

Annual Report

**A report on the activities of
Essex County RFU for the season
2023-2024**

Essex County Rugby Football Union
Founded 1885 Re-formed 9th December 1954
Constituent Body of the RFU 13th July 2003

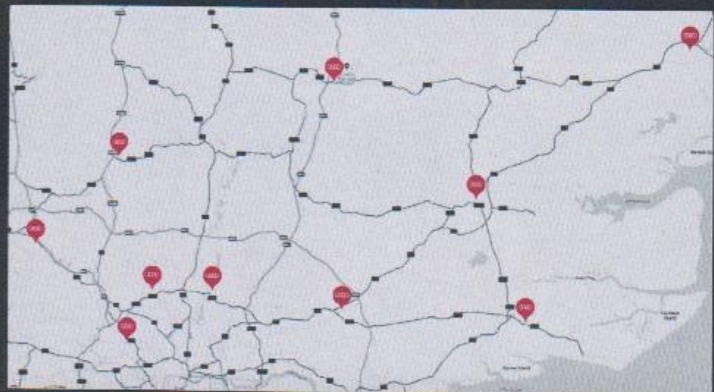


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Foreword

Keith Hill – President Essex County RFU

Firstly, can I thank you all for your support during my year as President which I consider to be an honour and a privilege. I would also like to thank you all for what you do to help rugby in the County.

I have had the privilege of visiting many clubs throughout the County this year, and I have been amazed at the commitment of the hundreds of volunteers making our game possible. If we had to pay for a small fraction of the thousands of volunteering hours, all our clubs would be bankrupt!

It is for this reason, I particular enjoyed the honour of presenting the Honda Valued Volunteers of the year awards to the many nominees from many clubs at a reception held at Thurrock RFC in May, ahead of our Men's senior XV's playing their County championship fixture against Gloucestershire. It was a great occasion to see so many committed rugby people, and to thank them in person.

Whilst I have mentioned the fantastic volunteering within our clubs, I would also like to acknowledge the ample work undertaken by various people that operate the CB without whom the game wouldn't be possible. This includes activities ranging from volunteer recognition, discipline, tournament organisation, safeguarding & welfare, County representative sides and providing support to clubs in various ways. Their reports on the activities of the County follow on in this report. I would also like to thank Nick Bracken, our immediate past president from whom I took over for his support advice and assistance.

Whilst it is always easy to talk about the positives, in signing off I feel I need to talk about some of the worrying changes the game is still seeing post the covid pandemic. We are still seeing a reduction in the number of adult men playing rugby, with many 2nd & 3rd XV's folding. There is also an erosion of the games core values, this is evidenced by the increase in match official abuse and off-field disciplinary matters.

In order to address this and the many other issues, we have implemented a process to redesign the way in which we as a constituent body of the RFU is organised and operates. We want to make sure it is fit for purpose and best meets the needs of our member clubs, whilst delivering those activities mandated by the RFU.

For this to be successful we need the engagement and participation of all concerned and I would urge you to please give your full attention and input to the engagement process.

Thanking you for what you do.

Yours in Rugby

Keith Hill – President Essex County RFU



Hon Secretary's Report Ivor Smith

In the Annual Report for 2003-4 Dai Davies the President of the day opened the report by saying:

"The past year has been a momentous season for Essex Rugby. Since achieving our long term aim of Constituent Body status last July, the County has made great strides. We have been faced with great challenges which have been met head on and, whilst on a steep learning curve, we can be proud of the progress that has been made, both with increased administration and our successes where it matters - on the playing field."

At the RFU AGM on the 3rd July 2003 the County was elected as a Constituent Body of the RFU. Now, 21 years after that date and following on from the decisions made at our last AGM, we have reviewed our structure and processes as a Constituent Body. The proposed changes to our constitution were accepted at the last AGM and the work undertaken by Alan Brooking our Chair of Finance in implementing a strawman review of our roles and responsibilities were approved. We then undertook a review of these changes and can now look forward to a structure which meets the requirements that we as a Constituent Body need to make in the light of the current changes to the Rugby Landscape not only in our area, but also nationally.

Essex County RFU "Strawman 2023" Update.

At last year's AGM we gave an update on the exercise the CB had been through to look at the CB's purpose, structure and objectives. From this exercise we established:

The Purpose of Essex RFU,

"To administer Rugby Union, working with the RFU, for the development of our Club's, players, coaches, volunteers and referees across all ages and genders to enable them to fulfil their full potential"

The Vision Of Essex RFU,

"to increase participation rates across the County".

5 areas of focus, all with defined activity and key metrics were identified.

- **Governance**, To ensure Clubs are operating in line with the RFU and County Rules and Regulations
- **Club Development**, To collaborate with Stakeholders to maintain the sustainability and well-being of our Clubs.
- **Diversity and Inclusion**, To ensure that ALL those who wish to participate in the game are treated fairly and given equal opportunity.
- **Engagement**, To ensure through effective structure and two-way communication we are understanding and address the needs of all Stakeholders.
- **Rugby Development**, To develop our players, coaches, volunteers which creates a pathway of progression to the highest level possible.

It is fair to say this is an ambitious plan and still requires a number of actions and communication channels to be put in place before we can really start to make inroads into some of our plans.

In terms of communication this was our priority last year in order to start the process of rebuilding links with the Clubs.

- **Chair's Supper.** We had an extremely useful meeting at Chelmsford.,
- **What's App.** We set up a Chair's whats app group to aid better communication and start to create a medium where Chairs can share and request information. We have also introduced a number of whats app groups to cover our various functions to help develop the game.
- **Website.** "www.essexrugby.com", our new website will provide links to the RFU on a range of matters, rules and regulations of the County, as well as regular updates on the County events, news, etc.

The other areas we have worked on are.

- **Essex RFU Youth Council.** This is a serious initiative to get the future leaders of our game involved in shaping the future needs of the County.
- **Essex Volunteer Charter.** Defines what a Volunteer can expect when volunteering for us as a Constituent body.
- **Essex Volunteer Recognition.** Defines the recognition process for all our Valued Volunteers at both CB and Club level.

Structure.

As part of the strawman exercise went through a restructuring of the County. We separated the Executive functions and created a Board of Directors, with the day to day delivery of managing the CB, the CB core responsibilities and delivery of all aspects of rugby owned by the Essex Management Team, which is supported by 90 Volunteers

Recruitment.

It is fair to say that we have a number of very key positions that need filling in order to continue to make inroads into our plans during 2024-25 and this will be a key action for the County as we urgently need;

- **Chair of Club Development,** this role will lead the Club develop engagement and is crucial to the success of our plans.
- **Chair of Diversity,** more than ever this a role we really need to educate us and lead the CB and our Clubs to ensure all those that wish to participate in the game are treated fairly and given equal opportunity.
- **Communication Manager,** to ensure we continue to develop all our communication channels, in order to reach as many people involved in our game as possible.
- **Player Safety Manager,** in the modern era where player safety is paramount this is a vital support role to the CB and our Clubs.

We are committed to deliver on these plans and to work with our Clubs, our RFU counterparts and our fantastic volunteers, to support all our Clubs to strive and achieve the very best for all their members.

Alan Brooking
Interim Chair Essex County RFU Executive

Honda Motors Valued Volunteer of the year nominees.

As set out above, our volunteers within the game are the games most important asset. This year the Honda Valued Volunteer of the year awards saw the County recognize just some of the outstanding volunteers who were nominated by clubs. It was pleasing to see most of the nominees attend the award presentations at Thurrock Rugby club prior to the County taking on Gloucestershire Men in the Bill Beaumont County Championships.

Honda Motors have continued to support the RFU recognition and reward program for volunteers. The work of volunteers in our clubs is really appreciated. The nominations for recognition this season were slightly up on the previous year and the quality of volunteers nominated this year remained high.

The 2023-24 awards had four categories – Connecting the Community, Game Changer, Game for All, and Unsung Hero, which recognised the outstanding contribution volunteers make to their rugby clubs and the wider community. EssexRugby received nominations in all four categories.

Connecting the Community

Angela Arnold; Elizabeth Calvert; Joanne Rasor - Essex Safeguarding

Game Changer

Peter Doolin - Clacton; Steven Clements - Kelvedon and Feering

Game for All

Laura Woodman - Southend; John Mulholland - East London

Unsung Hero

Jonathon Beales - Kelvedon and Feering; Mike Calvert - Wanstead; Paul Bach - Southend; Mary Short - Southend; Neil Davis - Romford & Gidea Park; Cindy Blunden - Harlow; Simon Blunden - Harlow; Ed Merry - Halstead Templers; Jo Merry - Halstead Templers; Lucy Flinter - Eton Manor; Lee Reed - Eton Manor; Richard Stock - Eton Manor; Lee Flintcroft – Eton Manor; Mathew Brown - Eton Manor; Paul Carr – Eton Manor; Steven Differ – Eton Manor; Tommy Gillingwater - Canvey Island; Brad Hill - Canvey Island; Ben Austin - Kelvedon and Feering

Also Nominated as Valued Volunteers were:

Ben Johnson Romford & Gidea Park; Charlie Andersen Millwall; Murray Keig-Hofstead Millwall; Liam Power Dagenham; Greg Harwood Romford & Gidea Park

As part of the National Valued Volunteer of the Year award program, EssexRugby was invited to select the names of three nominations to go forward to the National element of the recognition program for Honda and the RFU to select Volunteers to be the County finalist at the Honda Valued Volunteer of the Year Award national final. A difficult decision to make from the nominations but the three were:

Peter Doolin of Clacton RFC – Game Changer;

John Mulholland of East London RFC – Game for all;

Cindy Blunden of Harlow RFC – Unsung Hero

Essex County President Keith Hill said: “This is the fourth year that Honda have partnered with England Rugby to run the Volunteer Recognition Programme. Players at our clubs may give their all on the pitch, but without volunteers doing what they do week in, week out, they wouldn’t be out there. From our coaches to our secretaries and administrators; our grounds’ teams to our fundraisers; our chefs to our first aiders; and so many more, I thank them all for making rugby happen.

Most importantly, the award nominees were put forward by their fellow club members, players, parents and supporters, who have seen the difference those people have made to rugby in the community and feel they deserve a 'thank you' for their hard work. I thank Honda for giving us this opportunity to show that our volunteers are recognised and valued. I wish good luck in the national final."

Finance Report For the Annual Report.

Chair Of Finance: Alan Brooking.

Honorary Treasurer: Beiron Rees – July 2023-December 2023

Peter Phillips – January 2023 – June 2024

This report covers the period, 1st July 2023 to 30th June 2024 (FY24)

All figures quoted are fully inclusive of VAT.

I would like to confirm that during the period the County has met all its legal obligation as required by the FSA and HMRC in terms of VAT, Corporation Tax, Annual Accounts and FSA reporting.

At the start of FY24, the County had cash of £125,800, income for the year was £128,421 with an expenditure of £127,609.

In terms of expenditure, £62,84, was spent on supporting rugby, £25,270 on purchase of international tickets, and £39,553 on managing the CB.

In terms of Income £64,285 was from grants from the RFU of which £26,484 was to support managing the CB and delivering our core responsibilities as a CB, and £29,400 was to support RFU targeted activity comprising of age grade pathways, representative rugby and delivery of merit tables.

In terms of Club Grants 9 Clubs were given £16,184 of assistance covering,

- W&G Development
- Growing Senior Playing Numbers
- Enhancing coaching skills.
- Colts transition program.

At the year end the County has cash assets of £124,643 with no known liabilities.

At the beginning of the year we transitioned across to the Xero Accounting package which has given us a complete new layer of reporting capability which has allowed us to generate real-time budget v actual figures, which has certainly helped us stay on track.

I really need to pay thanks to Laker Goodwin Jones, our accountant, Beiron Rees who despite retiring continued to assist and Peter Phillips who came on board as our Book Keeper but has recently accepted the role of Chair of Finance and will be taking over in full after the AGM. I would like to also thank the Management Committee and the budget holders for their support throughout the year.

I would also like to thank the Clubs for their timeliness in paying their annual subscription and submission of annual accounts.

Recently we have also agreed our first loan to a club to help with much needed renovation.

Please see summary of accounts below.

Profit and Loss Summary (Net of VAT, Tax, adjustments, and accruals)

	FY24	FY23
Turnover	£86,881	£112,800
Other Income	£3,026	£399
Expenditure	£-84,212	£-89,474
	FY24	FY23
Tax	£-1,082	£-4,508
Profit Before Tax	£4,613	£19,217

Balance Sheet Summary. (Net of VAT, Tax, adjustments, and accruals)

	FY24	FY23
Fixed Assets	£0	£0
Current Assets	£126,421	£126,650
Creditors	£-2,816	£-7,658
Net Current Assets	£123,605	£118,992
Total Capital and Reserves	£123,605	£118,992

I&E by Department.

ESSEX COUNTY RUGBY UNION LIMITED

For the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

Please Note These Figures are Net of VAT.

Department	Spend	% Of Spend	Income	% Of Income
CB Admin Expenses	£1,757	1.38%	£0	0.00%
CB Club Loans & Grants	£15,75	12.35%	£0	0.00%
CB Club Subscriptions	£0	0.00%	£2,250	1.75%
CB Discipline	£1,701	1.33%	£3,350	2.61%
CB Events	£2,320	1.82%	£1,360	1.06%
CB Finance	£9,595	7.52%	£6,699	5.22%
CB Hospitality	£131	0.10%	£0	0.00%
CB Income Grants Donations	£0	0.00%	£3,320	2.59%
CB IT Services, Supplies, Website, etc.	£4,761	3.73%	£0	0.00%
CB Patrons	£0	0.00%	£1,152	0.90%
CB Safeguarding	£1,996	1.56%	£0	0.00%
CB Sponsorship	£0	0.00%	£18,400	14.33%
CB Volunteers	£1,533	1.20%	£0	0.00%
RFU Grants	£0	0.00%	£64,285	50.06%
RFU Tickets	£25,272	19.80%	£27,504	21.42%
CB Coaching & Referee Courses	£4,736	3.71%	£100	0.08%
CB Trophies	£2,665	2.09%	£0	0.00%
CB Schools	£5,604	4.39%	£0	0.00%
Rugby Coaching	£2,208	1.73%	£0	0.00%
Rugby Development	£825	0.65%	£0	0.00%
Rugby General Expenses	£3,362	2.63%	£0	0.00%
Rugby Hospitality	£5,525	4.33%	£0	0.00%

Rugby Medical Supplies and Cover	£8,091	6.34%	£0	0.00%
Rugby Pitch Hire	£5,349	4.19%	£0	0.00%
Rugby Playing Equipment	£788	0.62%	£0	0.00%
Rugby Playing Kit	£1,009	0.79%	£0	0.00%
Rugby Referee Expenses	£2,068	1.62%	£0	0.00%
Rugby Stash	£20,548	16.10%	£0	0.00%
Total	£127,609		£128,421	

Essex County RFU Departmental Reports

Women and Girls Development

In September 2023 Robert Clack U16 (Year 10) girls along with teams from Clifton College and Rugby School, were invited to represent England **at the Heritage Cup festival in Pontlevoy, France** which saw teams from across the world take part. Our congratulations to the team and their coach, **Clare Bond** as they were the winners of the development Cup



As the women and girls game continues to grow, 2023-24 has been a very successful year for women and girls rugby in Essex. At representative level both the U18 and U16 had some great results in their county matches with the U18 ending their round of matches undefeated. It was also the first season for the Essex girls leagues in which Basildon won both the U16 and U18 leagues. A big thank you to **Andy Collings** and **Simon Beadle** for organising and administrating the start up of these leagues.

Only three clubs were able to field an U18's side but it is pleasing to see that 8 clubs were able to field an U16 team. These sides will hopefully progress to U18's next season with a growing number of clubs being able to field a full team or at least cluster with neighbouring clubs to give these girls some meaningful development and game time. The U16 league was won by Basildon with Braintree, Harlow, Eton Manor, Dagenham, Thurrock, Southend and Bancroft all taking part.

The RFU also run a National Girls competition for U16 and U18 girls and it was great to see Basildon U18 girls win the National Cup as champions.

We have had some great success with U12 and U14 pitch up and play festivals with between 100 and 140 girls attending each one . It has provided a great chance for game time for these age grades especially as for some girls their club team size meant they had not been getting this opportunity to play games of rugby.

The County is grateful for the contribution made by **Andrea Church** of Rochford, who apart from helping the County Ladies sides at all age grades Andrea has been instrumental in ensuring that girls of U12 and U14 are able to have this game time through a series of Pitch up and Play events throughout the County.

As an example there was a fantastic turnout for the U12s and u14s Girls PuP at **Harlow Rugby Club**. The sun was shining and the players were all smiling – it was a great day for Girls Rugby. Here are just some of the comments from the EssexRugby facebook page:

Clacton RUFC YOUTH · The **Clacton RUFC YOUTH** girls loved it!

Iain Buist Well done today girls you all played really well. There were really good games out there today you should all be proud of yourselves.

Mia Blunden Amazing turnout!

Laura Suzanne Epping UCRFC girls loved their first PuP - thank you to everyone who made it happen! 🙌🏈

Jo Aracena Woodford Rugby Club girls had a brilliant time - thank you so much Harlow Rugby Club for hosting! 🏈🥰



This was not the only PuP to take place so “Well done” Andrea and thank you

Women’s Senior Representative Rugby

Over 90 players from nearly every club side in the county attended senior county training and trials, making selection very competitive. The women’s team took part in the RFU Gill Burns County Championship. On Sunday 19th May, Essex hosted Oxfordshire and won 69 – 5. Next came an away trip to Staffordshire where a 5 – 43 win set up a great final match between the County and Cumbria at Harlow. In an exciting match which was close all the way through, a last minute touch line try put Essex in contention for a draw, but the difficult conversion went wide leaving Cumbria with a 22 – 24 win.

This season two ladies from our clubs have represented the England Roses Age grade teams. **Keira Muir** and **Izzy van der Straaten** have both played for England u18 and **May Goulding** was awarded her U20 Ireland cap .

The Developing Player Pathway program for girls rose to a group of 60 players from 12 clubs across the county. Although there was definitely talent arising from the u14s last season it

was clear that their playing experience was limited. With the introduction of monthly pitch up and plays all across Essex we hope to see not only talented but experienced players at next season's assessments. We had 8 girls nominated for the Saracens Centre of Excellence.

RFU Women's Leagues

We have an ever increasing number of ladies teams in the County now taking part in the RFU Women's leagues. Among the notable successes of the season were:

Level 2 Women's Championship South - Champions – Thurrock T-Birds again.

Level 4 NC 2 SE (Central) Epping UC—Runners up Romford Ravens

Level 4 NC2 SE (East) Thurrock T Birds II

Level 5 NC3 SE (East) Rochford Ladies Runners up Braintree Vixens

RFU National U18 Girls Winners - Basildon Girls

There was also success in the Papa John Community Cup competition for **Thurrock II** winning their final at Twickenham and **Westcliff** just missing out in their Final at SixWays stadium. A great achievement by both clubs.

Fran Clayton-Brown

Chair Essex Women and Girls Development

Men and Boys Development

EssexRugby Age Grade Boys Report 2023-24

Over 6,000 boys from age 5 to 18 played club rugby in Essex this season.

None of which would be possible without the continued support of our clubs, coaches and volunteers so a big thanks to all of you that support the Game of Rugby in the County.

In accordance with the Game Regulations and Competition Framework, from U13 upwards we offer a variety of competitions to suit the developmental stages and needs of the players.

27 Clubs in Essex run a Youth Rugby Section that Essex supports.

At U13 and U14 we provide a list of some 280 Friendlies for those clubs to play, or not. The rationale is it takes the pressure off Fixtures secretaries and empowers clubs to choose to play the games if they feel them to be at the correct standard or not. At this age, clubs know best about the relative strengths of teams so can make their own decisions.

To introduce a level of competition we also provide a Waterfall Cup meaning all teams stay in the Cup with round winners playing other round winners and runners up playing other runners up. This builds towards a final day where numerous finals are played, and a prime final takes place.

This year the U13 Cup winners were Westcliff RFC and at U14 Chelmsford RFC who won their final. I add my congratulations to both teams.

Beyond U14 through to Colts (U17/18) we introduce league rugby with a further 280 League Fixtures provide across those age groups.

Congratulations to the following 23/24 League Winners

U15 League 1 - Eton Manor RFC

U15 League 2 - Billericay RFC

U15 League 3 - Brentwood RFC

U16 League 1 - Westcliff RFC

U16 League 2 - Woodford RFC

Colts League 1 - Eton Manor RFC

Colts League 2 - Harlow RFC

Finally for the same age groups we run a Knockout Cup competition that culminated in a fantastic finals day hosted by Westcliff RFC on 28th April.

Congratulations to the following teams on their cup success.

U15 - Eton Manor RFC

U16 - Westcliff RFC

Colts - Eton Manor RFC

So overall Essex supports almost 700 games of rugby for the Youth Sections at our clubs but this does not happen by magic, behind the scenes we have a dedicated team of volunteers who give up their time to administer all of the above competitions, so on behalf of Essex Rugby, to every player, coach, parent involved in the game I want to say a huge thank-you to Andy Brown U13's, Scott Savill U14's, Kes Flitcroft U15's, Tim Ablethorpe U16's and Marc Grange, Colts.

Whilst in all sports there will always be winners and runners up, I believe that winning is not just defined by the results of a game, it may be the day a player makes his first tackle, kicks his first penalty or scores his first try. This philosophy sits behind Age Grade Rugby - Player Centred, Development Driven, Competition Supported. At some point last season all of our 6,000 players did something that made them feel like a winner. We should not lose sight of that, we need that for the development of the game in the years to come.

To all of you involved in Age Grade Boys Rugby last season....Thank You !

Ian Hollingworth

Age Grade Lead Essex Rugby

Saracens/Essex Development Player Pathway and Player Development Group Overview – U14, U15 & U16 squads – Saracens U17-18 involvement

The **U18** group moves into its second season in the County aspirational programme, with 5 Essex players retained in the Saracens PDG, following the Malvern festival and a number of matches versus Northampton, Leicester, Leeds and Harlequins.

Saracens U18 Academy League playing Squad for 23/24 season

William Howard; Rohan Burke; Jack Marshall – U17 – Jack has been selected for upcoming England tour to SA with the England U18 Squad; Owen Gillett – U17; Gabrielle Registe – U17 Gabrielle was also asked to train with England U17 during the season

Saracens U17 PDG squad for 23/24 season

Tai Alleyne – retained for U18 Academy program; Tom Langley – now released back to the CB; Richard Walshe – now released to CB; Isaac Mayungbe – now released back to the CB

U16 Restart programme continued throughout the season culminating in a number of matches between Essex, Herts and Kent.

Following the last block, a number of players were selected for provisional Saracens PDG group moving into U17 in the summer training block

Saracens U18 Academy summer training squad 2024

Owen Gillett; Tai Alleyne; Gabriel Registe

Saracens U17 Academy summer training squad 2024

Charles Rotimi; Dylan Jenkins; James Farrow; Joe Buscomb; Kaiden Woosink; Nat Smith; Zac James

Saracens U17 County Development Programme summer 2024

Josh Smith; Krishan Arya; Frank O'Donohue; Leo McCarthy; Tom Skerry ;Harry Skinner; Beau Treadwell; Harrison Moody; Jamie Hallums;

The 2023-24 season training blocks commenced in July 23 with a larger U16 PDG group of 60 players. Additionally, between September 23 to March 24 there were 7 DPP sessions which were attended by circa 70-80 players at each session, which acted as development and selection sessions for PDG.

By March, 44 PDG players were selected for training, building towards a number of festival matches v Kent and Herts. Following this, Saracens selected two squads to train and play matches v Harlequins, Northampton and Sale.

16 Essex players were selected into these squads, and following the matches, 7 were selected to attend the provisional summer U17 development squad. The 9 players not selected were retained in a Saracens/County Development programme, with a view to inclusion into Saracens Dev squad at summers end. Summer training runs through July-August.

U15 DPP group Carried out 8 sessions including 148 players, before selection to a smaller PDG group of 48 players. Following four festivals at StoneX and Dartford Valley, playing Kent and Herts, Essex selected a smaller summer training group of 34 players to undertake a summer residential session at Harrow school with players selected from Herts and Kent, followed by session in Essex July-August. This will culminate in festival matches at StoneX, prior to selection for a Saracens U16 development group.

U14 DPP group undertook two “all play” festivals, one based at Westcliff and one at Romford as an introduction to the DPP. This incorporated over 180 players covering the two festivals.

Former recent Saracens Essex PDG players representing professional clubs during the season

- Obinna Nkwocha – voted into the Championship team of the season from Coventry
- Freddie Chapman – Ospreys – Wales.
- Nathan Michelow – Saracens from Brentwood and Cooperians School and England U20
- Craig Wright Northampton Saints from Braintree RFC England U20

Both Nathan and Craig played in the England U20 squad who won the World Rugby Junior World Championship in South Africa. Also worthy of note is that Finley Doyle of Westcliff RFC represented Scotland U20 who won the World Rugby Trophy in Scotland.

Injuries:

There were no notable injuries to date during the season.

Facilities, Coaches, Physios and Admin

We have exclusively used the facilities at Brentwood School, pitches, floodlit Astro and S&C suite, and continue to develop strong links with the School. Additionally, we have played matches at Westcliff and Thurrock and look to move some sessions to New Hall for next season.

We have used upwards of 14 coaches since August with a strong core of 8 and have provisioned 1x physio each session ably assisted by a trainee. We use a co-coaching model during sessions, with a lead coach facilitating the game and focusing on “on ball” players. The Co-coach supports the lead coach by coaching “off ball” players. Where we have additional resource, we utilise an observer coach, who watched the practise from afar and feeds information into coaches/players.

We now have a 6 coach team for PDG and 14 coach team for DPP (this includes the PDG coaches). All coaches have been given specific access to Saracen CPD’s – e.g. Role of Lead & Assistant Coaches and Player Feedback.

The programme delivered 3 coaches completing their level 3/advanced course. Paul Lovewell; Del Godfrey-Shaw; and Ian Rundall. Garry Bettis is now the pathway undertaking his level3/advanced course - L3 Mentor Matt Rozier

Representatives from Essex at Saracens and moving into the 2023/24 Pre-season to were:

Senior Squad

Toby Knight

Senior Academy

Obinna Nkwocha – who has been released and has signed for Coventry

***Nathan Michelow** and Barney Merrett

Junior Academy (U18 Academy League squad)

William Howard, Rohan Burke, Owen Gillett, Jack Marshall

Saracens Development Squad (U17)

Gabriel Registe, Lennie Saunders, James Bonner, Marlon Farouk, Thomas Langley, Tai Alleyne, Harry Courts, Finn Bannister.

Saracens Development Squad (U16)

Nathaniel Smith, Kaden Woolsink, Frank O’Donohue, Leo McCarthy

Summary

The schedule has been full, with a minimum of weekly sessions, and at time bi-weekly sessions. The pathway continues to go from strength to strength with very high numbers

training throughout the summer, strong retention, due to delivery of a well managed, strongly coached and quality content programme.

To put this into perspective, for season 23-24, by the end of December 23, we would have regularly coached over 400 Essex players, played 3x festivals, and moreover provided a strong development opportunity for players and coaches within the County. As set out above several players have achieved notable success in playing England representative Rugby.

This could not have been achieved without the time and dedication of a few individuals who have delivered without compromise. Next season's finer details are still to be confirmed although the premise will be for groups to be smaller with a push for higher quality. This will be offset with more attendance at School and club matches to "scout" talent and lessen impact to clubs/schools.

Jamie Howard (Lead Coach Essex Player Development Pathway)

Essex County RFU U17/U18 Representative program 23/24

The under 17s program

This year we invited all the boys who were in the Saracens DPP the previous year and where we would normally have around 60 boys, this year we had 150 nominations of which 95 trialled. We also invited schools and clubs to trial so we reviewed over 150 boys. To prepare for the matches we held more sessions this year for trials and training which made a big difference to us being able to select the right boys to take part in the squad.

With the extra training this meant more money was spent on pitch hire and physio costs. We felt this was important and looking at the DPP spreadsheet i had through from Saracens for next seasons U17s program, they have sent information on 150 boys. Added to the schools and clubs there will be in excess of 200 boys to look at in the coming season .

I note that this year we did exceed the budget by £1400 pounds for U17s and U18s combined and this was due to the extra training sessions. We also hosted two extra games including a warm up game against Saracens under 17s which was a great success not only for the boys but the relationship with Saracens which I feel is very strong.

The costs as with everything at the moment has increased but I believe we are getting it right with the extra sessions and games. I think the budget going forward needs to be looked at with a view of increasing, if that is possible. The under 17s budget needs to be higher than the U18s as they have already had kit apart from a few newcomers and there are twice the amount of training sessions.

The warm up game for the under 17s with Saracens was a great success and the coaches from both sides agreed they benefited from it. We did start the sessions earlier this year therefore pitch hire and physio costs were more than previous years. I was previously asked to start the U17s when the boys returned in September taking them through the whole season this would have resulted in a huge increase in spending therefore we started in October and when the U18s started at the end of October we had already selected the under 17s squad and did not have another session with them until after the u18s program had finished in January.

Essex County RFU U18

This year's U18 programs have been a success with the number of boys coming through the trials. With the under 18s grading program we had six boys who made it through to London south east. They were:

Bill Bailey, Thurrock (is an under 17 who played up a year and will be part of the U18s next season); Mason Ford, Wanstead; Riley Thomas, Westcliff; Frankie Christopher, Westcliff; Yami Kamanga, Brentwood and Theo Duffin, Westcliff.

I would like to thank the coaching team of our U17/U18 development program. They were Peter Mahony head coach, Westcliff; Tom King Upminster; Eugene O'Herlihy Campion School; Josh Toms Westcliff

We started the program earlier this year to enable us to see more boys before we finally reduced the players to a squad of 36. This helped the coaches put the right boys through to play in the three games. This year most of the boys who were in last year's U17s had their stash so there was no spending on kit for the new boys into the program as I had spares from the previous year. That has now been depleted so next seasons squad should be made up of mostly this year's 17s so there will be some kit needed for any new boys who are either released from Saracens or new to the program

Ken Laybourn

Manager, Essex U17/U18 program

Essex U20 End of Season Report 2023-2024

Taking part in the Jason Leonard U20's County Championship gives us the opportunity to continue the development and progress of the aspirational Rugby Pathway. However, this seasons success in a very close game vs Hertfordshire was bedevilled by RFU regulations in respect of being able to play certain players from our clubs who though still effectively registered with their clubs were found to be ineligible due to the status of their University teams in the BUCS leagues.

We were not the only County to fall foul of this confusing regulation, which also included Kent U20's who we would have met in the London and SE regional Play off. However, as we have good relationships with Kent they agreed that we should play out the match as a friendly. This was warmly accepted by both CB's and the players.

As the County Championship matches also graded players for selection to the London and South East divisional team it was pleasing to note that 5 of our players were selected to take part in the regional festivals against the Midlands and then the Southwest.

Congratulations are due to Wylde Tulip (Eton Manor) Kai Phillips (currently with Bishops Stortford) and Luck Everett of Westcliff who took part in both matches. Jack Rickwood (Romford) and Lyden Wallace (Woodford) were additionally selected to take part in the match against the South West.

All together we had nine of our U20's players who were invited to take part in the London and SE development sessions. A fair reflection of the standards which our County Development Pathway can achieve.

The U20 cohort is tough from a few standpoints,

- **Logistics many**, in fact most boys are now outside the county, for uni or work – we have to accept not everyone will make all sessions and games – but it is representative rugby and as such and within reason the “best” players are selected – it’s easy for me the coach to say budget but it would help if there was more information around budget for lads travel to games and training...
- **Emotion** – many lads struggle with transition from age grade to adult rugby. Its heightened here as so many would have dreamed of becoming a professional, only recently will it really have dawned it will not work out that way U20s is a key bridge – personally my biggest driver for coaching and agreeing to this cohort – the game has a lot of work to do here and this can be hugely influential in improving the amount of players who continue to adult rugby
- **Eligibility criteria** – just way too complicated – I have no idea why uni was brought into it – if lads are playing Nat 2 – level 4 then they should not be eligible apart from that I am not sure what else is required – 23 lad squad should be a given too
- **Lack of player info and data** - some serious work to be done here but hopefully clubs and GMS can help

We need to make it aspirational for all eligible U20 year olds to have the desire to play for Essex u20s – kit and recognition ties are obvious ones, but also more games and training spread around clubs more – I am aware I can and will affect these next season

Comms between Essex and Clubs – every colts coach needs to be on an email list and possibly whatsapp too. This is something to put in place for 2024=25

Having said that my overriding reflection is that of enjoyment and pride and I think many of the players would reiterate this. They enjoyed coming together, being challenged and given opportunities this is the aim for next season with improvement on the bits above. U20s is very much needed and wanted. We have to make it better for sure but it is needed. I think we should continue with the comp – friendlies if needed.. I think Essex was well represented at London and the boys were all proud and had good experiences. This will differ for those not selected but that’s to be expected – the feedback was positive –

Despite the issues of RFU regulations it was most pleasing to see a number of our U20’s selected for the London & SE squad. The following players were invited to the London & SE division development day

Michael Walsh (Campion); Joel Conradie (Woodford); Kai Phillips (Bishops Stortford); Luke Everitt (Westcliff); Jack Rickwood (Romford); Wylde Tulip (Eton Manor); Hayden Jellis (Romford); Lynden Wallace (Woodford); Dylan Sykes (Westcliff).

Of these Wylde Tulip (Eton Manor); Kai Phillips (Bishops Stortford); Luke Everitt (Westcliff) played for London & SE against the Midlands whilst: Wylde Tulip (Eton Manor); Kai Phillips (Bishops Stortford); Luke Everitt (Westcliff); Jack Rickwood (Romford); Lynden Wallace (Woodford) represented London & SE in their match against the South West.



London and SE Divisional U20 Squad

Richard Stock Head Coach Essex U20's

Essex Seniors Report 2023-24

The Senior squad started their preparations for the Bill Beaumont County Championship Competition with a training session at Brentwood RFC on Wednesday 24 April 2024. Invitations for players had been sent to ALL affiliated Essex Clubs and training sessions ran on each Wednesday evening.

Coaches

Steve Killington – Brentwood; Dave Stevens – Thurrock; Physio Alex Evans - Thurrock

Matches

11 May 2024 v Bucks away at Aylesbury RFC: A close encounter which finished with a 44 – 41 win for the hosts. On the 18th May 2024 we played Sussex at Crawley RFC. Another evenly contested match with Sussex just coming out as winners 27 – 21. Then on the 25th May 2024 v Gloucestershire at Thurrock RFC we hosted a very entertaining match against a very strong Gloucestershire squad in which the the visitors secured a 26 – 45 win.

Strengths

This season we had 44 players from 11 clubs who represented the County in these matches. Brentwood RFC continued to be a very good base for training. The County is grateful for the commitment of ALL players, and the support staff for the duration of the campaign.

Areas to discuss

The number of players not making themselves available for ALL games means a large turnover. This puts extra pressure on staff to get a full competitive squad out for each game and we did not have a full bench for the Sussex game.

Essex stash is a positive draw to attract the players of required standard as we do not pay players to play for the county. However, we do need more commitment for the duration of the campaign. The number of players used this season has meant an overspend on kit.

This season we had two away match for which we used coach transport. These were underused with a large number of players deciding to drive to away matches. A re- think for next season.

Finally we operated this season without a team manager and one MUST be appointed before the start of the next campaign.

Martin Jones – 08 July 2024

Competitions:

Group One Automotive Essex Merit Leagues.

The County is grateful to the sponsorship of Group One Automotive for its merit leagues this season. With over 84% completion rate of matches played it is probably one of the best supported merit tables in the Country. So well done all our clubs. Next season will see some changes as the County is able to run a 10 team Counties 2 RFU league without too much disruption to the merit leagues. So well done all our clubs.

The winners this Merit table results were:

Division 1 — Southend II

Division 2 — Wanstead II

Division 3 (East) - Harlow III

Division 3 (West) - Bancroft

Division 4 (East) - Basildon II

Division 4 (West) - Wanstead III

Following the completion of the league the teams played off in semi finals with the Winners playing off for the Cup and runners up taking part in the plate competition. This season the finals were successfully hosted at Rochford RFC, with our Group 1 Automotive sponsors in attendance.

This season we were also able to complete our own County Cup Competitions.

Results of Essex County RFU Competitions:

Group 1 Automotive Essex County Senior Cup - Dagenham RFC bt Brentwood RFC

Group 1 Automotive Intermediate Cup Winners: - Upminster bt East London

Group 1 Automotive Essex Presidents Shield Winner: - Canvey Island bt Burnham-on-Crouch

Group 1 Automotive 2nd XV Cup Winner: - Southend II bt Chelmsford II

Group 1 Automotive John Adler Trophy Winner: - Campion II bt Upminster

RFU Leagues

With an excellent completion rate it was pleasing to see Southend Saxons gain promotion to Regional 1. Sadly Rochford and Westcliff were both relegated. However, the matches in the lower leagues also produced some close and exciting local derby's with Wanstead winning Counties 1 Essex and Burnham and Basildon both winning promotion in their leagues.

Regional 2 Anglia Champions - Southend Saxons

Counties 1 Essex – Wanstead - R/U Braintree

Counties 2 Essex (North) – Burnham - R/U Harwich &Dovercourt

Counties 2 Essex (South) – Basildon - R/U Old Brentwoods

Craig Morgan

Chair of Competitions

Report from the Chair of Education sub committee
Michael Eyres (Essex Schools Union)

ANNUAL EDUCATION REPORT

Autumn, Spring and Summer term 2023/24

Section A Essex County RFU Schools Union.

Section B Further Education Colleges / Universities.

Section A Essex County RFU Schools Union.

Numerous festivals have been held in the second half of the season.

Participation numbers were up on previous years

In the boys events:

U12 festival : 45 teams 900players; U13 festival 1 : 22 teams 440 players. U13 festival 2 : 22 teams 440 players. U14 festival : 40 teams 800 players. U15 festival 1: 20 teams 400 players. U15 festival 2: would have had 20 teams with 400 players but was cancelled due to weather. U16 festival : 16 teams 320 players. U18 festival : 12 teams 240 players.

We were able to hold more Girls events this year which included:

U12 festival : 6 teams 120 players; U14 festival : 6 teams 120 players; U16 festival : 6 Teams 120 players

Team numbers were up in all age groups showing a positive progression. There were still some issues with player release from some educational establishments where Headteachers/Principles did not allow students out of timetabled lessons. However, many thanks to all schools and clubs that were able to take part as well as hosting some of the festivals.

The County Schools Union held its 7s tournaments in the Lent Term.

U18 Wednesday 28th Feb at Barking RUFC there were 12 entries.

U13 Thursday 29th Feb with 38 Entries

U12 Monday 4th March at New Hall School there were 35 Entries.

U14 Tuesday 5th March at Westcliff RUFC1 we had 35 entries.

U15 Wednesday 6th March at Champion Schools there were 25 entries.

U16 Thursday 7th March we had 16 entries.

ESSEX SCHOOLS 7s RESULTS 2024 Boys.

U12	Winners	Runners Up
Main	Campion	King John
Plate	Southend HS	New Hall
Bowl	Castle View	James Hornsby
Shield	Shenfield	Sydney Russell
U13		
Main	Campion	Eastwood
Plate	Brentwood	Coopers
Bowl (shared)	St Martins	Appleton
Shield	Emerson Pk	Sydney Russell
U14		
Main	Westcliff HS	Robert Clack
Plate	Southend HS	Coopers

Bowl	Helena Romanes	St Martins
Shield	St Marks	Sydney Russell
U15		
Main	Woodlands	New Hall
Plate	Brentwood	Robert Clack
Bowl	Great Baddow	Debden Pk
Shield	Sandon	Jo Richardson
U16		
Main	Campion	New Hall
Plate	Westcliff HS	Brentwood
Bowl	Great Baddow	Robert Clack
Shield	Coopers	Helena Romanes
U18		
Main	Brentwood	New Hall
Plate	Campion	SIGMA
Bowl	Westcliff HS	Southend HS

We also held a Girls 7s festival. U14 Monday 25th March at Robert Clack School - Main Winners Robert Clack Runners up Samuel Whitbread. Plate winners Robert Clack B Runners up Sydney Russell. U16 Tuesday 26th March at Robert Clack School. Main Winners Robert Clack Runners up Samuel Whitbread; U12 Wednesday 27th March at Robert Clack. Main Winners Robert Clack Runners up Thorpe Hall; Plate winners Robert Clack B Runners up Chelmer Valley

In the Essex Schools boys Knock out competition finals

U14 Boys Champion 7 v 5 Robert Clack; U15 Boys Champion 24 v 7 Woodlands

U16 Boys Champion (4 tries) 26 v 26 Fitzwimarc (3 tries); U18 Boys Champion 50 v 10 Coopers

In the Girls Knock out competition the results were

U14 Girls Robert Clack 34 v 10 Shenfield; U16 Girls Robert Clack 36 v 10 Woodlands

The highlights of the season were

All 7s tournaments for boys and girls were in place for spring term RESULTS included.

- National schools 7s week beginning 18th March.
- Numbers for festival up by 18%.
- All knockout competitions were completed on time for both boys and girls. All finals were held week beginning 11th of March with thanks to Barking RFC for hosting again.
- Champion and Felsted reached the semi-final stage of their respective National school's competitions. (Felsted won their final at Twickenham).
- New Hall School and Debden Park School reached the last 16 of their respective competitions
- Robert Clack u16 Girls represented the England Rugby Football Schools Union at a festival in France during the Rugby World Cup won their playoff section.

CPD

- A teachers course in September was very successful thanks to Barking RFU for hosting and Chris Sigworth for an excellent delivery.
- We aim to hold a First Aid course with the date to be confirmed at the beginning of 2024-25.
- It is pleasing to note Increased activity in the 5 schools regions of Essex.

Section B Further Education Colleges/University.

- Jack Daly has taken over from Danny Cleare as ECRFU rep.
- English Colleges have now restructured under guidance from RFU
- English Colleges 7s tournament was held on the 6th March.
- Colleges have progressed with their respective College cup competitions.
- Sigma, USP, attended an u18 festivals .
- USP won their pool at National 7s
- Hopefully they will attend the 7s in March at Barking RFU
- Universities are playing fixtures in their respective BUCS competitions.
- Links to Clubs is still on going and developing.
- We are aware of some new changes to DDP structures and await further information.
- Essex County Schools Union have secured sponsorship for season 24/25 which will help to cover medical costs at our events and CPD for teachers.



Michael Eyres seals the Support of Principle Cleaning.

The County schools union would like to thank the Essex County Committee for their continued support of the County Schools Union and its activities, and to Principle Cleaning for their Generous support of our 25 County Schools Union events for 2024-25

Mick Eyres

Chair of Education Essex CB
CSU committee member.
Honorary Life Member ERFSU

Safeguarding

A big thankyou to Nicky for all her hard work across the County and to the three volunteers who make up our safeguarding team, Angela Arnold; Elizabeth Calvert; Joanne Rasor.

Having a team of four to look after the County safeguarding issues has certainly led to better communication over safeguarding issues with our clubs. All clubs have also completed the Safeguarding audit for 2023-24, and the next round of audits are due to start in October 2024.

It is safe to say that our clubs through the work of the club safeguarding officers are continuing to make sure our clubs are safe places for players, volunteers and supporters of all ages and genders.

There have been no Major safeguarding incidents throughout the year though issues with Parents encroaching the field of play continues to be a source of complaint. The safeguarding team are also working alongside the County Discipline Committee to try and address this and further install the ethos of TREDs in our clubs especially at Age Grade level.

Nicky Worthington (CB Safeguarding Manager)

Essex Bishops and Essex Wooden Spoon

The Essex Wooden Spoon Men and Women's teams have grown in player numbers year on year, and are represented by a multitude of Essex rugby clubs, many of which are now partner clubs to the Charity.

Partner Clubs; Harlow RFC; Southend RFC; Braintree RFC; Rochford Hundred RFC; Billericay RFC; Chelmsford RFC; Old Brentwood's RFC; Witham RFC

The highlight for the 2023/24 season was VetsFest23 where the **Essex men retained the fundraising cup for the 3rd consecutive year raising £15k for Essex children**. We seek to retain that for VF24. The teams have been guests to Billericay Dad & Lads most recently. Every penny the teams raise goes directly back into children within Essex.

The Essex Bishops have been revitalised and has run out for the first time post covid this season. The squad look to have a busy 2024/25 season, with ever increasing player numbers and with the increase of club vets teams across the county the future of Essex Vets looks exciting.

Both the Essex Wooden Spooners and Essex Bishops (Vets) are very active in the County with invites to play club Vets teams with the aim of Raising Charitable funds. We thank everyone for their support this season.

Communications:

At last we now have a new updated web site at www.EssexRugby.com. Our thanks to **Ian Hollingworth** and **Alan Brooking** for bringing this project to life through Staxo our web providers.

Our Sponsors

Finally but not least the County is grateful for the sponsorship and opportunities offered by our sponsors **Group One Automotive and Group One Audi**. Our thanks go to **Steve Doble** and **Helen Keys** for their continued support of County Rugby in the Community. Group One Auto support has enabled us to maintain the Merit Leagues, the Youth Competitions, as well providing their logo on the County Representative sides team wear. **Thank you**.

We are also grateful to **Alliance Shipping**, and **Bursted Building Projects** for their support of the County activities. **Doveton Law**, **Commander Building Services**, **Golden Thread Fire Delay** and the **Essex Womens Institute** have this year supported the development of our Ladies and Girls teams and once again we appreciate the support that they have given to women and girls Rugby.

May I wish you all a successful 2024-25 season with all fixtures fulfilled, loads of happy people playing rugby every week, and bar takings at a record high. If you think that there is anything that I, or any of the RFU staff or our Management Committee can do to help with this please do not hesitate to get in touch. We are here to support our clubs and increase participation in our great game of Rugby Union.

Ivor Smith
Hon Secretary Essex County RFU

Some of our Honda Very Valued Volunteers Nominated by their clubs – 2023-24



Essex Ladies Vs Staffordshire



Essex Men vs Bucks



TEAMWORK RESPECT ENJOYMENT DISCIPLINE SPORTSMANSHIP

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