the season always flexible, always capable of spotting a gap and always secure in the passing.

##### The Nominations for **Junior Player of the Season 2007/8**

- Thomas Brown, *Prop*
- William Godwin, *Flanker*
- Lance Lohse, *Second Row*
- Simon Dungate, *Centre*

Under 16s – Paul Dungate

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Played	Won	Lost	Drew	Points For	Points Against
13	13	0	0	468	67

### **Players**

Starting the season with a squad of 20, by season-end the U16's had 25 RFU registered players. A guest South African player in England for 6 weeks only joined of his own volition and played his part in a couple of games before returning home. An Old Reigatians shirt has been sent to him as a memento.

An interesting point to note is that whilst the hard core of the squad are RGS boys, there is a significant number of St Bede's boys, a couple of Warwick School and one Reigate and Oakwood School boys respectively. They are very much integrated and the whole squad mix happily and well together, having gelled as a single unit with no cliques. It is a good example of the community cohesion that is increasingly a feature of the Club. The positional balance of the squad was good.



Squad at Mitcham: Photo courtesy of Ed Wheeler

### **Coaches and Management**

The duties between coaching and management were split with Phil Smith continuing to be the Head Coach, greatly assisted (especially with regards to forward play) by Jonathan Burbidge. Both are extremely popular with the players and both training sessions and match days' business was all conducted in the right spirit and frame of mind, depending on the circumstances.

As regards administration and management, with Phil's guidance the tasks were apportioned between a team of four, being Paul Dugate (match reports, management reports, general administration), Paul Godwin (squad communication and arrangements), Roger Addison (match day formalities and results submissions) and Mark Elsey (a strategic view!).

The coaches and management worked well together, allowing the boys to concentrate on their matches. All are CRB cleared. It is likely that this set-up will continue into next season.

### **Matches and Team/Squad Performances**

This is a team and squad that knows how to play winning rugby, including showing the spirit to dig deep and fight hard when under pressure. Consequently, the Club should be proud of not only the record of 13 wins from 13 games, but also the way and the spirit in which the U16s play the game. They are hard but always fair and conduct themselves properly with the opposition both during and after games.



Photo courtesy of Ed Wheeler

The record is quite impressive. It reads 13 matches played (League 3 – seven games, Club friendlies – five games including League 2 opposition, on Tour – two games). The total points scored were a massive 468 with only 67 against (of which 26 came in one match). This includes full squad rotation as several players picked up injuries along the way as well as being unavailable because of competing School events. All matches were well supported by parents. Opposition coaches often led the praise of certain outstanding individuals in the team.

### **Honours**

At an end of season BBQ event at the club on 2 May, the following awards for the season were announced:

Player of the Year – James Hudson (full back)  
Most Improved Forward – Steve Edgerley (second row)  
Most Improved Back – Will Irving (fly half)  
Clubman – Jake Sheldon

In addition, Will Godwin and Simon Dungate were in demand and each played several times and James Hudson once for the ORRFC U18s.

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George Wheeler (Captain and hooker) continued to make the Sussex squad and Will Godwin (back row) was involved at Harlequins.

**Tour**

An Easter weekend tour of Gloucester was arranged principally by an U16s parent who kindly extended this to arranging it to be jointly with the U15s. Apart from a minor mishap with an overloaded Hotel lift (for which, in the end, the Hotel were probably grateful as it demonstrated the ineffectiveness of their safety and alarm system procedures in non-serious circumstances), the team behaved well.

The Saturday included some coaching by a couple of Bath first team squad players and forming the guard of honour as the teams ran on at the match between Bath and London Irish. In addition, on the Friday and the Sunday they played well to overcome two strong Gloucester teams who clearly expected to roll them over. It shows the class of this squad that the two teams they beat, Longlevens and Widden Old Boys, were recent County Cup Finalists and had just played each other in the semi-final of the County Cup for this season.



Photo courtesy of Ed Wheeler

**Kit**

Miraculously, no shirts were lost throughout the season. In addition, with some sponsorship, squad T-shirts and a contribution to the costs of the tour were donated by London Bridge Associates.

**Reports**

The U16s Team Page on the Club website shows a full report for every match. This allowed the local press to take those reports and abridge them for the Surrey Mirror and its associated publications. Additionally, one particular parent was always on hand to record action shots in most matches and some of these made the local press too. Thanks go to Ed Wheeler for making the U16s gallery on the website the best one there.

**Other Events**

To help subsidise the costs of the Tour, the boys themselves led the arrangements for a highly successful, well-behaved and very popular Social Evening (including an entertaining scantily clad warm-up and down by the

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squad at the Clubhouse).

#### Under 15s

At the beginning of the season there was barely a full team turning up for training but by the end of the season, they had turned themselves round from a group of boys with low confidence, in to a unit of players who believed in what they could achieve. The original squad gained new recruits as the season progressed to finish with a tight group of 20 to 24 players turning up for most matches and training. Looking forward, the team needs to continue to understand the importance of the training sessions, as well as the experience they gain from being in matches and the discipline that goes with this.

The league season started with a loss to Effingham. However, once they started pulling together and gaining confidence they did not lose another league game ending the season with 4 league wins out of 5. Some of the games were very hard fought but they hung in there to come top of their league and gain promotion into the next league for 2008/09. A fantastic effort that we could not have believed at the beginning of the season, so well done to all, not forgetting the fantastic efforts made by the coaches.

We had a successful tour to Gloucester over the Easter weekend. This helped to further integrate the team, with the whole squad getting along together and working well as a team. Surprisingly, they were even well behaved apart from the odd moment! Apart from the weather, which threw everything it could at us, the team, along with the U16's, enjoyed some coaching from the Bath coaches prior to forming the Guard of Honour at the start of the Bath v London Irish match at the Bath stadium. They also played two tough matches of which they lost one and won one.

Over the year, the team improved both their skills and teamwork, culminating in Captain, Will Hughes and Coach, Nick Barratt picking up the Winners plate at Twickenham in May. They could not have done without Baz and Reidy, as well as the back up from Ali Tye and Malcolm Davidson.

Thanks should also go to parents for continuing to support the boys and coming in increasing numbers to matches, also to Rick Carter for all his brilliant action shots and Robert Fraser, for match reports and headlines in the local papers which have really helped to raise the team profile and given them something to be proud of.

Lets look forward to another spectacular year in 2008/09.

#### **Playing record:**

Played 11, won 7: lost 4  
Points for 199: Points against 123

#### **Honours:**

Squad Player of the Year – Max Hutchinson  
Most Improved Forward – Charlie Grieg  
Most Improved Back – Josh Black  
Clubman of the Year – Will Hughes (Captain)

Congratulations also to those who were called to development training for Surrey and in particular to Max Hutchinson for getting through to the Surrey squad.

#### Under 14s – Gary Stehrenberger

Following a tough start to league rugby at U13 level, in which we had to fight hard to maintain our position in league 2, the squad developed well at U14 and finished in a comfortable 4<sup>th</sup> place behind Old Ruts, Guildford

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and KCS who were all promoted to league 1 for next season. In fact, we were only denied 3<sup>rd</sup> place and promotion ourselves by two draws, both from winning positions, against Farnham and KCS. Despite that we would have to say that, for this season, all boxes were ticked. The boys enjoyed their rugby and played some scintillating stuff whilst, at the same time, improving their skills and performance. With a smaller, more mobile pack and an exciting back division our rugby was based on a fast, handling game, that yielded 43 tries in 10 matches, and aggressive defence. The final playing record was P-10, W-7, D-2, L-1, F-247 A-112.

Apart from losing 10-31 in driving rain and sleet on a waterlogged pitch to an enormous Old Ruts team, who were promoted as league winners, the rest of the matches went very well. Two 12 all draws against KCS and Farnham, both from winning positions, that were conceded cheaply by lapses in concentration, were the only blots on the copy book. The aim for next season must be to learn how to close out a match once a winning lead has been established. Esher came back from the dead in the last 15 minutes only to lose out 22-19.

The season started with a friendly (?) against Sutton & Epsom B where an under strength team bravely held off the mighty S&E pack. The damage was done by the backs who ran S&E ragged and scored four tries to produce a winning score of 20-7. This result launched the season. The disappointing draw with Farnham was followed by a 17-5 win that was ground out against a huge Weybridge Vandals side that had little to offer in the backs. Haywards Heath visited us for a non-league fixture and were despatched 17-5. The loss to Old Ruts before Christmas halted our progress but normal service was resumed against an aggressive and ill disciplined Dorking side who we beat 24-7. Another friendly against Heathfield & Waldren in a very strong wind yielded 12 tries and the 66-7 win was ideal preparation for the subsequent 44-5 trouncing of a weak Rosslyn Park team. This was followed by the disappointing 12 all draw against KCS and the nail biting 22-19 win against Esher where a 22-7 lead was clawed back by an inspired visiting team. This last match was probably the pick of the bunch in terms of entertainment value. (For the record the league match against Guildford could not be played).

For the U15 season the league 2 expands to 10 teams. We have lost 3 teams promoted to league 1 while Dorking and Rosslyn Park will be playing in league 3. We welcome back Effingham from league 1 and Chobham both of which had miserable seasons in the top flight. Warlingham, Sutton & Epsom B, Wimbledon and Camberley are all promoted from league 3.

A special mention must be made of Gerry O'Sullivan who resigned as manager mid-season. Gerry was very instrumental in the development of the squad in the early years and through the first season and a half of league rugby. His shoes have been filled by Gary Stehrenberger who is already up to full speed. A huge thank you to Ted Kennedy and Danny Haine who, year in year out, have coached the forwards and backs respectively. They have been helped by a cast of a few, namely Simon Todd, Sean Talbot and Andrew Smith. This really has been a great team effort all round and we look forward to another great season this year.

#### Under 13s

A big year for the U13's, the transition from mini to junior rugby, 15 a side on a full size pitch and the introduction of a competitive league is not something that should be sniffed at.

We elected to have a slow start to the season with only two friendly matches prior to the start of the league, a win against East Grinstead (44-5) and a trip to the Maidenhead tournament where we met two strong teams from Maidenhead and Amersham and lost closely to both.

Team building as always was a top priority and we had a very successful day paintballing in late September.

We finished the 2005/2006 season with a squad of 23, despite some boys deciding to concentrate on other activities; we picked up a number of new enthusiastic players and now have 31.

The squad is drawn from 8 schools with no dominant school; this fact has been to our advantage during the season as we have seen a number of the opposition's teams decimated by school skiing trips.

Having the depth of skills within the squad, enabled us to put out a strong side even when injuries removed

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some of the core squad members. The actual fitness of the boys showing up in many matches when in the second halves our boys seemed to be as fresh as when they first walked onto the pitch.

Our outings into Surrey League 2 turned out to be highly successful and we managed 8 out of 8 wins and finished the league as unbeaten champions and promoted to Surrey League 1 having scored 219 points and only conceded 17!

In order to continue to provide as much rugby as possible across the squad, all of our friendly games were used as development matches specifically aimed at those boys who were not getting as much league rugby. This is a policy we will continue into the new season.

At the end of May, Gavin and Ryan travelled to Twickenham to pick up the trophy which was proudly displayed at our presentation evening held on 7<sup>th</sup> June. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, end of season awards were presented to George Mullen for 'Most improved player', Ollie Hutson for 'Player of the year', and Kevin Sheldrick (manager) for 'Sportsman of the year'!!

After 7 years as coach, Gavin Peniston-Bird has decided to hang up his boots, the thanks of all the players (past and present), the parents and the club go to Gavin for his outstanding efforts to create the foundations on which this highly successful squad is based.

In this season we have had 3 boys attend the Harlequin's Academy, James Burrows, Kern Bush-Nelson and Ryan Travers and another 4 attend the RFU's SOR sessions, Ollie Hutson, Sam White, George Marguet-Pew, and Josh Hampson.

Our thanks must also go to Dave Tinn, Russ Gibson, Kevin Sheldrick, Stuart Choate, and Ralph Travers for all their hard work both on the coaching and administration teams.

#### Under 12s - Derek Holme

We opened the season with a seriously depleted squad, about one third down from the previous season and a lot of our stronger players gone. In the early stages we struggled, took some hard defeats, but the team never lost their spirit and determination. Gradually their performance improved; still defeats, but the scores closer, and the occasional win in the festivals.

The improvement continued and culminated in a terrific performance in the Guilfordian's Festival in March, where they deservedly won the day, picking up the U12s trophy. Comments from the day include "Your forwards are good, we don't often get pushed back like that!" and "During the final their coach patted me on the back and said what a committed bunch of lads we had; as coaches there is no better compliment than that.....so thank you all for giving your all!". Unfortunately weather and circumstances prevented them taking this any further.

This season has been about a bunch of young lads maturing as individuals and as a team, developing friendship and respect for each other, and preparing for the transition from the Minis to the Juniors next season, and looking forward to the challenges this will bring.

#### Under 11s - Nigel Walker

We started the season with 22 lads from 2006/7 (having lost a few during the summer months) but managed to gain an impressive 13 new players during the year ending up with 35 - enough players to be able to field two teams plus substitutes. After much debate, we decided to split the lads into As and Bs after Christmas. This quickly paid dividends, with the lads gaining a better appreciation of their team mates and both the As and Bs developing their team play significantly.

There were a few rule changes coming into the u11s - the main ones being an increase to 12 on the pitch, the

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addition of a second line to the scrum (now 5 in total) and kicking (the ball !!) introduced. The last one being the rule change the lads had been looking forward to most of all. After the initial novelty wore off they soon realised that kicking (or should I say mis-kicking) the ball a few yards and losing possession is really not the way to win games.

Coaching - Dave Green joined as our fifth official coach. Overall the coaching benefited from this new blood and the fact that Dave had attended one of the excellent RFU coaching courses. Kevin Richardson has also been actively helping out for the second half of the season, and he will become an official coach in 2008/9.

Festivals - we played in 6 festivals (excluding our own) during the year - 3 As (Chipstead, S&E and Surrey) and 3 Bs (Wimbledon, Guildford and Surrey). The lads struggled to get many points on the scoreboard in the A festivals. What they did not lack was commitment and determination, never giving up even when they knew there was no hope of winning. We could not ask more of them - making the parents and coaches very proud.

There is a different story to be told for the B festivals. The lads made it to the finals at Wimbledon - only to be beaten by a bigger and fresher Richmond squad. Despite appalling conditions at Guildfordians (seeing many teams giving up and going home early), we saw them play some of their best ever rugby and only just missing getting through to the semi finals on points difference. At the Surrey B festival at the end of the season they were unbeaten until weather stopped play.

The season has been a highly successful one. Our numbers have swelled, the lads have enjoyed their rugby and the standard of play improved significantly. We realise that, even though our standard has improved, so has that of the serious opposition. If we are to be competitive against the local A teams we need to improve even further, and so training in 08/09 will become much more focused.

#### Under 10s - Simon Peacock

The 2007/08 season can be considered a success for the U10s, as having started the season with around 40 players we finished with 50+ registered members, with an average 35-40 turning up each week. Although great for the club's finances, this was a challenge for the coaches. The priority this season was on ball handling, good rucking and a stronger defence, as this suited the style of game that we wanted the kids to play (i.e. running with the ball and moving it away from the opposition's big players). Given the growing number of players, after Christmas it was decided that it was in the best interest of everyone to divide the group into three squads, with Ian Maslin and Clive Cheal making very welcome additions to the coaching team. This certainly helped make each session more effective for everyone, so that by season-end we saw a massive improvement in all three squads, which is encouraging for the new season.

- For the A side, our aim was to turn these individuals into a team that would be consistently competitive against the top teams in Surrey, which given our previous record at Surrey A and early season form at Chipstead we were not. Although we naturally have room for improvement, at Guildfordians (despite the atrocious conditions) the boys won all their games and were putting the ball through the hands, and played more as a team. The gap has definitely closed.
- The B squad had a tough season, often playing against sides physically much bigger, but credit must be given to this group of players that they stuck at it and by the last few fixtures they began playing with more confidence, which translated into big wins on the scoreboard. They are not far away, but need to move the ball through the hands more quickly and tackle lower. These guys have plenty of 'heart', which you can not coach, and will get there.
- The Development side really improved during the year. In October, we played a specially arranged fixture against Chipstead B/Cs and, despite lots of effort, lost all the games pretty convincingly. However, come the Surrey Development Festival this squad was unrecognisable, and only lost 2 (out of 8) halves of rugby. Despite some 'no shows', the guys won their first two matches fairly comfortably and it was unfortunate that due to an injury they had to play the remaining two pool games against the best sides with only eight

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players. The boys played some decent rugby but Cobham and KCS had full squads and were able to rotate and rest players during the day. This made all the difference, as everyone was carrying some sort of knock by the end, but no one wanted to come off...you can't ask for more.

### Awards

Player of the Year for the A side was a closely fought contest and was won by **Toby Bunn**. We all knew Toby had bags of courage and commitment, but what we saw towards the end of the season was Toby passing the ball a lot more often, and showing much improved decision making at scrum half. Particular praise must also go to **William Shackel** for being by far the most consistent and outstanding forward in the group, while **Marcus Hodgkinson, Sam Brill, Sean Kenny and Jack Baart** all played important roles.

**Ben Maslin** won Player of the Year for the B side. Ben played all the positions in the side without a word of complaint and with 100% commitment every single time. Other contenders were **Ross Digby-Patel, Matthew Ferguson, Sam Palmer** and of course **Rachel Dungate** who yet again was the side's best tackler.

**Toby Jones** was our Development squad's Player of the Year. When Toby joined us at the start of the year, he had a lot to learn and was a gentle giant, but his transformation over the season is testament to his positive attitude and hard work.

Most Improved Player went to **Hamish Salmon**. When we split the group into the three squads we placed Hamish in the Development side with the challenge of proving us wrong. It was a tough call and Hamish could easily have fallen away; but full credit to him as he certainly did prove us wrong. His commitment, concentration and attitude were excellent, while his skill level improved significantly, and by season-end he had rightly deserved his promotion to the B side. Other strong contenders were **Harry Stoye, Robert Cheal** and **Ben Hoad**. Each has a good attitude and showed a willingness to tackle and get stuck in, something that they were pretty nervous about at the start of the season.

Best Newcomer was **Matt Coate**. Matt was a regular in the A side and he takes everything that you say on board (most unusual for a forward). The standard from newcomers was very high this year. **George Oyebode, Edward Stephenson, Tobias Thorpe, Harry Powell, Edward Stephen** and **Nathan Downes** have each have proved to be real assets to the club, and could have won this award.

The boys (& girl) are (relatively speaking) an easy bunch to coach and all credit must go to them for their enthusiasm and commitment over the season. Many thanks must go to my fellow coaches for their ongoing dedication and making the atmosphere at training very enjoyable for the kids, and off the field for all those that contributed with various duties in the kitchen, car parking, and supporting the coaches during the season. This is very much appreciated as building support and teamwork off the field is just as important and can only add to the success we can achieve on the field.

### Under 9s

Sunday 20th April 2008. Surrey A Festival Semi-Final. Old Reigatians U9s Vs Dorking. A group of 8-year-old boys showed their parents and coaches that they could compete with the best in Surrey.

A defeat by a single try was heartbreaking for everyone but the pride we all felt as the whistle blew to end the game was a fitting peak to a season of great transition for our young and very talented rugby players.

The performance of our boys in the Surrey A Festival was no surprise to us as coaches as we had witnessed a rapid progression throughout the squad as the season matured. The hard work, spirit and downright

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determination shown by these little men was a sight to behold. This was the second year in succession that these boys had reached the Semi Final of the Premier Festival in the South East. They are determined to make it a winning 2009.

The conclusion of our season is a proper way to begin our season's report as it tells us how far these terrific group of players have grown over the season.

The introduction of contact and "proper" rugby this year came as a shock to some. We were all relieved to see how the vast majority of the squad gradually grasped the finer points of tackling. Some wounded pride, the odd bruise here and there and the occasional bloody nose only served to gel the squad together in the early part of the season.

We would like especially to thank Tim Button for his enthusiastic willingness to help at every opportunity and the very instructive manner in which he guided the U9 coaches through the initial challenge of communicating the principles of contact to the squad. Well done Tim!

The success of a squad is not measured solely by the success of those boys chosen to appear in A Squad Festivals. Our B Squad Tigers have probably progressed the most this year with some stunning improvements over the year by a number of players. All the coaches congratulate them for their achievements.

In some very difficult weather conditions these boys proved at Guildford and Camberley that the depth of talent we have in the U9s is going to make next year's endeavours even more exciting.

Our thanks once again to the most supportive group of parents we could wish for. As long as you show the commitment to the cause like the players do on the pitch then we can't go far wrong.

We must say a sincere thank you to Ralph Tuckwell our Manager for this year. He has done a sterling job and deserves recognition for a responsibility, which at times can stretch the patience of a Saint. Well done Ralph. Ralph has handed the reigns to Karen Head for the coming season and we welcome her to the fold.

A very special thank you to James Picking for his efforts as Minis Chairman for the past two years. In our view James has raised the standards for this role in the club and will be a hard act to follow. Brilliant job James!

On behalf of all the coaches we would like to wish players and parents a fun packed summer holiday and we will be ready and bursting to go again come September !!

#### Under 8s - Hugh Serjeant

The U8s have undoubtedly had a jam-packed season. Our measure of success has always been to keep the boys and girls coming back each week, so I am pleased that we have consistently had a group of around 35 each Sunday and managed to field 4 separate squads of 10 or 11 on the final weekend of the season at different events at different grounds.

On the playing front, we have come a long way. Many of the golden rules of tag-rugby the boys and girls will take with them to next season's contact rugby, which clearly cannot come too soon for many of them. I believe that we have a talented squad, with excellent strength in depth. Last season the only squad to reach a final was our Development Squad that went all the way to the final of the Wimbledon C Festival but ran out of steam and couldn't quite secure the trophy. This season, by contrast, we have had good results across all teams.

In November, we hosted the inaugural U8 ORRFC Development Festival, to which we had invited Chipstead, Rosslyn Park and Teddington (each of which brought 2 teams) and Brighton RFC. This clearly sparked some competitive instincts in our teams of Bears and Wolves and the former went all the way to the final and succeeded in lifting the brand new trophy on home territory. Our first silverware! We had favourable comments from our guests too which was nice.

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In December, we ventured across the Severn for our first tour. We took 24 players plus siblings and parents which made for a tour party of over 60. After an eventful coach journey, we enjoyed a trip to Cardiff Arms Park to see the Blues outplay Stade Francais in the Heineken Cup, the latter being dressed head to toe in pink, much to the amusement of the boys and girls. On the Sunday we turned out on a bitterly cold, windswept Welsh hillside at Pentyrch RFC where our hosts had laid on a mini-festival just for our benefit with three other clubs visiting. Our Wasps and Bees certainly travelled better than their French counterparts the previous day and both ended up mid-table at the end of an enjoyable day's rugby. The boys and girls were very excited to meet two Welsh internationals in the clubhouse afterwards, as they were presented with their medals. The return coach trip was perhaps a little subdued as the combination of 5 games of rugby and a late night took its toll.

In March, we took two squads to the Guildford B Festival. Both Eagles and Barbarians stuck to the task despite horrendous conditions which led to the event being curtailed. The Barbarians were, in fact, not just unbeaten but won every game and yet only qualified for the plate final on the basis of tries scored. Nonetheless, they went on to win the Plate Final in fine style to add a second piece of silverware to our U8s trophy cabinet.

In April, we attended Surrey As, Bs and Surrey Development Festivals as well as hosting our second ORRFC Development Festival and a B Team Festival both with Rosslyn Park and London Irish. In the ORRFC Development Festival, this time it was Rosslyn Park who prevailed though both Eagles and Tigers gave good accounts of themselves. It was a similar picture in the B Team event in which the Barbarians also played enthusiastically but just missed out, finishing in third place as well. At the Surrey Bs in Camberley and the Surrey Development Festival at Nescot, our Eagles and Tigers encountered blizzard conditions and again the event at Camberley was called off before the end, but both teams stuck at it and will have learned a great deal from the experience.

Up to this point in the season, all squads had experienced some success apart from the Wasps. They travelled to Dorking for the Surrey As following a rather chaotic training session on the Saturday. The NCBS gazebo was large enough to shelter most of the teams present from the power of the sun, which was a pleasant surprise after the weather in the preceding weeks. The Wasps, quite simply, played the best rugby of the season. The starting moves which had worked in fits and starts hitherto produced quite breathtaking scores from a long way out, time and again. Only in 1 game out of 5 did the boys falter and this cost them dearly as 4 wins out of 5 was insufficient to see us through to the semi-final. Old Reedonians had won 5 out of 5. To win 4 out of 5 at the Surrey As is an achievement of which every Wasp should be proud. And it still leaves room for improvement next year!

It is a challenge for us to pick out individuals at the end of the season but I must report that the Most Improved Player Award went to Aaron Gilchrist. This was thoroughly deserved as he listened to every instruction from the coaches and implemented them as requested. He runs straight, passes well, tags well and has become one of the best support runners at U8, timing his runs beautifully. The Sportsman of the Year Award deservedly went to Ben Silverman who always plays with a smile on his face and managed to represent all three clubs at our April Development Festival, which must be some kind of record and speaks volumes about his attitude in general. Our Player of the Season was Harrison Kiy; not just for excellent running and passing skills but also for consistency of performance, enthusiasm and also attitude throughout the season. Well done not just to those three, but to all the squad, as all our U8s deserve praise for the effort they have put in and the progress they have made over the last eight months.

I must not omit thanks to my fellow coaches and Andrew, our manager, for the time they put in to making everything work smoothly. And a big thank you also to all those parents and supporters who have helped out in so many different ways throughout the season, from car park to kitchen to cake stall to festival marshal to team coach. This is very much appreciated.

Please enjoy the summer and we will see you in September for contact rugby (if not before)!

Under 7s – Steve Jenner

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The U7s had their first season of competitive rugby this season. Many of the players rose to the occasion well. It is clear that they have a strong competitive edge. The beginning of the season saw 35 players register and throughout the season we had a regular attendance of 25+ boys and girls.

#### Coaching

The number of parents willing to get involved is a key theme of the U7s. The lead coaches Richard Woodford, Steve Brann, Steve Allan and Andy Shaw were assisted by about half a dozen other parents on a weekly basis, and on more than one occasion we have seen the parents out-run or out-manoeuvred by a sprightly 6 year old!

The focus on the coaching was to

- Develop the impressive basic game skill that the players picked up as U6s
- Instil the basic tactics of the game into the players
- Begin to create a team rather than a collection of individual players, and
- Whilst doing these 3 things keep the sessions fun, interesting and challenging for players of all abilities

Matches – the first half of the season saw unstreamed teams made up of players of mixed ability break into competitive rugby. The teams did well and showed against Dorking, Old Caterhamians, Effingham and Leatherhead that they could hold their own, and had a few players that really shone in the match situations.

As the season began to draw towards the big festivals at Guilford and Dorking, the dominant players were clearly emerging. At this stage streamed squads were selected, and a regular A team was chosen to represent ORRFC in the festivals. This team had their first real outing at the Guilford festival, which was a real test of the team's determination and resilience with some of the wettest and most windswept conditions they had yet faced. Out of 3 games they had 2 draws and a loss. It was clear that despite their prolific ability to score from nothing, their ability to defend needed work.

The team's final show at the Dorking Festival was very tense for both the parents and the players. They did not manage a win out of their 5 games, but the improvement we saw in them during the tournament was clear. In their last game they nearly staged a group upset by leading Rosslyn Park (the group winners) for the majority of the game, only for their concentration to slip at the end.

#### Awards

There was big debate over who should win the two awards that were given.

The most improved player award went to Charlie Allen, who over the 2007-08 season found a drive, determination and passion for the game and was a role model for the rest of the squad.

The player of the season had many contenders. Prolific try scoring from Thomas Woodford and amazing pace and ball skills from Toby Brann made them both obvious contenders.....but for the first time the award went to a female member of the squad. Charlotte England's combination of tagging, passing and try scoring skills made her an invaluable member of the squad and a pleasure to have in the side.

A very big thank you is due to the coaches and parents for their commitment, enthusiasm and patience throughout the season. We are looking forward to next season and developing the individual talents we undoubtedly have into a number of regular teams.

Under 6s – Steve Jenner

Without playing competitive games this age group is all about giving youngsters their first introduction to

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rugby, learning the basis skills and absolutely having fun. In all those respects, another successful season for the youngsters with over 30 players regularly attending, including many new faces and new recruits arriving throughout the season. The weather proved to be a bit of challenge to maintaining momentum with a number of sessions cancelled and a few more curtailed by inclement conditions. However, despite the wind, rain, snow and hail, amazingly given their age, they all kept coming back for more. Their skill levels, understanding of the laws and game continuity went from strength to strength throughout the year and I would say a strong start to hopefully a long rugby career for these kids.

As ever, very difficult to single individuals out given how hard everyone worked, but, Player of the Year was Theo Colvin who showed an understanding of tactics and space far beyond his years but who was also one of the first to help his younger team mates. Most Improved Player of the Year was George Clarke who made great progress this year, listening to what he was being taught and then trying really hard to put that into practice in the drills and in the games.

I would like to thank my fellow coaches and all the mums and dads for their enthusiasm, touchline support and on the field participation throughout the year, with special mention to regular coaches Tim " the most injured man in the world" Bostel, Rich John and Jerry Clarke and also for those parents who rolled up their sleeves and answered the calls for help on the kitchen rota.

Above all thanks to the kids for making it such good fun, see you all next year and tell your all friends at school all about rugby at Old Reigatians.