



RFL

1895-2015

120 YEARS

BARRETTVILLE SHIELD  
WINNERS



# RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE ANNUAL REPORT 2015





# INTERNATIONAL SERIES 2015 WINNERS



## RFL ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2015

CEO's Review	4-6	Further Education	29
Chairman's View	7	Schools	30-31
Board of Directors	8-9	Rugby League Cares	32-34
120 Years	10	Play Touch RL	35
Wembley Statue	11	Concussion	36
Magic Weekend	12	Cardiac Screening	37
World Club Series	13	Player Welfare	38-40
England Review	14-15	Hall of Fame	42
Domestic Season Review	16-23	Safeguarding	43
Events Review	24-25	RLEF Review	44-45
Commercial Review	26-27	Operational Plan	46-47
Higher Education	28	Financial Review	48-50



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# CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

The year 2015 represented the 120th anniversary of the creation of the sport of Rugby League and as was fitting for this momentous occasion, a number of celebratory events took place to appropriately acknowledge this milestone. One of the biggest was the Founders Walk, a 120-mile trek which took in each of the Northern Union's 22 founding clubs, while commemorative blue plaques were also placed on the sites of all 22 original grounds where the sport was born in 1895.

However, perhaps the highlight was the unveiling of a magnificent bronze statue at Wembley Stadium to celebrate the sport's long and rich history at that venue. Three years in the making, it features five all-time greats of the sport in Eric Ashton, Billy Boston, Martin Offiah, Alex Murphy and Gus Risman. Situated on the Wembley concourse, it was unveiled by Sports Minister Tracey Crouch and will surely become the place where Rugby League fans gather for many years to come.

On the field, the new structure delivered spectacular results. We adopted the slogan, "Every Minute Matters" and it really did in 2015. The destination of the Super League League Leaders' Shield was only settled after the final hooter of the final game of the Super 8s when Ryan Hall scored a sensational try for Leeds Rhinos at Huddersfield.

This secured their second trophy of the season, having already lifted the Ladbrokes Challenge Cup with a comprehensive win over Hull Kingston Rovers at Wembley. A memorable treble beckoned and it proved to be a nailbiting climax to the season when they faced Wigan Warriors in the First Utility Grand Final.

In front of the first-ever sell-out crowd at Old Trafford they won 22-20, which proved a fitting finale to the careers of Rugby League legends Jamie Peacock and Kevin Sinfield, who was runner-up to Andy Murray in the BBC Sports Personality of the Year.

Rugby League broke new ground with the staging of the Magic Weekend in Newcastle. The switch from Manchester presented the sport with an opportunity, which it grabbed with both hands. It resulted in a record attendance of 67,841 for the weekend, which included a record crowd figure of 40,871 for the Saturday games.

The invaluable experience of staging Magic Weekend led to the introduction of the Summer Bash for Championship clubs at Blackpool. The fans and clubs embraced the concept and the coverage on Sky Sports brought Championship rugby to a wider audience. The weekend also featured the final of a new competition for League 1 clubs, the iPro Sport Cup, which brought a new sponsor to the game and provided North Wales Crusaders with their first-ever piece of silverware.

## FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Financially, 2015 was a very strong year with the highest Turnover recorded in non-World Cup years since 2011 and investment around the sport at the highest ever level. I am also pleased to report that for the fourteenth year in succession the RFL has posted a pre-tax profit, on this occasion of £201,000.

Year on year turnover increased by 33 per cent, which can be attributed, in the main, to increased broadcast and match income. Match income increased by 62 per cent as a consequence of hosting the New Zealand international series in the autumn of 2015. Sponsorship income grew by 64 per cent, due to an increase in the number and value of partnerships.

Government funding also increased by 4.5 per cent while the RFL's broadcasting agreements further enhanced the top line. As a consequence of these factors, the RFL, with the exception of the hugely successful RLWC2013 year, posted a record turnover in 2015 and signs for the future of the game are promising.

As a result, the funds distributed around the sport were at the highest ever levels which has provided a level of financial stability around the professional game not seen for some time.

## INTERNATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE

At the start of the year, the World Club Challenge was expanded to include three teams from each hemisphere in another exciting innovation. Warrington Wolves hosted St George Illawarra and Wigan Warriors took on Brisbane Broncos while 2014 champions St Helens played South Sydney Rabbitohs for the World Club crown. While results didn't go the way of the Super League clubs, a total of 51,902 fans attended the games, which included a capacity 17,980 at Langtree Park. Russell Crowe's appearance at the game helped to raise the profile of both the series and Rugby League in general.

England hosted New Zealand in a three-match series for the first time since 2007. The series broke new ground with the first staging of a Rugby League match in The Stadium at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London. England took the Albert Baskerville Shield with victories at the KC Stadium, Hull and the DW Stadium, Wigan with captain Sean O'Loughlin awarded the George Smith Medal after being named Player of the Series.

Having beaten France at Leigh Sports Village prior to the series, it represented a clean sweep for the national side.

Elsewhere on the international stage, England Students retained their 2015 Students Four Nations crown with a 100 per cent record.



England Women played a two-match series against France, winning 24-4 in Tonneins and earning a 14-14 draw in Biganos.

England Academy played one international fixture in 2015 against France Academy in Carcassonne and were narrowly beaten 32-31. England Youth played two games against their French counterparts. They won the first game at Wakefield 16-6 but lost the second 20-8 at Featherstone.

England won the Wheelchair Rugby League European Championship after beating world champions France 28-24.

## PARTICIPATION

2015 saw a ground breaking new partnership initiative between the RFL and broadcaster Sky with £1.5million of funding being allocated.

Sky Try is the biggest ever Rugby League programme for schools. Over the next seven years, the project will help 700,000 children and young people have fun, get active, grow in confidence and enjoy Rugby League. The Sky Try campaign connects children and young people to top class coaching from professional Rugby League clubs through the Rugby League Foundations.

This will have a significant effect on the future of Rugby League by giving hundreds of thousands of children and young people a high quality introduction to the sport and helping them to find more local playing opportunities - from Primary Rugby League and Secondary School

Festivals to local community clubs, Play Touch Rugby League and the award-winning Talent Pathway.

## CARDIAC SCREENING AND CONCUSSION

Sadly, 2015 will also be remembered for the loss of Keighley Cougars player, Danny Jones, who died tragically during a fixture at London Skolars. As one has come to expect from the Rugby League family, supporters from around the country rallied round to raise funds for his widow, Lizzie, and their young twins.

Lizzie captured the hearts of the nation by, remarkably, performing at both the Ladbrokes Challenge Cup final and the BBC Sports Personality of the Year.

As a direct result of Danny's death, it was agreed at the RFL annual meeting that compulsory cardiac screening was to be extended across all three professional divisions in 2016.



The protocol on concussion was also updated. Players suffering a suspected concussion during a game now have to undergo a proper assessment off the field, with a free interchange allowed.

The sport also mourned the passing of Super League Match Official Chris Leatherbarrow, a talented individual who tragically died at such a young age.

## VIEWERS AND SPECTATORS

Rugby League continued to grow its audience both in spectator numbers and viewers during 2015. The season launch video was watched by over a million people on the Sky platform and online and Sky Sports reported the highest Grand Final audience which peaked at over 500,000, which is the best since 2009.

The inaugural Summer Bash also recorded excellent viewing figures with a peak of 152,000 for the Leigh Centurions v Featherstone Rovers game, a real testimonial to the wider attractiveness of Championship Rugby League.

The BBC recorded a combined peak audience of 5.45million for the England v New Zealand Series with a 2million peak at 70-75mins of the second international at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

The First Utility Grand Final was sold out for the first time with 73,512 spectators coming through the turnstiles at Old Trafford. A record 67,841 fans attended Magic Weekend in Newcastle and a total of 101,040 spectators watched the England v New Zealand series. Sixty one per cent of tickets purchased for games at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park were from the London and the South East with 60 per cent of ticket purchasers having never purchased a ticket via the RFL before.

And there were other attendance milestones. The opening round of Super League saw Hull Kingston Rovers post a ground record of 11,811 for the visit of Leeds Rhinos. Bradford Bulls set a new Kingstone





MAGIC WEEKEND

Press Championship record when 6,881 spectators attended their match against Widnes Vikings in The Qualifiers. A new League 1 attendance record of 4,066 was also set by Keighley Cougars in their home match against Coventry Bears.

## PLAYER WELFARE AND EDUCATION

The Player Welfare Policy has now been in place for four years and for two of those years each club has been required to have a three-day-a-week Player Welfare Manager (PWM). All clubs now have one in place.

There has been a considerable improvement over the last 12 months both in the number of clubs now fully applying the policy and that change in culture has led to players engaging fully with what is on offer.

The RFL continues to lead the agenda on welfare and holds regular meetings for PWMs to discuss issues, share best practice, hear presentations from providers and roll out short training programmes.

The Player Welfare and Education Forum has met quarterly and has been invaluable in providing a critical but constructive view on the progress of Player Welfare Policy.

The RFL Career Coaches have had the highest level of take up on career 1-2-1s to date with 143 taking place with full-time players during the year.

Good relationships have been built up with training and education providers and Rugby League Learning have proved a valuable partner in sourcing training provision.

## SAFEGUARDING

It has been a year of significant progress with regard to Safeguarding. Sixty

one delegates attended the annual Safeguarding Conference at Leigh Sports Village, which featured workshops and/or presentations on a wide variety of courses.

The RFL hosted a round table discussion attended by other NGB Safeguarding Lead Officers, the Child Protection in Sport Unit, representatives from Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Local Authority Designated Officers together with some charities working in this area to share best practice.

The RFL also took a major role in the CPSU Lead Officer conference, the theme of which was Celebrating Difference.

## THE FUTURE

2016 is the second year of the RFL's new seven-year Strategic Plan. The Plan has the customer at its heart and looks particularly at broadcast, viewers, spectators at games, participants playing the sport at all levels, and of course winning internationally.

The new broadcast contract, which extends the relationship with Sky to beyond 30 years, also sees record levels of investment from British Sky Broadcasting, ensuring that more matches than ever before will be shown live on TV with both Super League and Championship clubs benefiting from the increased exposure. The clubs will not only enjoy financial stability during the next six years but the game as a whole will benefit from the investment made by Sky across every level, including investment in the community game.

Internally, the RFL is undertaking a "Transformational Change" Project to support our aspiration of putting the customer at the centre of all our activities. This project incorporates a review of our technological capability and internal

structures to ensure that we have the right blend of skills and resources available to deliver the best possible service to all consumers of Rugby League, in whatever capacity they enjoy the sport; playing, coaching, spectating, volunteering, officiating or viewing.

In December 2015, after an extensive consultation process, DCMS published a new Strategy for Sport. It is clear that the strategic objectives now being pursued by DCMS through its principle agency, Sport England, will be wider and broader than ever before and as more partners are engaged to deliver these sporting solutions for the nation, the likelihood is that resource flowing through national governing bodies of sport will be diminished over time. As is clear from the above, the RFL has a significant dependency on public sector money and the RFL Board are of the view that from April 2017 the climate in which we operate will be financially more competitive than currently exists.

Conversely, the RFL has made a commitment to bid for the Rugby League World Cup in 2021 with the benefit of substantial public sector financial support and we are hopeful that our bid will be persuasive to enable this country once again to host an outstanding international celebration of the sport in 2021.

## CONCLUSION

I would like to close by thanking the clubs, volunteers, staff and everyone associated with Rugby League for their hard work and support throughout the year, and look forward to the challenges that 2016 will bring.

**Nigel Wood**  
Chief Executive Officer

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A year of firsts...

**2015 saw a range of bold initiatives, something which the RFL has become synonymous with. The year opened with the newly-expanded World Club Series which had Super League's top three clubs taking on three of their NRL counterparts.**

While the results weren't favourable, the excitement around the games was terrific, culminating in Hollywood star Russell Crowe flying into Langtree Park to see his South Sydney Rabbitohs beat St Helens and be crowned world champions.

In May we witnessed the first-ever Summer Bash, which featured a round of Kingstone Press Championship matches in Blackpool. The famous seaside resort proved an inspired choice as supporters

were treated to two days of fun and top class action, preceded by the inaugural iPro Sport Cup Final. This new knock-out competition brought together two of the best Kingstone Press League 1 sides and the whole weekend showed that the sport was in vibrant health in all tiers of the professional game.

Super League broke new ground just one week later when Newcastle's St James' Park was the venue for Magic Weekend. Forced to move from Manchester due to work being done at the Etihad Stadium, the decision to take the event to the North East proved a winner with record crowds flocking to the stadium. It should be remembered that much thought and planning went into the decision to stage Magic in Newcastle

and all that hard work, plus the logistics over the weekend, showed that the RFL had made an inspired choice.

The tragedy of Danny Jones showed the Rugby League community at its most caring. The support for Danny's widow Lizzie and her two young children was overwhelming and her rendition of "Abide With Me" at the Ladbrokes Challenge Cup final was truly moving.

And who would have believed that as Leeds Rhinos collected that iconic trophy, it was to be the first of a historic treble.

2015 saw the introduction of the new format to decide the First Utility Super League champions and also the re-introduction of promotion and relegation. The slogan "Every Minute Matters" was never more apt as Leeds Rhinos claimed the League Leaders' Shield in the dying seconds of their final league game. They completed a clean sweep of domestic silverware in a tense Grand Final in front of a first-ever sold out Old Trafford.

The RFL's willingness to take risks and innovate had paid off.

The season climaxed with a first international series against New Zealand since 2007. It didn't disappoint. Rugby League broke new ground with the second match being staged at The Stadium at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London. There may have been disappointment when the Kiwis won the game to level the series but this set the scene for a sell-out decider at the DW Stadium, with England taking the series after a nail-biting finale.

It was a fitting end to a year in which the RFL and the Rugby League community at large celebrated the 120th anniversary of the game's formation. We hope we did our founding fathers proud.

After such a positive year, we can look forward to 2016 with real anticipation.

**Brian Barwick**  
Chairman  
The RFL





# THE RFL BOARD

## BRIAN BARWICK Chairman

■ Brian Barwick was appointed independent Non-Executive Chairman of the RFL at the beginning of 2013 and has brought a wealth of experience in sport and broadcasting to the role.

He has held a number of senior executive positions including Chief Executive of the Football Association, Controller of Sport at ITV and Head of Television Sport at BBC during his career.

He is a visiting Professor of Strategic Leadership at The School of Management at Liverpool University and a founding partner at the global sports and media consultancy - Barwick Media and Sport.

In his time as CEO of the FA from 2005 to 2008, Brian saw through the completion of the new Wembley Stadium, launched the Respect campaign and was involved in the appointment of two senior coaches for the national team. He was also a board member of Wembley Stadium Ltd and FIFA's Legal Committee plus UEFA's National Teams Committee.

At ITV, he was responsible for all the broadcaster's sport coverage, including the 1998 FIFA World Cup during which the highest audience in the network's history was achieved when 28million people tuned in to watch England v Argentina.



From 1979-98, he held a range of senior roles at BBC Sport and was responsible for award-winning coverage of the BBC Sport portfolio, including the summer and winter Olympics, FIFA World Cups and outstanding national events like the Rugby League Challenge Cup final, Wimbledon, the Open golf championship, the Grand National and the FA Cup Final.

He was Editor of Match of the Day from 1987 to 1995.

## NIGEL WOOD Chief Executive Officer

■ A Director at the RFL for the last 14 years, Nigel has been Chief Executive Officer since 2007 and in May 2014 was appointed Chairman of the Rugby League International Federation.

His appointment to head the body which is responsible for the development, governance and organisation of the game internationally comes just a few months after he helped to deliver the most successful international Rugby League tournament of all time in his role as Tournament Director of Rugby League World Cup 2013.

Nigel was elected Vice Chairman of the RLIF in May 2012 having worked in support of the Federation for a decade. He is Chairman of the Business, Finance and Grants Sub-Committee, which has



overseen the implementation of a formal grants protocol for the first time in the history of the organisation.

His work at the RFL has supported the development of the game both in the UK and Europe, including working with broadcast partners to ensure the widest possible audience for international matches.

Nigel joined the RFL in 2001 and has held a number of positions in the organisation, including Chief Financial Officer. Prior to working for the RFL, he was Chief Executive of Super League club Halifax Blue Sox and Deputy Head of Finance for BBC North. He graduated from the University of Bradford in 1996 with a MBA in Business Administration.

Nigel played Rugby League for Bradford Northern and Halifax RLFC at junior levels and Huddersfield at reserve grade, together with a number of seasons playing community Rugby League in the Pennine League.

He enjoys spending his spare time at Brighouse Rangers ARLFC where he assists with the coaching of the Under-14s team.

## RALPH RIMMER Chief Operating Officer

■ Ralph Rimmer joined the RFL board two years ago and is one of the most experienced development and



management executives in British sport.

His Rugby League career began 23 years ago in South Yorkshire when he joined Doncaster as a Development Officer and he took up a similar role three years later at Sheffield Eagles. In 1997 he was appointed General Manager and then became Chief Executive of the Sheffield Super League club. Under his tenure, the club won the Challenge Cup following the memorable final victory over Wigan at Wembley.

Ralph then moved to a similar role at Huddersfield Giants for five years before joining the Board as a Non-Executive Director and taking on the role of Managing Director of the stadium company Kirklees Stadium Development Ltd.

The last decade has also seen him take on a directorship at Huddersfield Town FC, where he helped them to come out of administration. He also managed the Ireland national Rugby League team from 1997 to 2002 and the Yorkshire Origin team in 2002.

He was Managing Director of The Galpharm Stadium and Project Lead on the £2million redevelopment in 2007 and also undertook a similar role on the £150million HD One Leisure Development. He acted as Management Consultant on the Leigh Sports Village development, and similar initiatives at Colchester United FC and Salford City Stadium.

A player with Ulverston ARLFC, Ralph captained the Liverpool University team and played at student international level before joining the Wakefield club, Stanley Old Boys.

## SIMON JOHNSON Non-Executive Director

■ Simon Johnson was appointed Non-Executive Director of the RFL in July, 2014.

He has a wealth of experience in the sports and media industry, together with a widely acknowledged expertise in sports law and governance.

Simon has previously held positions as Director of Corporate Affairs and Company Secretary at the Football Association, Director of Legal and Business Affairs at the FA Premier League and



Director of Rights and Business Affairs at ITV. He was Chief Operating Officer of the bid to host the 2018 FIFA World Cup in England and is currently a member of the Group Board of the Amateur Swimming Association.

After a highly successful career in broadcasting Simon lends his considerable experience to the RFL and adds value to the sport.

## BOB STOTT Non-Executive Director

■ Bob has extensive experience in the highly competitive supermarket



industry, including 20 years at director level at Wm Morrison Supermarkets plc, together with a successful period as the company's Chief Executive.

He is currently a Non-Executive Director on the Boards of Leeds Building Society, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain, Frank Roberts and Sons and First Milk Ltd.

Bob brings a wealth of knowledge to the RFL in commercial skills, cost control operations and strategic management from his vast corporate experiences and enjoys all team sports.

Bob retired in 2015.



## CLARE MORROW Non-Executive Director

■ Clare Morrow played a pivotal role in the successful bid to secure the staging of two stages of the Tour de France in Yorkshire in 2014, as she is Chair of the award-winning marketing agency Welcome To Yorkshire. She is also a non-executive director of the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

She also sits on the Board of Sheffield Theatres and is a trustee and school governor of Hollybank School in Mirfield.

A highly-experienced television executive, she was Controller of News and Regional Programmes at ITV Yorkshire. During her time there, she also held the position of Head of Sport and was responsible for Yorkshire Television's Rugby League output. This included the creation, development and production of the award-winning Rugby League Raw Series.

## BOARD COMMITTEES

The Board has established four specific committees, each with defined terms of reference. Minutes of the meetings are circulated to and reviewed by the Board.

### THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

This consists of the three Non-Executive Directors and the CEO. This Committee is chaired by Bob Stott, and normally meets once a year and in addition to the Committee members is attended by representatives of the external auditors and the Director of Finance and Central Services. The Non-Executive Chairman, and all other board directors, have a standing invite to attend. The Audit Committee considers the Annual Report and Accounts before submission to RFL Council for approval. The Committee also reviews accounting practices to ensure compliance with accounting standards. In addition it recommends the appointment of the external auditors for approval at the AGM, gives consideration to the scope of past and future audits, deals with matters arising from the audit and reviews internal control procedures. All non-audit services provided by the Group's auditors are considered by the Chairman of the Audit Committee and the Chief Executive Officer and are reviewed by the Audit Committee where expenditure is above a set limit for this type of work.

### THE REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

The Board of Directors consider it important to benchmark key staff against other businesses of similar size and against other sports governing bodies. To this end, the Remuneration Committee meets as appropriate under the chairmanship of Clare Morrow and also comprises Simon Johnson and Bob Stott. The Committee determines the terms and conditions of employment for executive directors and agrees the level of remuneration for senior managers whose earnings are in excess of the committee's prescribed limit.

### THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The RFL believes that there should be a formal and transparent procedure for appointing new members to the Board of Directors. To this end the Board established a Nominations Committee which will lead the process for board appointments. This Committee is chaired by Brian Barwick and includes Bob Stott, Clare Morrow, Simon Johnson and the RFL CEO. The Committee is responsible for nominating candidates to fill board vacancies for the approval of the Board as and when they arise. Before considering any appointment, the balance of skills, knowledge and experience on the Board is evaluated and, in the light of this evaluation, a description of the role and capabilities required for a particular appointment is prepared. In addition full consideration is given to succession planning in the course of its work, taking into account the challenges and opportunities facing the company and the skills and expertise that are therefore needed on the Board in the future as well as regularly reviewing the structure, size and composition (including skills, knowledge and experience) of the Board and making recommendations to the Board with regard to any changes.

### RISK MANAGEMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

The RFL have had a Risk Management Control Group for a number of years. This group has reported into the Board since its inception, but in 2013 the Board decided that this group should be a formal Committee of the RFL Board to further demonstrate the Board's commitment to risk. The Committee is chaired by Bob Stott and also includes the RFL's Company Secretary and Director of Finance and Central Services, Sue Allan; the RFL's Legal and Compliance Officer, Robert Hicks; the RFL's Facilities Manager, Sarah Trumble; and an external insurance specialist from Bartlett & Company. The Committee reviews the risks of the business and investigates appropriate responses to the identified risks.



# 120 YEARS

Celebrating Rugby League's foundation...

**In 2015 Rugby League seized the opportunity to look back and celebrate its very foundation.**

On August 29 1895, 22 clubs met at the George Hotel in Huddersfield and voted to break away from the Rugby Football Union and set up on their own competition. What was initially the Northern Union eventually became the RFL and a completely different sport.

To mark and honour that brave initiative there were a number of events throughout the year. One of the biggest was the Founders Walk, a 120-mile trek which took in each of the Northern Union's 22 founding clubs and their original grounds over six fantastic days in July.

The walk was led by RFL Chief Executive Nigel Wood, who was joined at different stages by walkers from every branch of the Rugby League family, including representatives from as many of the founding clubs as possible.

Organised in association with Rugby League Cares to raise money for the sport's charitable causes, the walk

featured six individual routes taking in the original grounds. The walkers were joined each day by guests who walked that section and then by the masses from the community game and club foundations who walked four or five miles to raise funds for their own club.

After completing the walk Nigel Wood said: "The Founders Walk was a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the 120th anniversary of Rugby League and its rich history which we are all very proud of.

"It was probably one of the toughest things I have ever done but being joined by the Rugby League family at different stages along the way really helped everybody through. We had former players, colleagues, community members and friends joining us from Hull to St Helens.

"Many of the original grounds that were on our route no longer exist but the Founders Walk was a fascinating journey into the past, as well as a celebration of our great sport, for everyone who took part. I'd like to thank everybody that took

part over the six days, others for their words of encouragement and all those that raised money to support worthy Rugby League causes."

Commemorative blue plaques were placed on the sites of all 22 original Northern Union grounds.

The history of the sport was brought to life in a fantastic exhibition which toured the North during 2015. Thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Rugby League Heritage on Tour was put together by Rugby League Cares.

As well as detailing the history of the sport and its development the exhibition boasted many fascinating artefacts, including a jersey from the first-ever Rugby League Test match and the ball from the famous 1954 Challenge Cup final replay between Warrington and Halifax.

The exhibition also told the story of the game's split from rugby union, the first World Cup, the dreadful banning of the game in France during World War Two and much more.



# WEMBLEY STATUE

Rugby League legends immortalised at the national stadium...

**A highlight of Rugby League's 120th anniversary was the unveiling of a bronze statue at Wembley Stadium before the 2015 Leeds Rhinos v Hull Kingston Rovers Ladbrokes Challenge Cup final.**

The statue, created by Hull-based sculptor Stephen Winterburn, was three years in the making and features five all-time greats of the sport in Eric Ashton, Billy Boston, Martin Offiah, Alex Murphy and Gus Risman.

A panel of journalists, coaches, players, MPs, national newspaper editors and fans were all involved in the voting and, after much discussion and consultation, the legendary quintet were chosen.

The statue, situated 50 metres from the Bobby Moore statue on the Wembley concourse, was commissioned by the Rugby League Cares charity and unveiled by Sports Minister Tracey Crouch on the 120th anniversary to the day the sport was founded.

"This is the pinnacle of my career, without a doubt," said Offiah. "I had a conversation with the sculptor Stephen Winterburn and we were in agreement that this is the greatest honour that any sportsman in any sport could ever have.

"To have it at the national stadium, too, is beyond anything you could ever dream of. When you're young, you dream about representing your country



or playing at Wembley. But whatever your desire is, you never imagine for a moment that anything like this will be achieved.

"It's very important to have this statue. The Rugby League statue will be a meeting place for Rugby League fans. In 20 or 30 years' time, it will still be there as a shrine to Rugby League."

"I think the statue looks great," said Cardiff-born Boston, who scored a record 478 tries for Wigan from 1953-68. "It's such a massive honour to have something like this and to be a part of it, too."

Murphy, who was inducted into the Rugby League Hall of Fame in 1988, ranks the statue as the greatest achievement in the sport. "I think it's the biggest thing to happen in Rugby League," Murphy said.

"When people go to Wembley for different events, they're not only going to see a statue of Bobby Moore, but they'll also see the Rugby League statue of Billy Boston, Eric Ashton, Gus Risman, Martin Offiah and myself. It's huge for Rugby League to have a permanent place at Wembley."



# MAGIC WEEKEND 2015

Breaking new ground...



**Magic Weekend broke new ground in 2015. After three successful years in Manchester a new venue had to be sought due to work being done at the Etihad Stadium. St James' Park, the home of Newcastle United FC, was chosen to host the ninth annual event.**

It was a bold decision to re-locate to the North East, but it turned out to be one of the best yet. A total of 67,788 fans packed into the stadium for the two-day sporting spectacular, which was an all-time Magic Weekend record. The 40,871 supporters who attended the Saturday round of games was also a record.

All the Super League clubs embraced the new venue, as did the Rugby League fans who attended and helped create that unique carnival atmosphere which the sport is famed for.

Newcastle City Council, NE1, Newcastle Gateshead Initiative and Newcastle United Football Club, as well as the people of Newcastle and the North East region, took to the event with a warmth and enthusiasm in making it a special occasion. First Utility wholeheartedly supported the move to Newcastle and the commitment and hard work of all partners, sponsors and agencies, as well as RFL staff, ensured that Rugby League fans were given a warm welcome at St James' Park and in and around the city of Newcastle.

The weekend also presented a great opportunity to build on the tremendous

development taking place in the North East where there are already over 1,000 players and 66 teams, including Newcastle Thunder and their Foundation, which has benefited from Sky Try funding aimed at ensuring this weekend leaves a lasting legacy.

As usual, the action on the pitch didn't disappoint. Following the reorganisation of Super League, the Magic Weekend featured 12 teams and six matches, as opposed to the seven games in previous years.

The weekend kicked off with Salford Red Devils taking on Widnes Vikings, with the Vikings winning 38-16. Next up was the Hull derby where Hull FC ensured Humberside bragging rights



with a 46-20 victory. Wigan Warriors and Leeds Rhinos rounded off the day's action with the Warriors securing a 27-12 victory.

Wet conditions greeted the opening game on Sunday and what began as a scrappy affair between Catalans Dragons and Huddersfield Giants turned into a tense affair with the teams finishing all square at 22-22.

The St Helens v Warrington Wolves match proved a real cracker with Saints coming back from a 16-8 deficit at half-time to claim a 20-16 victory.

Castleford Tigers' 56-16 victory over neighbours Wakefield Trinity Wildcats brought the curtain down on a truly wonderful weekend.

# WORLD CLUB SERIES

Expanding the concept...

**The newly-expanded World Club Series saw the three top clubs in Super League - St Helens, Wigan Warriors and Warrington Wolves - take on South Sydney Rabbitohs, Brisbane Broncos and St George Illawarra from the NRL.**

The Series kicked off when Warrington faced St George Illawarra at the Halliwell Jones Stadium. A crowd of just over 13,000 saw the team go toe-to-toe with the Australian side, who eventually ran out 18-12 winners.

The action switched to the DW Stadium the following night with Wigan playing host to the Brisbane Broncos. Once again the action on the field didn't disappoint, with a last-gasp try from Wigan's Joe Burgess sending the game into golden point extra-time. The Broncos squeezed through 14-12 in front of a crowd of over 20,000.

The stage was set for the clash of the champions between St Helens and South Sydney at a sold-out Langtree Park. Among those in the crowd was Hollywood actor Russell Crowe, who



opted to watch his beloved Rabbitohs in North West England rather than attend the Oscars ceremony in California.

He witnessed his team dominate from the kick-off and they led 24-0 at half-time, eventually winning 39-0 to take the World Club Challenge crown.

The move to expand the event was a success with a total of 51,902 fans attending the three games.

Crowe's presence at St Helens for the final game undoubtedly raised the profile of both the event and Rugby League in this country.





# ENGLAND 2015 REVIEW



International series win over New Zealand...

England were involved in a three-match international series against New Zealand in the autumn of 2015. The Kiwis were the number one ranked side in the world and the tour was their first to these shores since 2007.

There were seven uncapped players in Steve McNamara's squad, Luke Gale, Ben Currie, John Bateman, George Williams, Joe Burgess, Mike Cooper and Jermaine McGillvary, with Sean O'Loughlin named captain. Eighteen of the squad had progressed through the talent system since 2009.

Prior to the series, England played France at Leigh Sports Village, running out impressive 84-4 winners.

The first international against New Zealand was played at the KC Stadium in Hull and it looked ominous for England in the opening exchanges when the visitors raced into a 10-0 lead.

However, the home side worked their way back into the game with tries from Josh Hodgson and Brett Ferres, both converted by Gareth Widdop. The Kiwis

- ▶ England Students retained their 2015 Students Four Nations crown with a 100 per cent record.
- ▶ England Women played a two-match series against France, winning 24-4 in Tonneins and earning a 14-14 draw in Biganos.
- ▶ England won the Wheelchair Rugby League European Championship after beating world champions France 28-24.

added a penalty to make it 12-12 at the interval but the second-half belonged to England. They scored 14-unanswered points through tries from Ferres and O'Loughlin, and three goals from Widdop.

It augured well for the second match at The Stadium at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London but in a tough war of attrition New Zealand levelled the series with a 9-2 victory.

It was all set up for a showdown at the DW Stadium in Wigan a week later and, despite the cold, wet conditions, it didn't disappoint. England opened the scoring with a Widdop penalty and after 27 minutes they were 8-0 ahead thanks to a

try from Elliott Whitehead, which Widdop converted.

But New Zealand hit back when Jason Nightingale crossed and Issac Luke added the extras to reduce the arrears to just two points at half-time. They piled on the pressure early in the second-half and it took some desperate defending from the home side to keep them at bay.

Having weathered the storm England increased their lead going into the final quarter when Whitehead went over for his second try of the game, which Widdop once again converted. With eight minutes remaining they looked to have wrapped up the contest when skipper O'Loughlin



ELLIOTT WHITEHEAD  
SCORES HIS SECOND TRY  
AT THE DW STADIUM



QUEEN ELIZABETH STADIUM, OLYMPIC PARK

touched down and Widdop maintained his 100 per cent kicking record with the conversion.

However, from the re-start they found themselves under pressure from New Zealand and nerves were jangling in the home camp as the Kiwis crossed for two tries in three minutes. But Luke couldn't convert either of them and the England defence stood firm until the final whistle.

Sean O'Loughlin stepped up to receive the Albert Baskerville Shield and also collected the George Smith Medal after being named Man of the Series.

It was to be Steve McNamara's last game in charge of the national team.

Jon Roberts, Director of Performance and Development, said: "The series win over world champions New Zealand set the seal on an immensely satisfying year for England. The victory was the culmination of years of hard work, both on and off the field.

"It was also testament to the talent system which we have put in place. We are seeing a steady stream of top class players feed into the national set-up, as witnessed by the seven uncapped players who made the 2015 squad.

"Steve McNamara has been a huge factor in this development over the last few seasons and it is only right that we acknowledge his immense contribution to the national team and the entire England talent programme."



## ENGLAND ACADEMY

England Academy played one international fixture game in 2015. They played France Academy in Carcassonne and were narrowly beaten 32-31.

A training camp was held in October, alongside the full England squad as they prepared for the international series against New Zealand. This was for players eligible for the 2016 Australia Tour.

David Elliott, England Youth and Academy Manager, said: "2015 was a transformational and development year for the England Academy programme. During the year we had an individual and group focus into the England culture and environment. We worked hard on putting the correct values, standards and behaviours for players in place for the 2016 Australia tour."



# SUPER LEAGUE REVIEW



Leeds Rhinos sweep the board...

**Leeds Rhinos became the first side to complete the treble of domestic honours since St Helens achieved the feat in 2006. But while the lifting of the Ladbrokes Challenge Cup at Wembley was a relatively straightforward affair, the quest for the First Utility League Leaders' Shield and the Super League trophy was a much more fraught one.**

The Rhinos kicked off their 2015 campaign with four straight wins and, apart from a slight wobble at the end of April and the beginning of May, they cruised through the regular season to finish top of the pile.

But the 2015 campaign saw a radical change to the format which would not only decide the Super League champions but set up an annual promotion/relegation battle.

After all 12 clubs had played each other home and away, plus the Magic Weekend fixture, the top eight clubs, having secured their Super League status, took part in the newly-formulated Super 8s. This involved a further seven fixtures with the top four sides having the advantage of four home games and three away matches.

Under this new system, Leeds had to fight their way through the Super 8s to earn the League Leaders' Shield. The Rhinos won their first three games but suffered something of a Challenge Cup hangover, losing to St Helens, Catalans Dragons and Castleford after their Wembley triumph over Hull Kingston Rovers.

It seemed that time was finally catching up with a squad dominated by

seasoned campaigners, including Jamie Peacock, Kevin Sinfield and Kylie Leuluai who all announced their intention to retire at the end of the season. In their final Super 8s match at Huddersfield it looked like the League Leaders' Shield was heading to the DW Stadium as the Rhinos trailed 16-8 with seven minutes remaining. They managed to draw level and with just seconds left on the clock Ryan Hall sprinted down the touchline for a try which gave them a 20-16 victory and the Shield.

Following the Super 8s, the top four clubs - Leeds, Wigan, Huddersfield and St Helens - all qualified for the play-off semi-finals. The Rhinos beat St Helens in their last-four contest to set up a meeting with Wigan Warriors, who had beaten Huddersfield, at Old Trafford.



Once again, it looked as though they would miss out on the ultimate prize when they trailed the Warriors 20-16 going into the final quarter. However, in front of the first sell-out Grand Final crowd, their ability to close out tight games came to the fore and a try from Josh Walters, converted inevitably by Kevin Sinfield, saw them home by two points.

For Wigan it was another bitter pill to swallow after being pipped by the Rhinos for the League Leaders' Shield. Huddersfield Giants had another solid but ultimately frustrating season, finishing third and being denied a first appearance

in the Grand Final by Wigan. At least they had the consolation of having the competition's leading try scorer in Jermaine McGillvary.

Last year's champions St Helens had a disappointing end to their season. Dogged by injuries, after being beaten by Leeds Rhinos in the Challenge Cup semi-final they went on to lose their first three Super 8s matches. However, they managed to qualify for the play-off semi-finals with wins over Leeds, Castleford and Wigan before the Rhinos ended their hopes of a return to Old Trafford.

Castleford failed to reach the heights of their previous season, finishing just

outside the top four alongside Warrington Wolves, Catalans Dragons and Hull FC, who all secured their Super League status by finishing in the top eight but never really looked like making the play-offs.

It was a different story for Challenge Cup finalists Hull Kingston Rovers, who faced the threat of relegation after finishing in the bottom four alongside Widnes Vikings, Salford Red Devils and Wakefield Trinity Wildcats. Those four clubs had to battle the top four Championship clubs Leigh Centurions, Bradford Bulls, Sheffield Eagles and Halifax in The Qualifiers to retain their Super League status.

Hull Kingston Rovers won all their games and Widnes beat their Championship opposition, but Salford lost at Bradford 41-10 and Wakefield were beaten 24-10 at Sheffield.

Which left Wakefield Trinity Wildcats, who had spent much of the season at the bottom of the table, fighting for their Super League lives. They finished in fourth place, with Bradford in fifth, and the pair contested the first Million Pound Game at Belle Vue.

It proved to be a close contest which was in doubt until the final minutes, but Wakefield's 24-16 victory ensured that the same 12 Super League teams would do battle again in 2016.





# LADBROKES CHALLENGE CUP REVIEW

Rhinos' cup triumph kicks off quest for treble...



**Rugby League's oldest competition had a new sponsor in 2015, with Ladbrokes putting their name to the iconic trophy for the next three years.**

Leeds Rhinos began their quest for a clean sweep of domestic honours by retaining the Challenge Cup. Having secured the trophy in 2014 for the first time in 15 years they managed back-to-back wins with a 50-0 hammering of Hull Kingston Rovers in front of over 80,000 spectators.

Leeds wing Tom Briscoe made history by becoming the first player to score five tries in a final, which also earned him the Lance Todd Trophy. Rovers, appearing at Wembley Stadium for the first time in 29 years, froze on the big stage and never looked like getting their hands on the trophy for the first time since 1980.

The Rhinos led 16-0 at half-time and piled on the points in the second-half with Briscoe rounding things off with his fifth try in the final minute. Hull KR's scrum-half Albert Kelly, whose participation had been in doubt due to a knee injury, toiled in vain to get his side into the game while Rhinos' skipper Kevin Sinfield, in his last Wembley final, was at the heart of everything his side did.

The road to a sunlit Wembley Stadium in August had begun in deep mid-winter. The competition kicked off in late January with 40 community clubs, including Scotland's Aberdeen Warriors, Valley Cougars from Wales and South West Chargers from London, plus two university sides, Leeds Beckett and Loughborough. The armed forces were represented by the Royal Navy and the Army, who were joined by the British Police.

The tie of the round was between National Conference League champions West Hull and fellow Premier Division side Thatto Heath Crusaders, with the Hull outfit just scraping through 14-12.

Four ties were postponed due to bad weather and were played in early

February. Leigh Miners Rangers and Great Britain Police were both beaten in Round One but found themselves re-instated after the sides that knocked them out, Hull Dockers and Rochdale Mayfield respectively, were found to have fielded ineligible players.

Leigh made the most of their second chance with a 26-18 victory over Cumbrian champions Walney Central in the Second Round but the Police went down 38-16 to Widnes West Bank.

The Kingstone Press League 1 sides entered the fray in Round Three, played in early March. The pick of the all-community club clashes turned out to be

Leigh Miners Rangers' home tie against treble winners West Hull. A late try sealed a 32-28 victory for the home side who were making the most of the lifeline thrown to them after their Round One defeat.

In the all-League 1 clash, Barrow Raiders got their campaign off to a flying start with a 38-22 home win over Keighley Cougars. No scalps were claimed by the community clubs over their professional counterparts, but Rochdale Hornets were given a fright at Kells with the Cumbrian outfit taking an early lead. They were eventually overhauled and Hornets went on to win 29-12. Swinton Lions broke all



kinds of records in their 86-4 demolition of London Skolars at the New River Stadium.

The Kingstone Press Championship clubs joined the competition in Round Four and they wasted no time in making their presence felt. York City Knights and Leigh Centurions kicked the round off with two Friday night fixtures. York notched up a 58-8 win over community club Featherstone Lions, while Leigh's encounter with London Broncos proved equally one-sided. Their 64-12 demolition of the Londoners hinted at what was to come, with Paul Rowley's side clearly in the mood to make an impact further down the track.

There were more points piled up in the Saturday fixtures, with Batley Bulldogs, coached by the old Challenge Cup mastermind John Kear, posting a 78-6 win over Normanton Knights and Featherstone Rovers cruising past Whitehaven 36-12 in an all-Championship fixture on the Cumbrian coast.

Leigh Miners ensured a community club presence in the next round with a 32-6 victory over Oxford.

With the lower-ranked Super League sides in the hat for Round Five, Championship high flyers Halifax, Leigh Centurions, Sheffield Eagles and Bradford Bulls looked to spring some classic cup upsets.

However, Halifax found Wakefield Trinity Wildcats a little too hot to handle as James Webster's side, thrashed 80-0 by Warrington Wolves in Super League a week earlier, ran out 44-16 winners. But Championship leaders Leigh went one better, stunning Salford Red Devils with a 22-18 victory at Leigh Sports Village.

Hull Kingston Rovers battled past Bradford to reach the last 16, winning 50-30 at Odsal, while Hull FC held off a spirited comeback by Sheffield, eventually running out 34-14 winners. Leigh Miners saw their cup run halted with a 44-14 defeat to York.

Hull KR sprang the surprise of Round Six when they beat Wigan Warriors 16-12. A late touchdown from Ken Sio left the former Challenge Cup kings on the canvas as Rovers made it into the last eight.

Warrington Wolves eased through with a 52-10 win over Dewsbury Rams, and there was another comfortable win at Langtree Park, where the St Helens flyer Tommy Makinson finished with a 22-point haul in their 46-6 win over York.

Hull FC won an all-Super League tie with Castleford Tigers 40-14 and holders Leeds Rhinos were imperious against Huddersfield Giants, romping home 48-16.

Catalans Dragons, who finished the game with 12 men, overcame Championship battlers Featherstone

Rovers 37-34 in a Perpignan thriller to set-up a last-eight trip to Hull Kingston Rovers.

Widnes Vikings survived a second-half fightback from Batley Bulldogs before winning 26-22, but Championship leaders Leigh Centurions conjured up a sensational second-half revival to dump Super League side Wakefield Trinity Wildcats out of the competition with a 36-30 win at Belle Vue.

In the quarter-finals Hull KR saw off a second-half fightback by Catalans Dragons at the KC Lightstream Stadium to win 32-26 which put them into the semi-finals for the first time since 2006. Leeds secured their place in the last four with a comfortable 24-6 win over Hull FC at a rain-soaked KC Stadium.

Warrington Wolves finally ended the Challenge Cup dream of Leigh Centurions, but were made to fight all the way for their 34-24 victory at the Halliwell Jones Stadium. St Helens secured the final place in the Challenge Cup semi-finals with a 36-20 home victory over Widnes Vikings.

Leeds Rhinos booked their place at Wembley for the fifth time in six seasons after beating St Helens 24-14 at Warrington's Halliwell Jones Stadium. Chris Chester's Hull Kingston Rovers side sprang another Challenge Cup shock when they beat Warrington Wolves 26-18 in the other semi-final at Headingley.



# CHAMPIONSHIP REVIEW



**Leigh Centurions once again finished top of the Kingstone Press Championship having lost just one game in the 2015 campaign to London Broncos. They also had a terrific run in the Ladbrokes Challenge Cup beating two Super League clubs, Salford Red Devils and Wakefield Trinity Wildcats, before Warrington Wolves finally ended their progress in the quarter-finals with a hard-fought 34-24 victory.**

It all augured well for The Qualifiers and the chance to win a place in Super League. And in their first game things seemed to be going to plan when they led Challenge Cup finalists Hull Kingston Rovers 24-6 at half-time in their opening game. But they ended up losing the match and only won one of the next six games to finished bottom of the table.

Bradford Bulls finished runners-up in the Championship but a poor finish to the regular campaign, winning just one of their final five matches, didn't look promising for The Qualifiers. Indeed they were inconsistent, but wins over Leigh, Sheffield and Salford put them in fifth position to set up a meeting with Wakefield Trinity Wildcats in the first-ever Million Pound Game.

They came agonisingly close to winning but ultimately fell short, however they did

have the Championship Player of the Year in stand-off Lee Gaskell.

Sheffield Eagles finished a highly promising campaign in third place and notched up two wins in The Qualifiers, which included a victory over Wakefield Trinity Wildcats. They announced their intention to go full-time in 2016.

Richard Marshall was voted Championship Coach of the Year after guiding Halifax to fourth place in his first year at the helm. They ended their season with an impressive win at Bradford to finish sixth in The Qualifiers.

Featherstone Rovers had a disappointing regular season and midway through the campaign replaced their coach Andy Hay with Jon Sharp. They finished fifth and had some consolation in winning the Championship Shield, a new competition for the clubs finishing outside the top four. They beat London Broncos in the final and Jordan Baldwinson was voted Young Player of the Year with Thomas Minns also nominated.

Dewsbury Rams notched up some impressive wins during their campaign and their new reserve side won their competition. But they weren't able to grab a top-four spot and missed out on a Championship Shield Final outing.

London Broncos' ambitions of bouncing back into Super League were hit when coach Joey Grima quit the club at the start of the season and headed back to Australia. Assistant Andrew Henderson took over and they notched up some notable wins during the season. They thrashed Sheffield Eagles at Summer Bash and inflicted on Leigh Centurions their only league defeat, however, a poor run at the end of the regular season put paid to their hopes of making The Qualifiers. Their hopes of landing some silverware were dashed when they lost the Championship Shield Final to Featherstone Rovers.

Workington Town had a miserable start to the season but recovered to finish in mid-table. Four wins over local rivals Whitehaven lifted their spirits and the signing of mercurial half-back Jarrod Sammut proved a bonus.

Batley Bulldogs were competitive for much of the season and had the bonus point system not been abandoned, might have finished higher in the table. Willy coach John Kear almost worked his magic in their Challenge Cup match against Widnes Vikings which they ultimately lost 26-22.

Whitehaven were another side who had an uphill battle from the start, with coach Steve Deakin resigning before a ball had been kicked. Assistant James Coyle stepped up and acquitted himself well, helping them to avoid relegation, although the four losses to Workington Town were hard to swallow.

Hunslet Hawks made a reasonable start to the season, which suggested they could avoid relegation, but when injuries hit hard they found themselves struggling at the wrong end of the table and even their dual-registration deal with Leeds Rhinos couldn't save them.

The uncertain nature of the coaching world was illustrated at Doncaster. Paul Cooke won the 2014 Coach of the Year award for taking the club into the top four. But by mid-July they hadn't notched up a single win and Cooke was on his way out of the club. New coach Gary Thornton couldn't avoid the inevitable drop down into League 1.



# LEAGUE 1 REVIEW



**Oldham ended years of frustration by finally earning promotion to the Championship. Under Coach of the Year Scott Naylor, they headed the table for much of the season, finishing the regular campaign with a thumping 76-12 win at Oxford. They then beat Keighley Cougars to clinch promotion and in Lewis Palfrey had the League 1 Player of the Year.**

Swinton Lions joined their near neighbours Oldham in the Championship. They took the bold decision of ending their dual-registration partnership with Warrington Wolves and it paid off.

The Lions made the final of the iPro Sport Cup but were beaten by North Wales Crusaders. However, a consistent season, playing attractive rugby under coach John Duffy, resulted in a third-placed finish. They faced Keighley Cougars in the play-off final and showed tremendous grit and determination to hold on for a 29-28 victory.

Keighley Cougars may have been favourites to win promotion but they suffered a devastating blow midway through the season when Danny Jones collapsed and died at London Skolars. Coach Paul March and his players had much to contend with in the following weeks but they rallied and just fell short of earning promotion.

York City Knights had issues over ground and training facilities from the outset. They were forced to move around to both train and play matches but it is to the credit of coach James Ford and his players that they remained focused. Eventually, the situation was resolved and they finished the season in fourth. It looked like they would have a shot at promotion when they led Swinton Lions with just seconds remaining of their play-off match. But Swinton levelled and then won in golden-point extra-time. But there were many positives to take into 2016.

North Wales Crusaders picked up their first piece of silverware when they lifted the iPro Sport Cup at Blackpool following their victory over Swinton Lions. It was a major achievement for new coach Anthony Murray and despite a crippling injury list they went on to make the play-offs, eventually falling to Keighley.



Rochdale Hornets had a disappointing campaign, their promotion ambitions dashed when they finished just one point shy of the top five. Yet they had been in contention right up to the final game, which only added to the frustration. Coach Ian Talbot stepped down at the end of the season with Alan Kilshaw stepping into the role for 2016.

Barrow Raiders also had high hopes of promotion but like Rochdale finished the season agonisingly one point short of making the play-offs. They could point to defeats by Keighley as crucial results in their campaign. They lost to the Cougars at home by two points in June and were defeated by one point at Keighley in August. What made it all the more frustrating for coach Paul Creary is that they beat the Cougars 38-22 in the Third Round of the Ladbrokes Challenge Cup.

The re-named Newcastle Thunder began the season full of promise and under coach Stanley Gene seemed to be fulfilling that promise in their early games. By mid-June they were in third place but a disastrous second half of the season saw them slump to eighth. At least they had the consolation of terrific crowds with an average home attendance of just under 1,000. Australian Mick Mantelli came in to replace Gene as coach.

University of Gloucestershire All Golds made progress under coach Lee Greenwood, becoming the first southern-based team to beat a northern side when they defeated Newcastle Thunder 26-10. The All Golds finished on a high with three wins from their final five fixtures.

Oxford suffered some heavy defeats during the course of the 2015 season but a dual-registration arrangement with Bradford Bulls helped them to pick up seven wins, which included three in five matches.

Heavy defeats in their first two fixtures saw London Skolars part company with their coach Joe Mbu. Former Skolars stalwart Jermaine Coleman took over as player/coach and oversaw a steady upturn in the team's performance. A competitive performance against Keighley in front of over 1,000 fans in the annual Friday Night Lights fixture at New River Stadium was followed by a win at Coventry Bears. The season ended with another encouraging performance at Rochdale which all boded well for 2016.

Coventry Bears made a flying start to life in League 1, winning two of their opening three games. They only managed three more wins in their inaugural season but there was much for coach Tom Tsang to be proud of. They excelled off the field and their year culminated with the club winning the League 1 Project of the Year award.

After a good 2014 campaign, Hemel Stags had a disappointing 2015 finishing second from bottom. The high turnover of players, they used 49 over the course of the season, didn't help coach Troy Perkins. South Wales Scorpions had another challenging season winning just one game, but coach Mike Grady deserves credit for looking to field teams made up of predominantly local players, before Phil Calerton took up the reins for 2016.



# HONOURS BOARD

The outstanding performers of 2015...



ZAK HARDAKER

## STEVE PRESCOTT MAN OF STEEL

**Zak Hardaker** capped a remarkable 2015 by taking Rugby League's highest individual award.

It's been quite a journey for the Leeds and England full-back. His career began with local community club Knottingley Rockware, before a switch to Featherstone Lions, ahead of moving into the professional ranks with Featherstone Rovers in 2010.

Hardaker scored a hat-trick on his professional debut and went on to be named Championship Young Player of the Year.

He signed for Leeds Rhinos in October 2010 and initially played at centre but, due to an injury to Brent Webb, moved to full-back. After just his second full season with the Rhinos, Hardaker was already a two-time Grand Final winner and was named Super League Young Player of the Year in 2012, going on to gain England honours.

Now firmly established in the full-back role, he was named in the Super League Dream Team for the first time at the end of the 2014 season. Outstanding

in defence and always a real threat in attack, he was a crucial member of the treble-winning Leeds Rhinos side in 2015, and featured in all four England internationals at the end of the season.

He became the first Leeds player to win the Man of Steel award since Iestyn Harris in 1998.

## SUPER LEAGUE COACH OF THE YEAR

There could be no other possible choice than Leeds boss **Brian McDermott**. A clean sweep of all three domestic trophies, and achieved in some style, guaranteed the former Bradford and Great Britain prop the ultimate coaching award.

He began his coaching career in 2003 as assistant with Huddersfield Giants and took on his first head coach role with Harlequins RL in 2006.

In 2010, he joined Leeds Rhinos and, over the next five seasons, guided them to three Super League titles, two Challenge Cups and a World Club crown. He is now the most successful coach in the club's 146-year history.

His teams are invariably a blend of home grown talent, seasoned campaigners and shrewd overseas recruits. Getting the players to peak at the right time in the various domestic competitions is a challenge, but one which McDermott rose to admirably in 2015.



BRIAN McDERMOTT



TOM BRISCOE

## LANCE TODD TROPHY

Leeds Rhinos winger **Tom Briscoe** was a shoe-in for the Lance Todd Trophy after becoming the first player to score five tries in a Challenge Cup final. He succeeded another Leeds wing, Ryan Hall, who had earned the honour the previous year.

Briscoe, who is quick and deceptively strong in the tackle, scored the first of his tries midway through the game against Hull Kingston Rovers with a short dart to the line following an initial burst from Ryan Hall. Early in the second-half, he plucked a high kick out of the air before touching down, then with just 14 minutes remaining he raced in for a hat-trick, squeezing over in the final minute to break the record. Briscoe was quick to credit centre Kallum Watkins and the rest of his team-mates for his five-try haul.

## HARRY SUNDERLAND TROPHY

Leeds Rhinos not only claimed all three domestic trophies but they scooped all three individual player awards with **Danny McGuire** being voted Man of the Match in their Grand Final victory over Wigan Warriors at Old Trafford.



DANNY McGUIRE

Wigan had stunned the Rhinos by taking the lead after just four minutes but McGuire got his side back on terms with a perfectly-timed run onto Kevin Sinfield's grubber to the line.

He struck again just before half-time, beginning a slick move on the halfway line with a long ball out to Tom Briscoe. He then sent Kallum Watkins racing to the line but when the centre was hauled down just short, McGuire was crucially on hand to finish off the move he had started.

Wigan dominated the second-half and were leading 20-16 going into the final quarter, but McGuire was the architect of a try which won the game for the Rhinos. A perfectly-judged high kick to the corner was knocked back to Joel Moon, who fed Jimmy Keinhorst and he put Josh Walters over for the winning score.



RICHARD MARSHALL



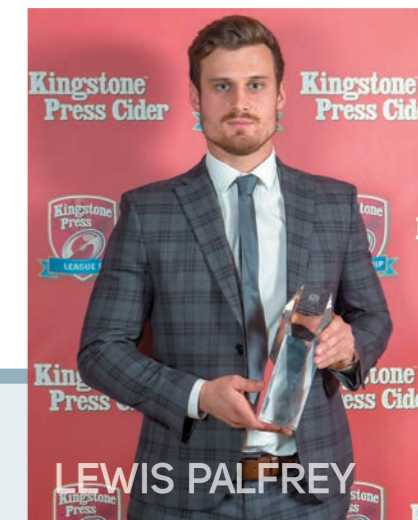
LEE GASKELL

## CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Bradford Bulls may have been frustrated at missing out on promotion back into Super League but they had the Championship's best player in **Lee Gaskell**. The former St Helens stand-off was a constant threat to opposition defences with his handling skills, eye for the gap and superb kicking game.

## CHAMPIONSHIP COACH OF THE YEAR

Halifax rounded off a hugely impressive campaign by beating Bradford at Osdal which earned them entry to The Qualifiers. **Richard Marshall** duly earned the plaudits in his first year as head coach at The Shay.



LEWIS PALFREY

## LEAGUE 1 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Utility back **Lewis Palfrey** scooped the award for an outstanding season with Oldham and was a key player in their successful drive for promotion. The former reserve team captain at Salford had spells with Whitehaven and Batley Bulldogs before signing with Oldham for the 2013 season. Coach Scott Naylor knew him in his Salford days and his faith in signing Palfrey has paid dividends.

## LEAGUE 1 COACH OF THE YEAR

After years of coming so close to promotion, Oldham finally achieved their ambition of a place in the Championship. Coach **Scott Naylor** may not have had the same budget as some of his rivals but he put his faith in a squad which included a raft of young players. Naylor was also innovative in some of the tactics he employed.

The side were rarely outside the top two and claimed the League Leaders' trophy, finishing their campaign with a victory over Keighley Cougars in the promotion play-off.



SCOTT NAYLOR



# RFL EVENTS DEPARTMENT REVIEW

2015 was a year of firsts for Rugby League...

The year kicked off with the inaugural World Club Series which saw three of the top Super League clubs taking on their NRL rivals. A total of 51,902 fans attended the three games, which included a capacity crowd at Langtree Park as St Helens took on South Sydney Rabbitohs.

Among the crowd was film star Russell Crowe who saw the Rabbitohs take the World Club Championship crown with a convincing victory. Crowe's presence undoubtedly raised the profile of the event and Rugby League in this country.

2015 saw the first ever Summer Bash which was staged in Blackpool. The popular seaside resort saw all 12 Kingstone Press Championship clubs taking part in a round of matches at the home of Blackpool FC.

Kicking off proceedings was the iPro Sport Cup Final, the climax to a new knock-out competition featuring all the Kingstone Press League 1 clubs plus two top community sides. North Wales Crusaders were the inaugural winners after a tough 14-6 win over Swinton Lions.

This set the stage for some spectacular action over the two days, with more than 15,000 fans attending.

The Magic Weekend registered another first with a new venue. After three years at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, the event broke new ground by moving to St James' Park, home of Newcastle United FC, which proved to be a spectacular success. The stadium, situated in the heart of the vibrant city of Newcastle, proved a real winner with fans. A total of 67,788 fans made the journey to the North East, a record for Magic Weekend



SUPER LEAGUE GRAND FINAL



CHALLENGE CUP FINAL 2015

with the Saturday attendance of 40,871 also being a record for the first day of the competition.

In May, the world of Rugby League was shocked by the death of Wales and Keighley Cougars player Danny Jones. The 29-year-old suffered a cardiac arrest after leaving the pitch during the Cougars' game against London Skolars at the New River Stadium in north London.

At the Ladbroke's Challenge Cup final in August his widow Lizzie Jones gave an emotional rendition of 'Abide With Me' to a crowd of 80,140.

The new league structure delivered an exciting climax to the season with

Leeds Rhinos taking the League Leaders' Shield in a dramatic finale. It took a last-gasp try by Ryan Hall for them to beat Huddersfield Giants in their final Super 8s fixture.

Wakefield Trinity Wildcats beat Bradford Bulls in the Million Pound Game to secure their top-flight status.

Rhinos went on to win an historic treble at Old Trafford in a nail-biting Grand Final, which was sold out for the very first time. The Charlatans were the highlight of the pre-match entertainment. As well as performing some of their most recognised songs, the four-piece band played some tracks from their latest studio album. The traditional hymn 'Jerusalem' was performed by one of England's finest sopranos, Laura Wright.

The England international series against New Zealand rounded off the domestic calendar, which included a first ever Rugby League game played at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London.



RUSSELL CROWE



# COMMERCIAL REVIEW

Commercial revenue across Super League and the RFL grew for the second year running...

## First Utility's relationship with Super League Europe (SLE) brought extra exposure to one of the most exciting Super League Grand Final chases in recent years.

Ladbroke's first year sponsoring the Challenge Cup was a raging success, culminating in a fantastic day at Wembley as the RFL celebrated its 120th birthday.

The World Club Series was a commercial success for all three competing UK clubs as well as SLE, with AFEX, First Utility and Specsavers stepping up their involvement in the tournament.

Kingstone Press extended their Championship, League 1 and England

relationship, by stepping up into Super League. This was in addition to the 60+ clubs and the relationships they have built with stadiums during their tenure.

Our fans again played their part in engaging with sponsors and commercial partners alike, nowhere more so than the FanZone at St James' Park for Magic Weekend, breaking previous records on attendances.

The international series delivered against its commercial objectives, again with the existing family of partners choosing to extend their activity and investment into international Rugby League.

The market continues to change, with more and more emphasis placed by

brands on digital communication and interaction, fan engagement, as well as the more traditional brand awareness benefits.

We continue to learn and invest in that area, to be able to commercialise new opportunities.

The commercial team continues to strive to improve relationships with stakeholders across the sport, as well as continuing to build a reputation as a rights holder for setting standards in the level of service it provides to its commercial partners.

2016 brings a new set of challenges, including the hosting of the Four Nations; opportunities we feel well placed to maximise.



BRIAN McDERMOTT AND SHAUN WANE LEAD OUT THE 2015 GRAND FINALISTS





# HIGHER EDUCATION

Continuing to promote university Rugby League...

## RUGBY LEAGUE NINES AND GROWTH

Rugby League Nines was piloted for another year as the proposal, which went to BUCS, was not eligible for voting after the idea was presented to the Competitions Group. This meant that it would be the 2015-16 season that the paper would be able to be voted on. Through the presentation process, important feedback was received from BUCS staff alongside the Regional Competition Group members.

A close relationship with key stakeholders was maintained to ensure the project and concept was able to move forward.

## BUCS SPORTS ADVISORY GROUP (SAG)

2015 saw the introduction of a Sports Advisory Group. The Sports Advisory group acts as another vehicle to promote Rugby League within the HE sector and gives Rugby League another voice into BUCS.

The SAG is a cross section of people within the HE Sector. The chair is Steve Curtis from the University of Hull, there is also a representative from each tier of the BUCS competition, and a BUCS relationship manager alongside the HE lead from the RFL. The SAG



prioritised Rugby League Nines and a comprehensive review of the league structures in their first year.

## COMPETITION

Leeds Beckett dominated the BUCS Premier North League and won their tenth consecutive Championship Final at BUCS Big Wednesday, held at Loughborough University in March 2015.

Leeds Beckett defeated Northumbria in the Championship Final in a very competitive game. The University of Leeds made it a good year for the city by winning the Trophy Final and gaining promotion to Premier North.

## REPRESENTATIVE

England Universities were crowned the 2015 Four Nations Champions after beating Wales 42-26 in the final of the competition, which was hosted at Bray Wanderers, Bray, Ireland.

2015's representative programme kicked off with the Regional Championships held in Nottingham in mid-February. This sees the best 20 players from the university game from the six regions (North East, North West, Yorkshire, Midlands, South East and South West) play in a one-day event as part of the selection process for the England Universities squad.

The final saw Yorkshire defeat the North West 6-4 to be crowned regional champions for the second consecutive year.

Adam Hughes, HE Manager at the RFL, said: "The representative programme was pivotal once again in the selection of the successful England Universities team. There will be a full review of the representative programme carried out for the 2015-16 academic year with recommendations to see the players in longer games. The England Universities team showed commitment and a great desire to win the Four Nations and were deserved winners."



# FURTHER EDUCATION

Re-shaping Rugby League's offer...

## A PIVOTAL YEAR...

It was a pivotal year for Colleges Rugby League as we continued to work with the Association of Colleges (AOC) and Sport England to re-shape Rugby League's offer to the sector. Through this work we have seen more colleges engage with Rugby League.

There have been some significant changes in the college's sport sector and the RFL is working with key national partners to ensure the Rugby League offer is fit for purpose and is developed around the needs of the participants within the sector.

## CATEGORY 3 ACADEMIES

We have worked in partnership with the Performance Department at the RFL to research and develop the Category 3

Academy programme. The Category 3 Academy model is based on a service level agreement between a college and a professional Rugby League club. The rationale behind Category 3 Academies is to ensure that players in the college game can experience a high quality environment and enable players who want to, to pursue an academic pathway alongside their Rugby League.

## COMPETITION

The National College Final saw Bishop Burton from Beverley claim the trophy after beating New College, Pontefract, at Featherstone Rovers.

Adam Hughes, FE and HE Manager, said: "The final was a great spectacle, it was a really tough, fast and skilful game. It shows that there is a lot of talent in the college game and it will

be great to see some of these players later in their careers, whether that is in the community game, university Rugby League or the professional game."

## REPRESENTATIVE

The Regional Championships took place in May at Sheffield Hallam Sports Park where five regions, North West and Cumbria, Yorkshire, North East, South East, Midlands and South West competed in a one-day competition. Yorkshire were crowned champions in a close final against the North West.

The re-named English College Lionhearts toured the Czech Republic in May 2015 for a four-day tour.

The squad team, who are made up of the best players in the College Rugby League competition, played against the Czech national side.

## BISHOP BURTON FROM BEVERLEY WERE CROWNED COLLEGE KINGS AFTER BEATING NEW COLLEGE, PONTEFRACT





# CHAMPION SCHOOLS

The national competition continues to spread far and wide...

The 2014-15 competition climaxed in a great weekend of action at the Champion Schools Finals, which took place in glorious sunshine at Richmond and Wembley.

The headline makers were Glantaf Year 7 Boys, who became the first Welsh school to win at Wembley, comprehensively outplaying Wade Deacon from Widnes in their 40-6 victory.

The Welsh boys were outstanding with the strong running Cia Marcus taking the Man of the Match award. Iwan Jones scored one of the best tries ever seen at Wembley in the traditional curtain-raiser. The right wing gained possession deep in his own half and set off on a mesmerising run which ended under the posts.

In the Year 7 Girls final Castleford Academy played St Peter's from Manchester in a terrific match with



Castleford eventually running out 36-22 winners. Swansea's Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera couldn't make it a double for the Welsh schools in the Year 8 Boys Final. They were outplayed by a strong St Peter's Catholic High School from Wigan, who won 46-0.

In the Year 8 Girls final Castleford Academy did make it two from two for the Yorkshire school when they beat Deanery High School 36-16.

Both Year 9 games proved to be closely-fought contests. The Boys final was an all-Yorkshire clash, with Brooksbank from Calderdale beating Castleford Academy 26-18. In the Girls final Manchester's St Peter's RC High School took on Sirius Academy from Hull and won a pulsating match 40-30.

However, the match of the day turned out to be the Year 10 Girls final between Astley High School and Castleford Academy. Astley, the first school from the North East to reach a final, went on to take the trophy with a 28-26 victory in a thrilling contest.

The final match was a Hull derby between the Year 10 Boys of Sirius Academy and South Holderness College. It proved to be a fiery contest but Sirius were in control from start to finish. After a strong first-half performance they led 16-0 and eventually went on to win 25-10.

National Education Manager, Ebony Gilbin, said: "Champion Schools continues to be the pinnacle of the Schools Rugby League competition. The standard of play and the commitment of players, teachers and parents is second to none and without the support of these key people the programme would not continue to build from strength to strength."



MAIN: GLANTAF RECEIVING THE TROPHY  
RIGHT: MAN OF THE MATCH CIA MARCUS OF GLANTAF Y7



"The RFL Education Officers work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure young people have great experiences when they take part in Rugby League and they are invaluable to the whole competition. Relationships are established and maintained with schools and local leads to ensure that the transition through the stages of the competition are seamless."

The Champion School Finals are an opportunity to recognise work and commitment of the dedicated army of volunteers who support the competition and Schools Rugby League. As part of the Reward and Recognition programme, the Champion Schools Coordinators, who oversee the local stages of the competition, are invited to Richmond to join in the celebration of Schools Rugby League.

The English Schools Rugby League award winners are also recognised in an awards ceremony on the main pitch



during the Champions Schools Finals. Categories included in these regional awards are School of the Year, Teacher of the Year, Outstanding Contribution to Schools Rugby League and Match Official of the Year.

2015 was another strong year for officials and the Champion Schools competition continued to play an important role for the junior officials.

Referees under the age of 18 from every region officiated in both the regional and national rounds of the competition, alongside their commitments to the community game at weekends, all with the aim of being one of the few selected to officiate at Wembley.

The National Finals saw a squad of eight of the country's most talented young officials head to the capital and ultimately Wembley. They took charge of all eight matches over the course of the finals weekend, and were superb in the various roles, from refereeing to touch judging and in-goal officiating.

Each official took to the pitch at Wembley for the Boys Year 7 final. Officials who have all featured in the Wembley curtain-raiser in recent years have gone on to referee at the highest level.



## 2014-15 RESULTS

Year 7 Girls	St Peter's RC High School 32-36 Castleford Academy
Year 7 Boys	Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf 40-6 Wade Deacon High School
Year 8 Girls	Deanery High School 16-36 Castleford Academy
Year 8 Boys	St Peter's Catholic High School 46-0 Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera
Year 9 Girls	Sirius Academy 30-40 St Peter's RC High School
Year 9 Boys	Castleford Academy 18-26 Brooksbank School
Year 10 Girls	Astley High School 28-26 Castleford Academy
Year 10 Boys	South Holderness College 10-25 Sirius Academy



# RUGBY LEAGUE CARES REVIEW

Connecting with more members of the Rugby League family than ever before...



Rugby League Cares is the umbrella charity supporting all charitable activities in Rugby League and 2015 was a busy, eventful and important year for the organisation which connected to, and engaged with, more members of the Rugby League family than ever before.

The work of the charity gained a very high profile following the tragic loss of Danny Jones, who passed away playing for Keighley Cougars at London Skolars in May.

Danny's death saw the sport come together like never before and through the campaigning work undertaken by Danny's wife, Lizzie, supported by RL Cares and the RFL Benevolent Fund, positive changes were effected across the sport.

Danny died from an undiagnosed heart condition which would have been picked up had he undergone cardiac screening, a process which was mandatory for all players in Super League.

Following the RL Cares campaign, the Championship and League 1 clubs unanimously agreed to mandatory screening for the sport's second and third-tier competitions, and many clubs within the community game are expected to follow suit.

Since RL Cares was formed in 2013, the charity has supported professional club Foundations in the following ways:

- ▶ Convening regular meetings of the professional clubs' charities, the Foundations, each year. This includes three general meetings plus an additional two Sky Try meetings during the year.
- ▶ Helping to assist Foundations monitor and improve their Governance structures and operations to include jointly paid-for legal advice to the chairs and senior managers of the Foundations.



LIZZIE JONES, WHOSE CAMPAIGNING WORK WAS SUPPORTED BY RL CARES AND THE RFL BENEVOLENT FUND



HERITAGE EXHIBITION

- ▶ Developed the Good Governance framework in line with the Sky Try programme.
- ▶ Visited all Foundations as part of the Sky Try programme to review their Governance and advise on improvements where needed.
- ▶ Supported new Foundations, assisting and advising clubs with their plans.

In addition Rugby League Cares seeks to attract support for centrally funded projects including:

- ▶ Sport Relief - Mental Health project.
- ▶ 16-19 Education Programme, which was taken over by Rugby League Learning in the year.
- ▶ The 'Join the Momentum' dance project.
- ▶ Cultural partnership programme involving 15 Foundations in arts and heritage activities.

Rugby League Cares awarded 53 small grants in 2015 to support the start-up of Under-7s community teams via the Community Game Grants Programme. Each project was awarded £500 to assist in the creation of a junior Rugby League team.

Clubs generally invest the grant into coaching awards, kits and equipment.

The charity also supported the grassroots via the Community Game Raffle. In 2015, 41,000 tickets were sold with £28,700 generated for community clubs. The raffle also raised £12,300 (minus servicing costs of £5,000) for RL Cares.

The Welfare and Education Programme continued to make a positive difference to the lives of current and former players throughout the year.

RL Cares runs a dedicated Education Fund which is used to aid players' transition to a new career following Rugby League. Players can apply for grant aid to help motivate and cover the costs of training for a new career during their time in the sport. Grants are means tested against earnings

and whether the player is full-time or part-time. Over 250 players have been supported by this fund to date.

The charity also provide Hardship Grants, or occasionally loans to players struggling financially either through hardship or illness following their retirement from the sport.

The Rugby League Cares Reunions programme, established to bring together former players for social functions, reunions and reminiscence events, enjoyed another successful year by re-engaging many players who have drifted away from the sport.

The Heritage Programme acts as a central hub to the game and provides opportunities to celebrate and participate in the sport's history and







# PLAY TOUCH RUGBY LEAGUE

Embedding as Rugby League's summer social offer...

Play Touch Rugby League (PTRL) is a licensed participation product now into the third year of delivery. The programme in 2015 embedded itself as Rugby League's summer social offer across England.

In 2014, 50 licensed sites operated successful and profitable programmes. This increased to 54 in 2015 with the majority experiencing growth in participants and profit.

Due to the success and popularity of the programme, 95 per cent of licensees signed up for 2015. Mike Horrocks, from Orrell St James, said: "We've just finished our second year of running a PTRL licence and we can definitely see a step up from year one, especially in regards to marketing and general support and feel across the country. It's really easy and straightforward; with all the support and resources you get from the RFL it's hard to go wrong and it's a great way to expand your provision of the community club, with a greater reach and connection with the local community."

There have been a number of additional interventions in 2015 which have enhanced the programme, including a great partnership with Alcatel One Touch. This has seen the technology



company supplying licensed sites with resources used to help manage data and enhance the social media experience, including the very popular "selfie stick" to help capture the Fun, Fitness & Friends elements which is engrained in the PTRL experience.

To start the summer season we launched the new #HIITThePitch campaign to encourage more people to take up this great sport. It targets those players who are coming to the end of their contact playing careers and fans who have been inspired to take up the sport by watching their favourite players

from the stands or on TV. The campaign was a great success and had a positive impact on participants at sites.

To support the #HIITThePitch campaign we ran a number of roadshows, where we went directly to the fans and ex-players to encourage them to take up this exciting non-contact sport. This culminated in a big presence at Summer Bash and Magic Weekend where we signed up 1,500 people and sold bespoke merchandise and limited-edition Summer Bash and Magic Weekend balls.

To celebrate Magic Weekend and the start of the summer we ran our first national PTRL competition on the pitch at St James' Park. Six teams entered, including a number of Super League referees. The two finalists competed for the prize during half-time of the Hull derby, which was played in front of 30,000 people. As part of the rewards programme, the team also arranged a half-time event at the England v New Zealand international at Olympic Park in London.

2015 also saw PTRL launch our NVQ programme, which aims to upskill licensed staff, giving volunteers a structured learning programme which will give them real life experiences. This will improve and grow the volunteer work force while helping keep volunteers along the sports development path.

traditions. This work has evolved into plans which support the creation of a National Rugby League Museum.

In 2015 the Heritage on Tour project was concluded after 42,000 people attended the travelling exhibition.

Plans for a National Rugby League Museum were progressed and to date four local authorities are expressing their desire to be the home of this prestigious facility: Leeds, Bradford, Wigan and Salford.

The Heritage Lottery Fund have also indicated their support at the highest levels from the Chair of the fund to Regional Directors.

Rugby League Cares also supported a new cultural partnership programme, funded by the Arts Council in partnership with the Dance Programme and 15 Foundations.

The RFL Benevolent Fund continues to raise approximately £250,000 per annum in its own right and in 2015 paid out approximately £150,000 to more than 40 recipients. It also delivered and administered the raising of funds for specific causes through its 'Just Giving' pages: for example, over £280,000 was raised for Lizzie Jones and her family and over £20,000 in restricted funds for other specific individuals.

Administrative assistance was given by RL Cares, in particular to The President's Ball. Equally the Benevolent Fund assisted RL Cares with heritage and welfare issues.

On occasion the Rugby League charities lead on partnerships with other charities which benefit the whole game.

Significant funding and support was provided to State of Mind. Work was started on a joint application to the Big Lottery Fund to enhance and extend the

sport's partnership with State of Mind. A decision is expected mid-2016.

Rugby League Cares worked alongside Prostate Cancer UK throughout 2015 to joint fundraise and raise awareness of the disease and the help available. Through these actions, the charities both protected and enhanced the Rugby League Family along with the sport's reputation in 2015 and increased the wider profile and recognition of the game.





# CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT

Updating the protocol...



ALL PLAYERS NOW HAVE AN OFF-FIELD ASSESSMENT IF SUSPECTED OF CONCUSSION

In 2015 the protocol on concussion was also updated. Players suffering a suspected concussion during a game now have to undergo a proper assessment off the field, with a free interchange allowed. If the player doesn't return after 15 minutes then the interchange becomes permanent. Specific Return To Play (RTP) guidelines were also introduced.

"Education of all stakeholder groups from broadcasters to fans to club CEOs has been the mainstay of this strategy," said Dr Chris Brookes, who provides medical care to the England team. "Consequently, it has now become accepted that reliable concussion management is essential for player welfare. Players being removed from the field for a concussion assessment is now common place within the game.

"It is encouraging that the players themselves are becoming much more aware, both of the potential dangers of concussion and also the protocols designed to protect their long-term health. This is complimented by the RFL programmes of Continuing Professional Development for the game's medical staff and the injury audit which has been conducted over the last three seasons by the RFL academic partners at the University of Bolton.

"This ground-breaking study is providing valuable evidence to focus programmes of injury prevention and rehabilitation and increasing the knowledge base of the factors which may result in or exacerbate player injury."



CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL FOR PLAYER WELFARE

# CARDIAC SCREENING

Extended to Championship and League 1...

Following the death of the Keighley Cougars and Wales half-back Danny Jones, it was agreed that compulsory cardiac screening will be rolled out across all three tiers of professional Rugby League in 2016.

Screening has been mandatory for all players in Super League since 2012 and will be extended into the Kingstone Press Championship and League 1 from 2016.

Details of the plan were outlined at the RFL's annual meeting in Leigh which was attended by Lizzie Jones, whose husband collapsed and died from heart failure triggered by an undetected heart defect while playing for the Cougars against London Skolars in May.

"I would like to congratulate all the Championship and League 1 clubs on their decision to conduct cardiac screening

with their players," said Lizzie, who was given a standing ovation by delegates. "Anything the game can do to minimise the chance of another family experiencing what we have gone through has to be welcomed.

"I would also like to say a big 'thank you' to everyone involved in Rugby League for the support they have given to me, my twins and my family. We couldn't have got through this without you all. The support of the Rugby League family has given us the strength to rebuild our lives without Danny."

Dr Chris Brookes, who provides medical care to the England team, said: "Following the tragic death of Danny Jones the decision was made to extend the cardiac screening programme for players to professionals at all levels of the game.



DANNY JONES

"This has provided an increased level of confidence and reassurance that those playing professionally are not unknowingly exposing themselves to significant risk. This initiative has been complemented by the fantastic and inspirational work of Lizzie Jones in raising funds to ensure defibrillators are available for all Rugby League clubs.

"It will be a fitting legacy to Danny and ensure provision of this vital, life-saving equipment in a medical emergency."



DR CHRIS BROOKES (RIGHT)



# PLAYER WELFARE

Considerable improvements during 2015...

The Player Welfare Policy has now been in place for four years and for two of those years each club has been required to have a three-day-a-week Player Welfare Manager.



CHRIS HILL

There has been a considerable improvement over the last 12 months, both in the number of clubs now fully applying the policy and in the change in culture, which has led to players engaging with what is on offer.

It is clear that when there is strong leadership and buy-in at senior level in a club, including CEO and head coach, so the policy can deliver. The challenge now is for all clubs to operate at the levels of those consistently high achieving ones.

In December the Government Strategy for Sport was published and the section on Duty of Care shows that the RFL Player Welfare Policy is very much in line with the direction of travel outlined in the strategy.

## PLAYER WELFARE AND EDUCATION FORUM

The Player Welfare and Education Forum has met quarterly, chaired by Mike Farrar, and has been invaluable in providing a critical but constructive view on the progress of Player Welfare Policy. During

the year, the Forum has been concerned at the low level of achievement and/or compliance by some clubs, however it appears that most, if not all, have now started to make significant strides, although some are starting from a low base.

## PLAYER WELFARE MANAGERS

All clubs now have a Player Welfare Manager (PWM) in place. During 2015 there was a high turnover of PWMs, with eight new appointments, which includes two clubs making two appointments during the year. The majority of those clubs have sought to make high quality appointments who, once in post, have made significant progress. However, as a major part of the PWM role involves gaining the trust of the players and a clear insight into their career and education needs, stability is important. There are a significant number of recently retired players now in post as PWMs.



## MEETINGS AND TRAINING

The RFL continues to hold regular meetings for PWMs to discuss issues, share best practice, hear presentations from providers and roll out short training programmes.

Training has included Mental Health First Aid (for those not already with the qualification), two master classes from the NRL (career engagement and Player Welfare Software use), how to make best use of the RFL career coaches and an awareness session on depression.

All clubs should be ensuring that their PWM has three full days to deliver the Welfare Policy. All the feedback and research outcomes suggest that even when the PWM has this amount of time available, it is still difficult to carry out the full requirements of the role to a high level of performance.

Two PWMs (Andy Jordan of Huddersfield Giants and John Keyes of London Broncos) should be recognised for volunteering their services to support Keighley Cougars and London Skolars after the tragic death of Danny Jones in 2015.

GOOD RELATIONSHIPS HAVE BEEN BUILT UP WITH TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROVIDERS

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Sporting Chance's services remain fundamental to the success of the Player Welfare Policy with the game being highly dependent on its provision. In addition to the regular services, Sporting Chance was also a key part of the game's response to the tragic deaths of Danny Jones and Chris Leatherbarrow.

Sporting Chance is now providing a personal supervision facility for PWMs to help them deal with the strain of supporting others, a recommendation from the University of Huddersfield research.

## CAREER PLANNING

The RFL Career Coaches have had the highest level of take up on career 1-2-1s to date, with 143 taking place with current full-time players during the year. Each 1-2-1 results in a researched Personal Development Plan (PDP) being

## UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD RESEARCH

In 2014 the RFL commissioned a two-year research programme into players and PWMs' perception of Player Welfare. The research takes the form of a confidential online questionnaire for players and a confidential telephone interview with PWMs. The research is seen by the RFL as an important way for players to have their say about the player welfare policy in a confidential setting. The first study was carried out in early 2015 and saw 103 players take part in an online welfare survey, answering questions about the player welfare provision at their club, combined with measures of athletic identity, stress and depression.

"Players' mental health is better when their club has a good Player Welfare Manager in place and have received advice on counselling support available from Sporting Chance," said Dr Alison Rodriguez, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, referring to the clinic set up by soccer star Tony Adams and the Professional Footballers' Association, mainly to deal with issues of addiction.

She went on to say: "These results suggest that the higher the psychological stress, and the more players identify with the athlete role, the worse their mental health, whereas favourable attitudes towards Player Welfare Managers and the player welfare policy are associated with better mental health."

The research found that those players at high risk of depression are more likely to anticipate problems with retiring. Those players who had a less positive attitude to player welfare were more likely to have higher depression scores and higher stress levels.

The University of Huddersfield survey also probed the issue of "athletic identity" and found an association between athletic identity and depression scores, such that players who identify more as being solely a professional RFL player have worse mental health. Players with high athletic identity scores tend to be younger, having played professional rugby for a shorter period of time, be single, and not have any children.

The survey also looked at how players thought they would cope with their retirement from the sport. From a sample of

86 players, 50 answered a question on the advantages of retirement, with 22 per cent stating that it enabled them to spend more time with their family and friends and an end to physical pain.

But 55 players out of 86 answered a question on the downsides of retirement. Twenty per cent admitted there would be adjustment issues when retiring from the sport and 18 per cent conceded there would be financial problems when they finished playing.

Eleven player welfare managers from the 15 full-time clubs volunteered to be interviewed, saying that they felt their role was mainly as an advisor, mediator and facilitator. The interviewees believed that while some clubs are organised and committed to player welfare, the delivery at others is fragmented.

"Some player welfare managers feel that the lack of support from their clubs and lack of acceptance from the coaching staff makes their role difficult and those coming into the environment from the outside need to negotiate the 'Rugby League culture' to create an understanding of the players," said Dr Rodriguez.

## The key recommendations from the report from the first year of the research are that:

- ▶ The PWM role exceeds the recommended three-day provision.
- ▶ The RFL needs to provide a personal supervision facility for PWMs who deal with many distressing and challenging circumstances.
- ▶ Clubs and coaches need to recognise the importance of player welfare provision and be more supportive of the role of their PWM and their work within the club, in particular, this gives players "permission" to engage with the support available.
- ▶ The RFL needs to provide more centrally funded resources that can be drawn down by clubs, particularly to provide support to the Under-19s.
- ▶ All players need to be encouraged to develop a healthy, multifaceted identity and, given the time and encouragement to take up opportunities to plan for a future without rugby.
- ▶ There was a need for a stronger Transition intervention programme with a focus on issues relevant to identity adjustment, finances, physical and mental health and welfare.



produced for the player. The number of players who have previously failed to plan successfully for a career after Rugby League explains the number of recently retired players (43 in 2015) using the services of the career coaches.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

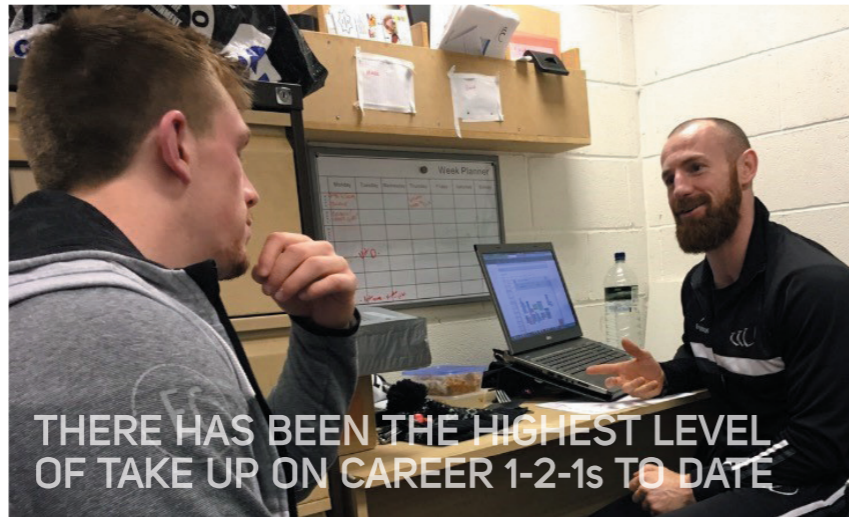
Good relationships have been built up with training and education providers who are prepared to work around players' training schedules. Rugby League Learning have proved a valuable partner in sourcing training provision. There has yet again been significant demand for Rugby League Cares grants.

There continues to be an increased trend for clubs to make work experience for at least younger players compulsory, which is to be applauded. Consideration should also be given to providing career relevant work experience for older players who often have no experience of the "normal" workplace environment.

## TRANSITION

Improving the provision around transition remains a key challenge for 2016. There are still a significant number of players who leave the full-time game without the ability to earn a living other than in casual employment.

Four years after the introduction of the Player Welfare Policy this suggests that the policy has failed to provide the necessary support for many players and there needs to be significantly more focus on preparing players for transition after their careers.



There were two Transition Meetings this year, one aimed at senior players and one at the younger players, which clubs had to place in their training schedule. Despite this, out of the potential attendance of around 50 players only 18 attended over two days. However, it was clear that where senior management and head coaches bought into the concept, players attended and their feedback was very positive.

## MENTAL HEALTH CHARTER FOR SPORT AND RECREATION

The RFL was one of the founding members and initial signatories of the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation, created by the Sport and Recreation Alliance and Professional Players Federation, with support from the mental health charity Mind. The RFL

shares the vision of using the power of the sport and recreation sector to make our activities welcoming, positive and inclusive for everyone.

The Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation sets out how sport can use its collective power to tackle mental ill health and the stigma that surrounds it by taking positive steps to address and encourage people to be open about mental health issues.

**The Charter outlines five actions the sport can take to help make mental health a commonly understood matter and to help those in need. The RFL has agreed to:**

- ▶ Use the power of sport and recreation to promote wellbeing, with a special focus on encouraging physical activity and social interaction for their contribution to good mental health.
- ▶ Publicly promote and adopt good mental health policies and best practice within our sports and recreational activities.
- ▶ Promote positive public health messages using diverse role models and ambassadors to reduce the stigma attached to mental health problems.
- ▶ Actively tackle discrimination on the grounds of mental health to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- ▶ Support the establishment of a pan-sport platform to work closely with the mental health sector to develop and share networks, resources and best practice.
- ▶ Regularly monitor our performance, assess progress and take positive action on mental health issues.

## IMPROVING THE PROVISION AROUND TRANSITION REMAINS A KEY CHALLENGE FOR 2016



## Supporting the Rugby League family & its community



Enhancing and enriching people's lives through the power and positive influence of Rugby League.

Grants

Welfare

Heritage

Benevolent Fund

[www.rugbyleaguecares.org](http://www.rugbyleaguecares.org)



# HALL OF FAME

Edwards and Goldthorpe inducted...



The 25 members of the Rugby League Hall of Fame are as follows:

#### 1988 Inductees

Billy Batten  
Brian Bevan  
Billy Boston MBE  
Alex Murphy OBE  
Jonty Parkin  
Gus Risman  
Albert Rosenfeld  
Jim Sullivan  
Harold Wagstaff

#### 1989 Inductee

Neil Fox MBE

#### 2000 Inductees

Vince Karalius  
Tom Van Vollenhoven  
Roger Millward MBE

#### 2005 Inductees

Eric Ashton MBE  
Douglas Clark MM  
Ellery Hanley MBE  
Martin Hodgson

#### 2013 Inductees

Lewis Jones  
Martin Offiah MBE  
Garry Schofield OBE  
Mick Sullivan

#### 2014 Inductees

Willie Horne  
Malcolm Reilly OBE

#### 2015 Inductees

Albert Goldthorpe  
Shaun Edwards OBE

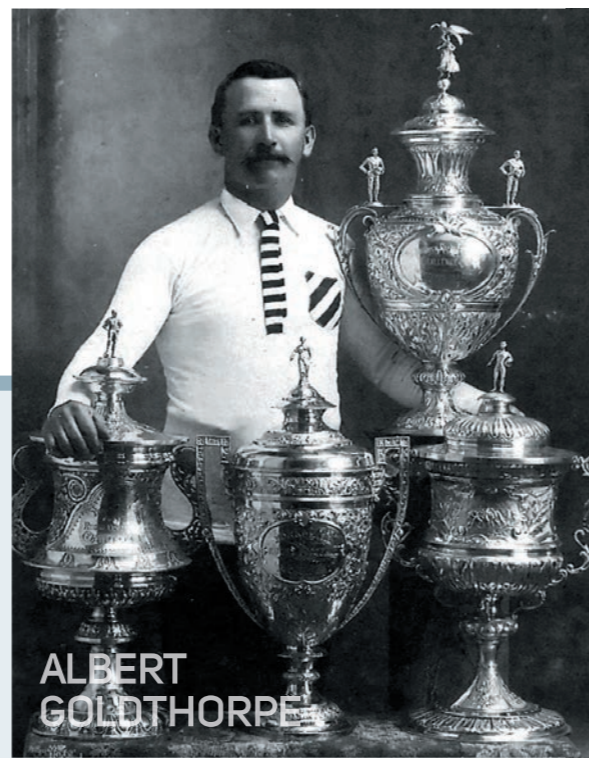
Albert Goldthorpe and Shaun Edwards OBE became the latest members of the Rugby League Hall of Fame when they were inducted into the sport's exclusive club in 2015.

Hunslet legend Goldthorpe and former Wigan and Great Britain star Edwards were both formally inducted into the Hall of Fame at a celebratory dinner, in association with Rugby League Cares in Manchester.

In a playing career spanning over 20 years, Goldthorpe made his debut for Hunslet at the age of 16 in 1888 before retiring in 1910 having scored over 1,500 points in 659 games.

In the 1907-08 season, Goldthorpe led the Hunslet side that scooped all four domestic trophies that were on offer at the time - the Yorkshire Cup, the Yorkshire League Trophy, the Challenge Cup and the Championship Trophy.

Like Goldthorpe, Edwards enjoyed a trophy-laden career with his hometown club Wigan - winning the Challenge Cup for eight consecutive years as well as three World Club Championships, eight Championship titles and the Man of Steel award in 1990.

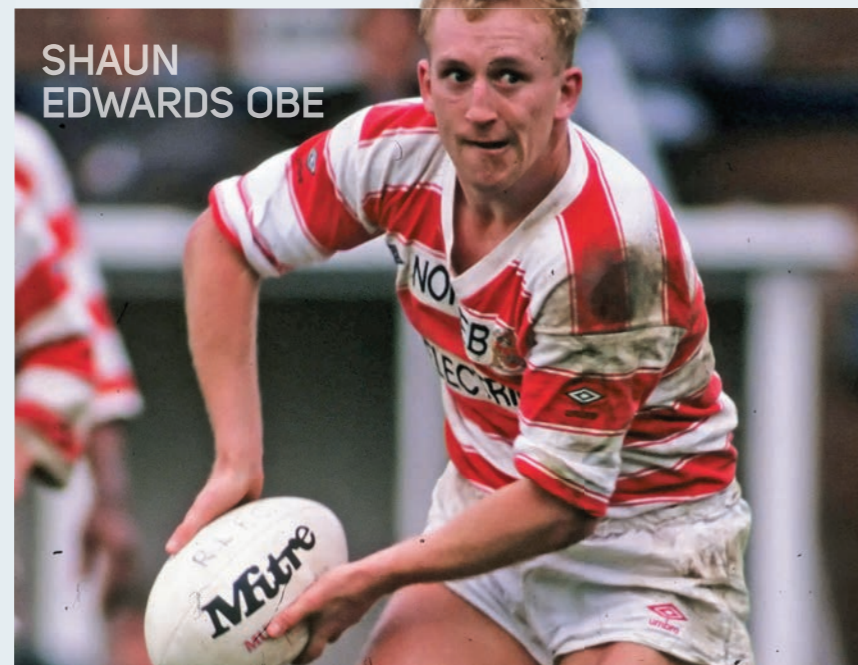


ALBERT GOLDTHORPE

The half-back, who represented Great Britain 36 times, amassed over 450 appearances for Wigan, registering 1,146 points before spells at London Broncos, Bradford Bulls and a brief spell in Australia with Balmain Tigers.

Goldthorpe and Edwards became the 24th and 25th members of the Hall of Fame following Malcolm Reilly OBE and Willie Horne's inductions last year.

The Rugby League Hall of Fame was established in 1988 to commemorate the greatest ever players in British Rugby League. The inductions of Albert Goldthorpe and Shaun Edwards takes the total number of players in the Hall of Fame to 25.



SHAUN EDWARDS OBE

# SAFEGUARDING

A year of significant progress...

In January the RFL (Colette Eden and Karen Moorhouse) hosted a round table discussion at Quay West attended by other NGB Safeguarding Lead Officers, the Child Protection in Sport Unit, representatives from Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Local Authority Designated Officers, together with some charities working in this area. The day was to share best practice from the project including presentations by the RFL, the UK project lead from Edgehill University and some of the young volunteers from the project. There was also a discussion about future collaboration and partnership, in particular through youth empowerment approaches.

In February Colette Eden attended the Final Sport Respects Your Rights Conference at the House of the European Union in Vienna. Each country presented their work - what they did, numbers, poster designs etc. The RFL's young volunteers "one in five" hand sign was adopted by all the countries and formed the basis of the final conference poster and displays. Each country took ambassadors to the event with Terry O'Connor being one of the two UK ambassadors.

## CHILD PROTECTION IN SPORT (CPSU) CONFERENCE

In October the RFL took a major role in the CPSU Lead Officer conference which was on the theme of Celebrating Difference. Colette Eden presented the RFL's community club training workshop "Tackling Racism in Sport" which has been rolled out in community clubs during 2015. Tara Jones, a young North West Match Official, presented as part of the Young Women and Sexism in Sport debate. For the item on Empowering Sport to Include and Safeguard LGBT Young People, the CPSU commissioned an interview with Keegan Hirst on his experiences of sport as a young man and what his advice would be to clubs to help young people in his circumstances and also use RFL Tackle IT resources.

## RFL SAFEGUARDING CONFERENCE

The annual Safeguarding Conference was held on Saturday, February 7 at Leigh Sports Village. There were 61 delegates in attendance with workshops and/or presentations on first aid courses, concussion, the work of the Safeguarding Case Management Group, meetings with parents and children, the coach and their responsibilities, engaging and informing children and young people, safe recruitment and RFL/CWO communication.

The feedback from the delegates was positive, with the majority of attendees finding all the sessions 'extremely useful'. Feedback confirmed that having the conference before the start of the season (rather than at the end) was more beneficial.

## EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY

In 2015 the government's national review of research excellence judged research into safeguarding issues in

sport at Edge Hill to be 4\* - the highest award possible. Dr Mike Hartill, Senior Lecturer in Sociology of Sport at the university, said: "This evaluation of the work we have undertaken at Edge Hill over the past decade is due, in no small part, to the collaboration with the RFL."

"In 2015 we published our latest report on safeguarding and child protection in Rugby League. Colette Eden has also supported a number of European projects on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in sport. Colette has been especially involved in the Sport Respects Your Rights project and over the course of two years she shared her expertise of safeguarding matters with many sport organisations, as well as many young athletes, from across Europe."

## CHALLENGES FOR 2016

The key challenges are to improve environments in clubs and at matches; to communicate more effectively with leagues and to ensure there is a trained CWO in each club.



NORTH WEST MATCH OFFICIAL TARA JONES



# RLEF REVIEW

Another year of expansion plus historic firsts...

The last 12 months were busy in many different areas and once again demonstrated not only the increasing capability of the RLEF's diverse membership but also the capacity of the RLEF as a governing body. That the Federation's name is a misnomer is well documented, with the RLEF's European territories joined by American, Caribbean, African and Middle Eastern nations, and 2015 certainly ensured that the RLEF was active in its farthest outposts.

At the end of the year, the United States and Lebanon qualified for the 2017 Rugby League World Cup following historic firsts, not just for the RLEF but for the sport itself. Compared to the previous tournament in 2013, the qualifying events administered by the RLEF increased from two to three, with the Atlantic group replaced by 'Americas' and the Middle East Africa regional qualifier introduced for the first time, in an exciting signal of the sport's burgeoning geographical ambitions.

The USA and Lebanon represent exciting opportunities for Rugby League in two very different but quite lucrative regional markets. They will be joined by three more European nations at the end of 2016, at which time the 14-team line-up for Australia and New Zealand will be known.

Those qualifiers capped a very busy year of international Rugby League in Europe itself, which saw Wales win the 2015 European Championship, Serbia win European Championship B (2014-15) and, remarkably, Spain continue its fairytale run towards World Cup qualification by an unexpected victory in European Championship C.

The Spaniards, who only joined the RLEF in 2013, defeated Latvia in a Euro C pre-qualifier before beating favourites Malta and then Greece to secure the title and progress into the final stages of the World Cup qualifiers.

Significantly, the European Championship was accompanied, for the first time, by a media rights sale negotiated by the RLEF. While the agreement with French broadcaster beIN Sport was modest it should be seen in context, as the tournament's

first rights deal in its 80-year history. The RLEF is committed to securing a long-term broadcast partner for a European Championship that has a fixed slot in a broader RLIF competition calendar, enabling the Federation to secure institutional sponsors and augment the scope of what is a strong brand.

At Board level, 2015 saw some changes through five plenary Board Meetings and four further sub-committee meetings. Richard Graham resigned after two terms as an Independent Director following his appointment as interim-CEO of the English Commonwealth Games Association. His replacement is Sally Bolton who was the General Manager of the superb 2013 Rugby League World Cup, and her experience and skills will be great assets to the RLEF. Next year will see another election held for the two Member-Elected Directorships. This staggered change to personnel promotes stability, allows for continuity while ensuring that, crucially, the membership's voice is always heard.

The RLEF changed its official company address from Red Hall, Leeds, to 20 Fitzroy Square, London, where it shares an office with the Rugby League International Federation. The latter continued to develop its own organisation through the engagement of a first ever chief executive officer in May, Dr David Collier MBE.

The RLEF was awarded a biggest-ever grant of €466,000 (part of a total project value of €739,000) from the European Union's Erasmus+ programme and was one of only 22 projects selected for funding from over 330 eligible applications. The 'TEP' involves 21 nations involved in six clusters of between three and four nations over three years, although the benefits and impact of the project will be felt in perpetuity, such is its potential for real change. The TEP will see the formation of the 'RLEF Education' department, will increase the federation's suite of qualifications from four to 10 and see them registered on the European Qualifications Framework, giving the courses supra-institutional legitimacy.

The TEP is the heir to the 'Leadership Devolution Project', which was the RLEF's fourth EU-backed project, and which concluded in June. The 18-month project, supported with €195,000 of public funding, resulted in 31 technical educators and 224 new Level 1 coaches and match officials achieving their qualification throughout the 17 partner countries.

On the field, 2015 was the RLEF's busiest year, involving administration of three European Championship and two World Cup qualification competitions, a total of 20 official matches in three continents.

Danny Kazandjian, general manager of the RLEF, was Tournament Director



MARTIN CRICK DELIVERING COACH EDUCATION IN BUDAPEST



RL IRELAND CHAIR DR MICK MOLLOY HANDING OVER THE EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY TO WALES CAPTAIN CRAIG KOPCZAK

for four of those tournaments. He said: "Both the United States Association of Rugby League and Canada Rugby League Association are relatively young but they are focusing on developing their club competitions and in Jamaica they have an excellent partner and example of good practice and organic growth."

The Jamaican Rugby League Association now runs 10-round competitions at club and college level, which is a real milestone and for the second successive year recorded 100 games of domestic 13-a-side Rugby League."

In Europe itself, the most notable upsurge in activity came in Russia. Since the Association of Rugby League Clubs (ARLK) took over from the Russian Rugby League Federation it has kept the Rugby League flame burning, then breathed more and more oxygen into the sport. Having recorded 25

senior 13-a-side club games in 2013, then 30 in 2014, it had 86 this year, in addition to 60 junior games.

After England, France and Wales nowhere has seen more domestic Rugby League played than Russia, which is fitting for one of the RLEF's original Full Members. Vice president Edgard Taturyan, whose dedication to Rugby League has been exceptional, has now bowed out, handing the baton to executive director Denis Korolev and his colleagues.

Operational aspects of the RLEF's work included the distribution of over 1,000 Steeden rugby balls to members in 2015.

Financially, revenues were similar to the previous period, at just over half a million pounds despite a 15 per cent increase in activity costs, while administration reduced by 11 per cent. Savings were made against the prior year in both Central and Regional

Administration despite exchange rate movements moving adversely. There was confirmation from HMRC that the RLEF will no longer be subject to corporation tax, however, increasing the Federation's revenue is critical and the best opportunity to do this is through the European Championship. It is imperative that the RLEF agrees cyclical arrangements with a major broadcaster which will allow us to acquire major sponsors.

Another enhanced aspect of the Federation's activities was its regulatory role. The RLEF assumed total control of all disciplinary matters for matches and events not governed by their own specific set of rules. This meant that the RLEF convened a number of committees empanelled by volunteers keen to contribute to this important area. It is an important area for the RLEF to assume more authority as transnational touring becomes more common.

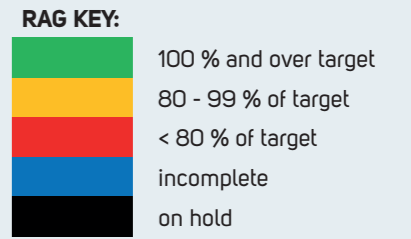


# REVIEW OF FINANCES

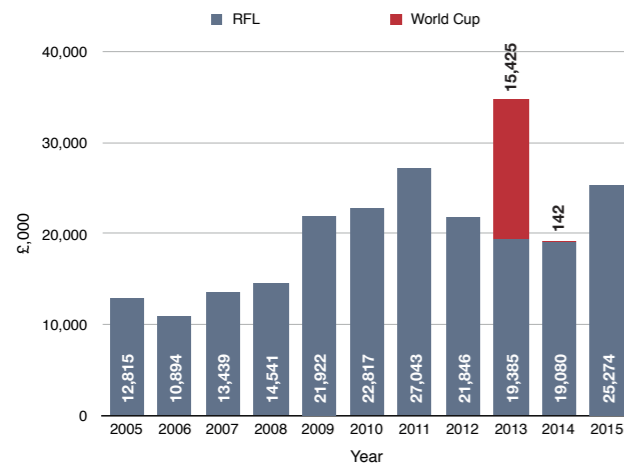
Another strong financial performance...

# STRATEGIC PLAN

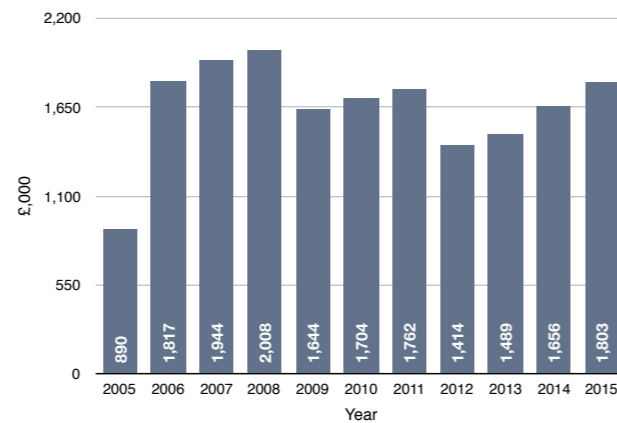
First year update...



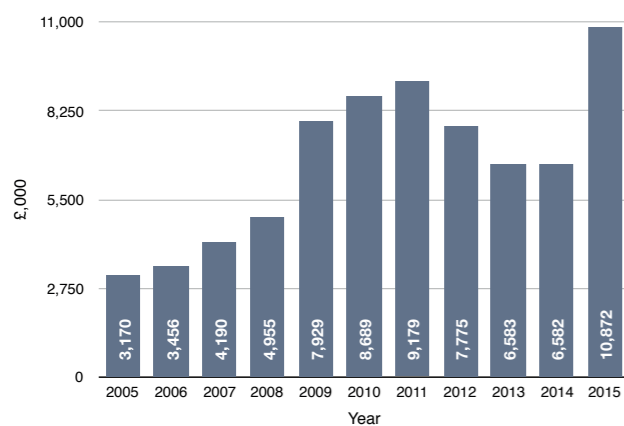
**RFL TOTAL REVENUE**



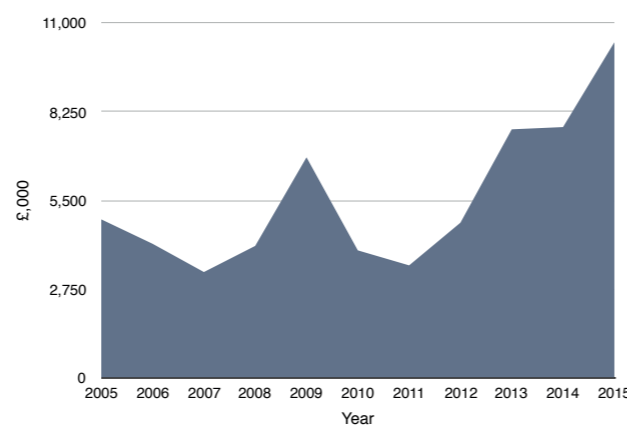
**NET RFL VALUE**



**RFL INVESTMENT TO THE SPORT**



**CASH BALANCES**



In January 2015, the RFL published their seven year Strategic Plan along with a subset of strategies for Super League, Championship and League 1, the Community Game and England. The RFL Strategic Plan has a number of measures that are reported either monthly, quarterly or annually. The 2015 performance against target is set out below:

Measure	Description	2015 Target	2015 Actual
V1	Terrestrial viewers (000's)	6,000	14,788
V2	Subscription viewers (000's)	12,000	12,468
S1	Number of Spectators across Super League (000')	1,533	1,527
S2	Number of Spectators Finals, Play-Offs, Magic, Summer Bash WCS & Internationals	267,802	353,893
S3	Number of Spectators Championship and League 1	345,178	401,105
S4	Number of Spectators Challenge Cup (Round 3 onwards)	198,000	206,183
S5	Levels of visibility and profile	104	104
P1	Number of Registered Community Club Players	41,193	45,242
P2	Number of Registered Touch & Tag Participants	5,171	4,740
P3	Number of Registered College & University Participants	3,027	2,950
P4	Number of people reached through the Sky Try Programme (cumulative and pro rata)	41,665	43,955
F1	Super League (Europe) Ltd Turnover (000's)	£30,584	£29,834
F2	RFL Ltd Turnover (000's)	£20,517	£24,862
F3	Professional and semi-professional club turnover (000's)	£83,500	Incomplete
F4	Super League Club Profit and Loss Accounts	Average losses £147K + 4 Clubs in profit	Incomplete
F5	Commercial Income (000's)	£2,945	£2,947
PT1	Super League Academies rated as 'Outstanding'	8	6
PT2	England Academy players making a Super League debut	76%	79%
PT3	Academy players that graduate to Super League	28	29
PT4	Players that can access Talent Development Environments	2,500	2,973
PT5	England Performance Target	England to win NZ Test Series	Achieved
G1	European Foundation for Quality Management Excellence Model	Baseline	On hold
G2	Investors in People	Good (Bronze)	Incomplete
G3	Investors in Customers	Achieved	Incomplete
G4	Sport England High Performing Governing Body Framework	Baseline	Achieved
G5	Sport England Equality Standard for Sport	Intermediate	Achieved
G6	Medical Standards	Consistent with best practice in British Sport	Achieved
G7	Full time players career engaged	40%	35%
G8	Safeguarding	Compliant - Green	Achieved



# Consolidated Profit and Loss Account and Other Comprehensive Income

for the year ended 31st December 2015

	Note	2015		2014	
		£	£	£	£
<b>Turnover</b>	1,2		<b>25,274,296</b>		19,221,513
Cost of sales	3	<b>(11,410,090)</b>		(9,270,375)	
Cost of sales – payable to or on behalf of clubs	4	<b>(3,173,540)</b>		(2,234,602)	
Total cost of sales			<b>(14,583,630)</b>		(11,504,977)
<b>Gross profit</b>			<b>10,690,666</b>		7,716,536
Payments to or on behalf of clubs and other member organisations	4	<b>(7,698,540)</b>		(4,347,591)	
Operating costs		<b>(2,853,019)</b>		(3,132,716)	
Administrative costs		<b>(10,551,559)</b>		(7,480,307)	
<b>Operating profit</b>			<b>139,107</b>		236,229
Other interest receivable and similar income	9		<b>61,632</b>		58,797
<b>Profit on ordinary activities before taxation</b>			<b>200,739</b>		295,026
Tax on profit on ordinary activities	10		<b>(61,249)</b>		(76,225)
<b>Profit for the financial year</b>			<b>139,489</b>		218,801
<b>Notes</b>					
<b>1 Turnover</b>			<b>2015</b>		<b>2014</b>
By activity:			£		£
Match income			<b>4,677,715</b>		2,901,925
Broadcast			<b>8,069,533</b>		5,757,000
Sponsorship			<b>1,254,798</b>		775,950
Government funding			<b>5,137,489</b>		4,915,915
Other			<b>6,134,761</b>		4,870,723
			<b>25,274,296</b>		19,221,513
By geographical market:					
UK			<b>25,274,296</b>		19,221,513
<b>2 Cost of sales</b>					
			<b>2015</b>		<b>2014</b>
			£		£
Match costs			<b>3,000,903</b>		1,381,043
Grant funded activities			<b>5,086,150</b>		5,086,253
Sponsorship and promotional costs			<b>605,628</b>		303,392
Other			<b>2,717,409</b>		2,499,687
			<b>11,410,090</b>		9,270,375
<b>3 Payments to or on behalf of clubs and other member organisations</b>					
			<b>2015</b>		<b>2014</b>
			£		£
Awards to clubs			<b>5,240,620</b>		2,581,637
Awards to other sections of the game			<b>156,939</b>		174,633
Match officials			<b>1,388,380</b>		703,420
Insurance			<b>480,728</b>		478,720
Disciplinary costs and banned substances testing			<b>239,311</b>		240,183
Player welfare			<b>192,562</b>		168,998
			<b>7,698,540</b>		4,347,591
In addition to the amounts above, further amounts were paid to or on behalf of clubs relating to events or government funding. These amounts are contained within cost of sales – payable to or on behalf of clubs and are as follows:					
			<b>2015</b>		<b>2014</b>
			£		£
Match costs			1,544,667		1,376,196
Grant funded activities			1,628,873		858,406
			<b>3,173,540</b>		2,234,602
Total payments made to or behalf of clubs and other member organisations			<b>10,872,080</b>		6,582,193



# Consolidated balance sheet

at 31st December 2015

	Note	2015		2014 (restated)	
		£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Tangible assets	11		2,868,423		3,003,042
Investments	13		-		1
			<b>2,868,423</b>		<b>3,003,043</b>
<b>Current assets</b>					
Debtors	14	10,981,864		10,166,240	
Cash at bank and in hand	15	10,402,819		7,773,298	
		<b>21,384,683</b>		<b>17,939,538</b>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	16	(22,450,230)		(19,287,002)	
			<b>(1,065,547)</b>		<b>(1,347,464)</b>
<b>Net current liabilities</b>					
			<b>1,802,876</b>		<b>1,655,579</b>
<b>Total assets less net current liabilities</b>					
			<b>1,802,876</b>		<b>1,655,579</b>
<b>Net assets</b>					
<b>Capital and Reserves</b>					
Revaluation reserve	19		412,379		404,571
Accumulated surplus	19		1,390,497		1,251,008
			<b>1,802,876</b>		<b>1,655,579</b>
<b>Shareholders' funds</b>					

The auditor has substantially completed the audit of the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2015 and currently expects to issue an unqualified audit opinion. The auditor has reported on the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2014; their report was unqualified, did not include a reference to any matters to which the auditor drew attention by way of emphasis without qualifying their report, and did not contain statements under section 498(2) or (3) of the Companies Act 2006.



