

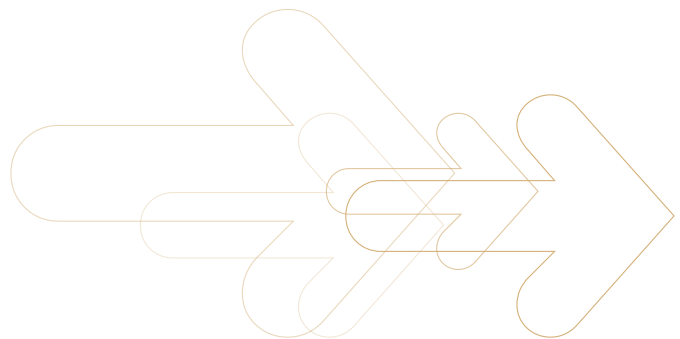


STRENGTH TO STRENGTH



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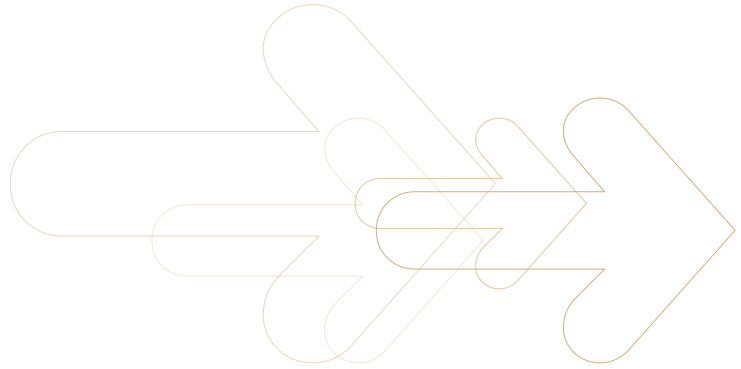




PRESIDENT'S REPORT

D.A. Crawford

On the playing side we once again won the “Triple Crown”, for the second time in three years, and for only the eighth time in history. The fact that a trophy was presented for the first time made the occasion even more memorable.



It is most fulfilling for me as President in 2005/06 to have presided in such a momentous season. Had I looked forward to my year in office and written down a blueprint for success, I could hardly have matched what actually unfolded.

For me to share with the I.R.F.U. Committee the achievement of a Triple Crown, a European Cup and Celtic League victory is truly a memory that will endure not alone as a personal highlight, but one in which we all in the Union can collectively reflect with pride.

When we launched the I.R.F.U. Strategic Plan for the development of Irish rugby over the four years to 2008, your Union set itself ambitious targets to ensure the wellbeing of the game going forward. Our determination remains firmly in focus, buoyed by the many boxes we have been able to tick in relation to achievement on the pitch.

The Management Committee under the chairmanship of John Hussey has made enormous progress, ably supported by the Sub Committee Chairmen and the work and commitment of all of our Committee members and I.R.F.U. staff.

We continued to implement our Strategic Plan in the form of a revamped AIB League structure, new All Ireland Junior and Senior Cup competitions and the innovative Club International against Scotland.

Simon Easterby,
Gordon D'Arcy and
John Hayes tackle
Lee Byrne of Wales





Brian O'Driscoll
lifts the Triple Crown
Trophy with the
Irish Team



Our Hon. Treasurer, John Lyons, and his Finance Committee continue to do sterling work, and I am happy to report that at the time of writing we are showing a positive balance and should continue to do so at the end of our financial year. All our Sub Committees have worked extremely hard to meet their cost reduction objectives, with Commercial and Marketing doing exceptional work in generating substantial increases in revenue.

Our new stadium is no longer a dream and in late autumn we were delighted when the G.A.A. confirmed that they would allow rugby and soccer to be played in Croke Park, during the redevelopment of Lansdowne Road. I would like to acknowledge the major contribution made by their President, Sean Kelly, and his Council in obtaining the temporary change to their Constitution.

In mid-January 2006 all necessary building plans were submitted to Dublin City Council and we await their decision. Again many hours have been spent in getting to this stage and I sincerely thank John Hussey, John Lyons, Noel Murphy and Philip Browne for all their efforts in the planning and delicate negotiations.

On the playing side we once again won the "Triple Crown", for the second time in three years, and for only the eighth time in history. The fact that a trophy was presented for the first time made the occasion even more memorable, especially receiving it at Twickenham.

In doing so we have now moved up to fifth place in the World Rankings – another strategic objective achieved. To Eddie O'Sullivan, his management team, to Brian O'Driscoll (Captain) and all his players, I thank them for making this such a special year.

It is a just reward for all their hard work and we can now look forward with confidence to our three Tests in New Zealand and Australia in June.

At provincial level Munster and Leinster qualified once again for the Quarter Finals of the European Cup, both progressing to

the Semi Finals with Connacht also making the same stage of the Challenge Cup. Congratulations to Munster on reaching their third Heineken Cup Final and on this occasion winning this coveted prize in front of 60,000 supporters at Cardiff.

Irish provinces excelled in the Celtic League this season with three in the top four positions at the time of writing.

Our U.19 team had an outstanding World Championship campaign with excellent performances resulting in securing fifth place which augurs well for the tournament in Belfast next year.

The inaugural AIB Cup and Junior Cups were won by Cork Constitution and Rainey Old Boys, respectively.

In the club game, I wish to report on my promise to support the clubs. I achieved my personal goal of visiting club games in all four provinces, and at the time of writing, I have attended in excess of thirty club games.

I wish to thank all of the Club Presidents and their Committees for the warmth and generosity of their hospitality. I have no doubt that the club game is very much alive, though as a Union, we must continue to give any assistance possible to clubs and schools, through additional resources, finance and promotion of the game.

Our Domestic Committee in conjunction with AIB, have introduced many new initiatives this season, very much welcomed by the clubs.

Finally it has been a tremendous pleasure for me to have been your President, a job made easier for me by the invaluable guidance and help given to me by our Chief Executive, Philip Browne and his staff.

My own Officers, Committee and Past Presidents were always most supportive in what has been a wonderful year, one that I will never forget.



HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

J.P. Lyons

It is important to continue the momentum built up in the professional game but the long term survival of the game at national and provincial level depends on the domestic game.

It is again my privilege to present to you the Accounts of the Union for the season 2005/06. In my report on last year's accounts I indicated that an improvement in the financial position of the Union was attainable and I am pleased to report a significant turnaround in respect of the results under review.

As can be seen the Union enjoyed a significant surplus of €0.8m for the year which compares favourably with large deficits suffered over the previous three years thereby realising one of the main objectives of the Union's Strategic Plan, namely, to eliminate annual revenue deficits in the short to medium term.

Income And Expenditure Account

Income has increased significantly as a result of the following:-

- Three home Six Nations matches.
- Increased revenues from broadcasting and commercial contracts.
- Performance related increases in revenue resultant from performance of national and provincial teams in the Six Nations, Heineken Cup and Celtic League, respectively.



Paul O'Connell wins the lineout against Scott Murray of Scotland





The Munster team
celebrate at the
final whistle



It is important to note that the financial effects of the additional Six Nations match together with the performance related income account for a very significant part of the overall increase and that this income is very specific to the year under review and as such the Union may not benefit from these amounts in subsequent seasons. The financial return from competition performance reflects the significant investment which has been made in the professional game over the last seven years and the enhanced dividend from the professional game will thus allow the Union to increase the level of funding to the domestic and elite development areas of the game.

Professional rugby costs have increased resultant from improved performance, away camps, and a reallocation of senior management costs.

Elite player development costs have increased significantly due to the addition of the High Performance Unit (including the reintroduction of the 'A' team) whose operations commenced during the year. This increased investment was identified as being of critical importance in the Union's Strategic Plan and it is worth noting that significant funding has been obtained from the I.R.B. and through local sponsorship.

Domestic rugby costs have increased reflecting additional investment in the amateur game. A budgetary review of expenditure on the domestic game is almost complete which may enable a change in emphasis of investment therein.

A contributing factor to the realisation of a surplus this year is the application of strict budgetary controls over variable expenditure.

Balance Sheet

Additions to fixed assets include the acquisition of additional property on the periphery of the stadium.

Cash balances increased significantly over the year as a result of the successful re-issue of the West Stand ten year tickets. It is important to note that the funds so raised are required

to fund the Union's operations over the ten year life of the tickets. In order to clarify this fact in the Union accounts the funds raised from the sale of ten year tickets are treated as deferred income in the Union's balance sheet rather than heretofore as a revenue reserve.

Outlook

Looking to the future the Union faces significant changes to its operating profile with its matches moving from the existing stadium at Lansdowne Road and ultimately the construction and use of the new stadium. As can be expected these moves will have a very significant impact on the Union's cashflows and profitability. Short, medium and long term projections were prepared prior to all decisions in this respect and the long term effects on the Union's finances are very positive. It is important to note that any projections are based on assumptions and for the Union one of the critical assumptions is the future cost of the professional game which as I have remarked in previous years is dictated by market forces beyond the Union's control.

Thus the Union can look back on a successful season both on and off the field with the former contributing quite significantly to the latter. It is important to continue the momentum built up in the professional game but the long term survival of the game at national and provincial level depends on the domestic game and thus on the level and quality of the investment made by the Union in this area and the continuing support of unpaid volunteers at schools, club, provincial and national level.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my colleagues on the Union Committee and in particular also on the Finance Committee for their support and commitment during the year. In addition, no praise is too much for members of staff and especially Conor O'Brien and those in the Accounts Department whose efforts make the preparation of the accounts possible in a very short timeframe. Finally, may I commend the efforts of all those who volunteer their work in the amateur game throughout the country.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

P.R. Browne

It is very clear that there have been significant levels of delivery against the objectives set in the Strategic Plan.

In 2004 the I.R.F.U. produced a Strategic Plan covering the period May 2004 to May 2008. The Plan was the outcome of an audit, an international benchmarking process and most importantly an extensive consultation process with all sectors of the game. The implementation of this Strategic Plan has been the focus of both the voluntary and professional administrators of the game at both national and provincial level. We are now at "half time" in the life of this Strategic Plan and it is worth taking stock in broad terms of where we are vis a vis the objectives set out.

Strategic goals were:-

- more players, coaches and referees, and
- sustainable game in schools, clubs, universities and colleges.

The key strategic priorities set out in the Plan were:-

- become a stronger consistent force at the top of the professional game,
- increase our player base in vibrant schools, clubs and universities/colleges, and
- maximise our revenues to invest in Irish rugby.

Looking at these priorities in turn, below it can be seen that there has been significant progress made.

Stronger consistent force at the top of the professional game

The national team is currently ranked fifth in the world and has achieved third place in the Six Nations Championship in 2005 followed by a Triple Crown and second place in 2006.

The provincial teams have achieved two Quarter Finals in Heineken Cup in 2005 (Munster and Leinster) and in 2006 a semi finalist (Leinster) with Munster winning the Heineken Cup in Cardiff. Competitive performances also shown by Ulster in the Heineken Cup and Celtic League and by Connacht in reaching knock-out stages of the European Shield in 2005 and 2006.

Munster winners of Celtic Cup in 2005 and ranked second in Celtic League with Leinster ranked third. In 2006 at the time of writing Ulster leading Celtic League with Leinster and Munster in the top four.



Andrew Trimble
tackles Mark Cueto
of England



Ronan O'Gara
supported by
Geordan Murphy



An Irish fan at the
RBS Six Nations
19/3/2005



Shane Horgan
scores the winning try



Ireland U.19 ranked ninth in the I.R.B. U.19 World Championship in 2005, ranked fifth in same competition in 2006.

Ireland U.21 ranked ninth in the 2005 I.R.B. U.21 World Championship.

High Performance Manager appointed in 2005 along with establishment of High Performance Unit linked to network of provincial academies.

Increasing our player base at schools, club and university/college level

In excess of 90,000 players in schools, clubs, universities/colleges in 2006. The trend is for continuing strong growth at underage level whilst at adult level there is modest growth in some sectors.

	2006	2005
Adult teams	693	674
Youth teams	462	477
Secondary school teams	1,192	1,185
Womens teams	48	48
Affiliated clubs	265	264
Affiliated schools	308	293
Affiliated primary schools	586	522
Registered coaches	4,450	n/a
	<i>(New accreditation system in operation)</i>	

Maximising our revenues to invest in Irish rugby

- 2005 turnover - approximately €39 million
- 2006 turnover - approximately €45 million
- 2005 profit/loss - loss of approximately €3 million
- 2006 profit/loss - modest surplus
- Sponsorship portfolio fully subscribed
- Development plans for Lansdowne Road, Thomond Park, Donnybrook and Ravenhill at advanced stages.

The points highlighted above reflect measures of performance against stated objectives in the Strategic Plan. It is very clear that there have been significant levels of delivery against the objectives set in the Strategic Plan but with another two years in the life of this Plan there is still a significant amount of work

required to capitalise on the good work done to date. The performance to date, particularly in the domestic game area, is due in no small part to the work of the voluntary structures at Union, Branch and club level where there has been a significant focus of attention on the club and schools game.

The Strategic Plan forms the blue print for the Union's operations and by its nature lies in the background. Very much to the foreground has been the burgeoning profile of rugby throughout the country built on the success of the professional teams at both provincial and national level. The highlights must be the Triple Crown victory for a second time in three seasons and this year won away in Twickenham and that Semi Final showdown between Leinster and Munster in the Heineken Cup. Munster went on to win the Heineken Cup in Cardiff, a tremendous achievement for Munster and Irish rugby. This is underpinned by successful performances in the Celtic League where three of the top four places are held by Irish provinces, with one week remaining in the League at the time of writing.

The current wellbeing of the professional game brings with it the heightened profile of rugby, a profile that could not have been imagined ten years ago but it has the potential to mask the growing concerns of how to sustain the levels of performance we have come to expect as the norm. The need to use our collective resources from schools, club and the provincial teams to develop the next generation of professional rugby players is paramount and it is crucial that each unit of our game understands the role it plays in this process and the benefits that flow from success at each level. The development of the High Performance Unit under the new High Performance Manager is important in this context. Equally important are the initiatives that are being developed with the Branches and clubs in relation to the domestic club game. We do not want rugby to be simply a spectator sport, its roots and its strengths are as a participation sport. The positive overall growth in playing numbers is encouraging in this respect. The challenge is to build capacity and structure our competitions to ensure that the growing numbers are accommodated.

The finances of the I.R.F.U. have been challenging over the past number of years with the Union operating planned deficits.



Eddie O'Sullivan, his management team and the national squad deserve great credit for their performances in what could have been a very difficult season.

Through careful budgetary control and against an encouraging increase in revenue the Union has achieved a surplus situation this season, despite a costly closure of the North Terrace for the Autumn Internationals. The demands of resourcing the domestic game and the professional game continue to challenge and finding the balance can be difficult. The domestic game requires significant funding to ensure that our clubs and schools game benefit from the success of the professional game and are resourced to grow through the various Rugby Department programmes. The four provincial teams have been given the challenge of becoming financially independent of I.R.F.U. grant aid towards their operational costs. This has helped improve the financial situation even though it is clear that the particular circumstances in Connacht will make this challenge difficult.

Critical to the game is the provision of revenue generating facilities at both national and provincial level as outlined in the Strategic Plan. The Lansdowne Road redevelopment in particular is fundamental to the wellbeing of the game. The need to replace the existing stadium quickly is now critical and the closure of the North Terrace for structural reasons is evidence that the existing stadium cannot remain operational for much longer without major investment. Any delay in the progress of the redevelopment and provision of a new facility will have serious consequences for the I.R.F.U. At the moment the progress of the project is on schedule and temporary arrangements for 2007 Six Nations Championship have been agreed with the G.A.A. at Croke Park. This gesture by the G.A.A. is most welcome and appreciated and the staging of two Six Nations matches against France and England next season will be a hugely historic occasion. A more detailed update on the Lansdowne Road redevelopment is carried later in this report.

Similarly at provincial level, significant progress has been made by Ulster, Munster and Leinster in relation to the ground

improvements at Ravenhill, Thomond Park and Donnybrook, respectively. With these improvements come greater revenue generating capacity and potential - critical if the professional game at provincial level is to become self-financing.

National Team

A 70% win loss ratio for 2005/06 following a 60% win loss ratio in 2004/05 for the national team, once again shows a level of consistency and improvement in national team performance from one season to the next. With eleven players selected for the Lions Tour to New Zealand, a squad of mixed experience was sent to Japan where both test matches were won and in the process several players were capped for the first time. Eddie O'Sullivan highlighted the tour as the start of the build-up to R.W.C. 2007 and the process continued during the Autumn Internationals partly by design and partly as a result of injury to a number of players, in particular, O'Driscoll and O'Connell. A heavy defeat to an outstanding New Zealand team was followed by a disappointing defeat to Australia, a match Ireland was capable of winning. A comfortable win against Romania wrapped up the Autumn Series amid media criticism of the Coach and the team. From the Coach's point of view his rebuilding of the team and change in the playing strategy were steps in the right direction. He clearly indicated at the start of the season that the process may not be painless but the process was necessary nonetheless.

The wisdom of his approach was self-evident in the Six Nations where a number of new players were introduced into the squad. An initial win over Italy was hard fought, Italy showing themselves to be the most improved side in the Championship against all opposition by the end of the season. This was followed by a remarkable game in Paris where three mistakes in the first half resulted in three tries leaving the Irish team reeling. However, a second half performance of scintillating continuity rugby saw the French lead whittled down to such



an extent that, with ten minutes remaining, Ireland were in a position where they might well have been able to win the match. What it did show was the capacity of the Irish team to play to the new strategy being adopted and whilst the team never quite fulfilled their promise in this regard in the remaining matches, the Coach was pleased with progress. Wins against Wales and Scotland set up a deciding Triple Crown match in Twickenham against an English side with a lot to prove. It was a great match, exciting to the end and a great spectacle. Ireland through a piece of sublime play in the closing minutes of the game scored a try to win the inaugural Triple Crown Trophy and to beat England for the third year in a row. Details of these matches are to be found in the attached CD.

Eddie O'Sullivan, his management team and the national squad deserve great credit for their performances in what could have been a very difficult season. The preparation for R.W.C. 2007 has well and truly begun with some new faces and talent in the playing squad along with an emerging style of play that has seen Ireland evolve over the last twelve months as a team more likely to pass the ball and retain possession as opposed to being the team statistically most likely to kick for position. The 2006/07 season promises to be most interesting as we see how this new style of play and this new squad evolves with the ultimate test being World Cup in September/October 2007.

Provincial Teams/Professional Game

The season was marked by some changes in coaching personnel, however, the strong performances of Munster and Leinster in reaching the knock-out stages of Heineken Cup gave a familiar feel to the season.

Declan Kidney returned to Munster as Coach after the departure of Alan Gaffney, following his brief spell for a season in Leinster. A new coaching team from Australia of Michael Cheika and David Knox was appointed by Leinster and with a change to a new Heineken Cup venue at the R.D.S. in Ballsbridge, there was a new feel about Leinster rugby.

In the Heineken Cup Munster and Leinster qualified for the knock-out stages of the competition despite some off-colour

performances in the pool stages. A remarkable turnaround by Leinster at Bath ensured their qualification whilst Munster had to overcome Castres away and then the English Premier League leaders, Sale, at home in Thomond Park in the final matches to qualify as pool leaders. Ulster were unlucky once again and failed to qualify for the knock-out stages whilst putting together some good performances with some exciting new players.

The contrasting styles of Munster and Leinster were demonstrated over the Quarter Final weekend with Leinster comprehensively outplaying Toulouse in Toulouse with a magnificent display of scintillating back play. Munster playing Perpignan at Lansdowne Road did what they had to do in a workman like way having had no opportunity to play together following the Six Nations Championship. The two victories set up a hugely exciting Semi Final at Lansdowne Road showcasing Irish rugby with Leinster pitted against Munster. The fixture created positive exposure for the game in Ireland and abroad and demonstrated once again the important role Irish provinces have played in the evolution and continued wellbeing of the Heineken Cup. The match played in front of 48,000 Leinster and Munster supporters was won by Munster who tactically managed to prevent the Leinster back line from getting any decent possession. Munster went on to Cardiff to play Biarritz in the Final watched by maybe 60,000 Munster supporters. In a tremendous occasion they beat Biarritz 23-19 to win the Heineken Cup, showcasing Irish Rugby on an important international stage.

Connacht once again showed their potential as they reached the knock-out stages yet again of the European Shield competition. Unfortunately, they came up against a strong Newcastle side and did not progress any further.

The Celtic League this season took on new meaning and greater importance arising from the decision that ranking within the Celtic League would determine European qualification and ranking. As this report is being prepared, Ulster hold down the top position in the Celtic League with Leinster in second position and Munster in fourth position with one weekend to go. This competition has become extremely important for all three Celtic Unions and their professional teams. It forms the mainstay of the professional



fixture list and is critical for the ongoing development of new and existing players. Unfortunately, the competition has been bedevilled by difficulties since its inception arising from the restructuring of the Welsh professional club game, the difficulties the Irish provinces had in using it as a qualification vehicle for Heineken Cup and most recently the unilateral move by the Welsh clubs to participate in the Anglo-Welsh Cup. This most recent difficulty has resulted in fixture complications giving clashing dates between the two competitions. However, despite the inevitable difficulties that have arisen, there is a common view that the Celtic League should continue and remains of vital importance to all three Unions. A four year Celtic Accord has been agreed in principle and hopefully will be signed-off in the near term. The need for a title sponsor for the competition has never been so important and hopefully good news will be forthcoming on that front in the near term as well.

It seems to be an annual *crie de coeur* that the identification and development of new professional players is not happening at a pace that will ensure sufficient players of quality to staff our four professional teams in to the future. A number of initiatives have taken place over the last twelve months to help address these problems.

The Strategic Plan highlighted the creation of a High Performance Unit to draw together the resources and systems necessary to allow young players to develop their skills in the professional game to the highest level. With financial assistance from the I.R.B. and sponsorship from PriceWaterhouseCoopers, this unit has been set up under the management of Steve Anderson, the new I.R.F.U. High Performance Manager. Recruitment of a Specialist Skills Coach and a Performance Analyst along with a realignment of existing coaching personnel including national team coaching personnel, provides the High Performance Unit with a resource which can be brought to bear on the best talent in the game. The roll out of the provincial academies working with the provincial teams and supported by the High Performance Unit resources better equips us to systematically identify and develop players for both the provincial teams and the national team. The High Performance Unit will include collaboration and initiatives with clubs and schools which form the basic

structural units of our game in Ireland. Working with the clubs and schools will be critical and will ensure not only benefits for those players who go on to become professional but also benefits for those involved in the club and schools game as well in terms of coaching and skills/knowledge transfer. The aim of this programme is to ensure the sustainability of the professional game in Ireland through the creation of structures, systems and programmes, resourced by suitably qualified personnel and thereby producing quality players not by chance but by design.

The Player Advisory Group oversees the recruitment and retention of professional players with a brief to ensure that decisions are taken having given due consideration to not only the interests of each province but also the interests of the national team. Inevitably there is a desire at provincial level to recruit experienced players from abroad to strengthen teams for success in Celtic League and Heineken Cup. This cannot be at the expense of the national team, after all it generates the key revenues. New procedures were applied this season which make for a more open and transparent process and one of the encouraging developments has been some increased movement of players between provinces which will undoubtedly allow these players to progress their careers as they are getting insufficient game time in their current provinces. This will help the I.R.F.U. to better utilise the playing resources across all four provincial teams. The Exiles also have a role to play in player identification and recruitment. The Exiles Committee and the Exiles Development Officer, John Hunter, continue their good work in reaching out to players eligible to play for Ireland and providing the contact with Irish rugby. Their work starts with underage players and continues on to adult players and is an important element in our player identification and development process.

The effective operation of the provincial teams falls under the control of each Branch Chief Executive and an appropriate committee of the Branch. Consideration has been given to setting up each professional team as a completely separate entity from its respective Branch with reporting lines direct to the I.R.F.U. However, it was felt that it would be more appropriate to retain the linkage and ownership of the teams by the local rugby community in each Branch as this model has

The President promoted season 2005/06 as the “Year of the Club” and in this regard considerable attention and focus has been given to the domestic club and schools game at both Branch and Union level. The Strategic Plan lays down very clear goals in relation to the revitalisation and growth of the domestic club game and there has been considerable progress in this regard.

served all provincial teams extremely well to date and provides each team with real identity. The preferred model now is a professional team board or committee which manages both the rugby and non-rugby aspects of the professional teams with a direct reporting line to the Branch. Equally important is that the Branch Chief Executives are now employed by the I.R.F.U. with a direct line of reporting and accountability to the I.R.F.U. in respect of the professional game in particular. This structure ensures that there is local ownership and local buy-in but at the same time clear lines of responsibility and accountability are in place for the success of the professional game.

The I.R.F.U.'s relationship with I.R.U.P.A. (Irish Rugby Union Players Association) continues to evolve and a number of matters have taken up considerable time of Maurice Dowling, I.R.F.U. Director of Human Resources. Key amongst those has been the desire by both I.R.U.P.A. and the I.R.F.U. to update the player contract of employment. The initial contract has served all parties well over the last nine years but grey areas in relation to commercial and operational matters make the existing contract a source of uncertainty and therefore tension and it is hoped agreement can be reached in updating this document.

Progress is being made with I.R.U.P.A. and the Irish Sports Council towards the development of an Athlete Career Education Programme with the likely joint appointment of an individual to run this programme. This will provide the necessary support to equip players with the skills necessary to cope with the unique demands of competing at the highest level in rugby whilst also preparing them for life after sport.

I.R.U.P.A. has been keen to have a greater input in relation to the high level management of the professional game, to this end, the I.R.F.U. has created a player forum where senior players from all four provinces and I.R.U.P.A. representatives have the opportunity to meet with the key decision-makers in the I.R.F.U. to discuss issues of mutual interest. The I.R.F.U. has also agreed to co-opt a representative of I.R.U.P.A. on to the I.R.F.U. Representative Game Committee, giving professional players a voice in the management of professional rugby in Ireland.

Following discussions with the I.R.F.U. Charitable Trust, agreement was also reached during the year to merge the

I.R.U.P.A. Injured Players Fund in to the I.R.F.U. Charitable Trust and I.R.U.P.A. will support the I.R.F.U. Charitable Trust through its fundraising activities in the future. This again is a pragmatic step to ensure that there is only one rugby charitable fund for players rather than confusing the marketplace.

These are all positive developments. The I.R.F.U. is committed to working with I.R.U.P.A. to establish a practical partnership in relation to the professional game. The key is to ensure that collectively we can manage to sustain the professional game for the benefit of those employed within it, but most importantly, for the benefits that it brings to the game as a whole in terms of finance, exposure and popularity.

Other Representative Teams

Two Ireland 'A' fixtures were played against France and England. Eddie O'Sullivan chose to use the 'A' team as a vehicle for developing younger players as opposed to selecting a second XV of experienced players. This decision was taken in light of the forthcoming participation of Ireland 'A' in the Churchill Cup against England 'A', Scotland 'A', U.S.A., Canada and N.Z. Maori. This is seen as an ideal competition in which to develop players on the fringe of the national squad. For the record France 'A' beat Ireland 'A' by 20 - 12, but Ireland 'A' beat a strong England 'A' team by 33 - 18. The team is currently coached by Michael Bradley and Mark McCall who will take the team to the Churchill Cup.

The Ireland U.21 team coached by Mark McDermott came ninth in the 2005 I.R.B. World Championship in Argentina. There were mixed performances during the 2005/06 season with the U.21s recording five wins out of eleven matches. The I.R.B. U.21 World Championship takes place in France in June and hopefully there will be an improved performance over last year.

Moves are afoot at I.R.B. level to possibly change the age-grade competition structure from U.21 to U.20 level and in the process to have one age-grade competition by doing away with the U.19 competition. There are pros and cons to this proposition and no decision has been taken as yet at I.R.B. level. At Six Nations however, the decision clearly seems to be to move to U.20 level



Simon Best
on the attack



Simon Easterby and
John Hayes scrum down
for Ireland



Gordon D'Arcy
gets away from
Gavin Henson of Wales



Paul O'Connell
tackles Steve Borthwick
of England



along with U.18 teams. In these circumstances the continuation of U.21 rugby is uncertain and there will be implications for provincial U.21 competitions as a result.

The Ireland U.19 team coached by Charlie McAleese struggled in its warm-up matches prior to the I.R.B. U.19 World Championship in Dubai losing to Wales and England. Having been seeded ninth, their performance at the World Cup Championship was remarkably improved and they finished a highly creditable fifth place recording wins against England, Argentina, Samoa and Wales and suffering only one narrow defeat at the hands of semi finalists, France. This sets things up nicely for the I.R.B. U.19 World Championship to be held in Belfast in 2007.

The U.18 schools team played two test matches against Australia Schools in December losing both to a talented Australian side. A warm-up fixture with French Schools was played in France prior to the Four Nations Tournament in England. The French side proved too strong as did England and Wales in the Four Nations Tournament where Ireland recorded a sole victory against Scotland.

The U.18 club side participated in the F.I.R.A./A.E.R. U.18 European Championship beating Portugal and Georgia but losing to Italy, having beaten Scotland in a warm-up fixture prior to the tournament.

The Irish Womens team played two fixtures outside the Womens Six Nations with a very good win against Canada in the Sportground in Galway, following a loss to U.S.A. earlier in the year. In the Womens Six Nations, Ireland recorded a single win against Spain.

Domestic Game

The President promoted season 2005/06 as the "Year of the Club" and in this regard considerable attention and focus has been given to the domestic club and schools game at both Branch and Union level. The Strategic Plan lays down very clear goals in relation to the revitalisation and growth of the domestic club game and there has been considerable progress in this regard.

With a budget this season of some €9 million spent on the domestic game programmes, the need to ensure value for money and accountability is recognised. This figure includes €3.5 million received from the Irish Sports Council specifically for programmes aimed at underage participation. This support is gratefully acknowledged. The appointment of a Domestic Game Manager, Kevin Potts, has allowed the Union to clearly focus on the club game and to review the capacity of the Union's existing programmes and structures to deliver the strategic goal of revitalising the game. This included a detailed independent appraisal of progress in implementing the Strategic Plan at Branch level.

The key findings of this exercise included the following:-

- The effect of the I.R.F.U. Strategic Plan is beginning to flow down to the Branches in a meaningful way - with the Branches now beginning to adopt similar strategies and structures.
- There is considerable debate about how the Branches can revitalise the domestic game and the process for doing this.
- There is enthusiasm for the I.R.F.U. policy of empowering the Branches to lead the implementation of domestic game programmes - but this is curtailed by the lack of a full time staff member to drive this.
- There is a clear disconnection between existing I.R.F.U. development programmes and their ownership by the Branches.
- The benefits and opportunities for the professional game are not being maximised. There is little evidence to date of strategies and actions to link the high profile of the professional game with revitalising the game.

As a result of this review, Provincial Domestic Game Managers are to be appointed to address the issues identified. These positions will be responsible and accountable for the operational and strategic development of the domestic game within each Branch. The positions will be underpinned by an independently monitored Service Level Agreement (SLA) between each Branch and the I.R.F.U. This will include agreed annual key performance indicators (KPIs) for each Branch that will deliver the



strategic goal of revitalising the domestic game at all levels. The recruitment process will commence in June after the SLAs have been agreed.

A detailed review of Junior/Social rugby was carried out in each Branch with a not unsurprising conclusion that the changing social and recreation patterns of modern Ireland mean that perhaps the game at this level no longer is meeting the needs of our players. Consideration is being given to this issue at Branch level with possible responses including changing the season structure, new competition models and more relaxed regulations at Junior level.

There are implications arising in relation to the capacity of the current club infrastructure to accommodate such changes, particularly in the context of mid-week floodlit rugby. The I.R.F.U. will shortly announce a Capital Assistance Scheme in partnership with AIB. This will provide eligible clubs with interest-free loans towards the installation of match quality floodlights and pitch upgrades. Such loans with a combination of Lottery funding, Revenue approval and member contributions should provide a very attractive scheme for clubs. Interest on the loan will be paid by I.R.F.U.

There is also clearly an issue to be addressed in terms of how we deal with the growing base of schools players. Currently there are 55,000 children involved in secondary school and primary school rugby. Much of the focus and good work of the Schools Committee has been on the game in the established "Schools of Ireland" secondary schools with a population of 15,000 children. There may well need to be a greater focus applied to the remaining 40,000 children to ensure that Irish rugby will benefit from the increasing interest in the game within the schools sector.

The Rugby Department has been extremely active in ensuring that the operational plan underpinning the I.R.F.U. Strategic Plan is progressed in tandem with the voluntary structures at club, Branch and Union level.

Some activities to highlight include:-

- The provision of the AIB Community Rugby Programme in association with AIB which includes:-
 - AIB League

- AIB Junior and AIB Cups
- AIB Club International Team
- AIB Rugby Champions
- Marketing PR support for Clubs
- Completion of Club Development Manager (CDM) team with appointments of Damon Ulrich in Munster and John Power in Connacht. The role of the CDMs is to support clubs in off-field matters including assistance with funding applications, club planning and volunteer recruitment. This year alone CDMs assisted in excess of twenty clubs to apply for Lottery funding.
- Club PRO training programme held in each province.
- Launch of new state of the art online Player Registration System in April 2006.
- Volunteer Recognition Programmes now in place in Munster, Leinster and Connacht. A national scheme was launched in April 2006 in support of provincial schemes.
- Club Development Manager programme underpinned through the publication of the excellent *AIB/I.R.F.U. Club Assistance Guide*. This invaluable reference document is now with all clubs.
- Review undertaken of the Clubs of Ireland Scheme. A discussion document was published in July 2005 following consideration of the scheme at Branch level. A new scheme will be implemented in 2007/08 with full details to be published in October 2006. There is general acceptance of principals of equalisation as between all clubs, increasing participation and core "best practice" criteria, in addition to allowing for some level of flexibility to account for different provincial environments.
- Continued support for the development of Schools, Youth, Women's and U.20 sectors by funding team insurance premiums.
- In-depth review performed of Domestic Game Budget. A number of programmes will be reviewed in depth in the coming months to ensure that value is being achieved and that areas of priority as set out in the Strategic Plan are being adequately funded.
- 2006/07 Domestic Game Budget was sent to all clubs following review for increased transparency.
- I.R.F.U. continue to recognise the link between the schools/clubs and provincial teams through the Reward for Development Scheme. €90k paid out this season.



- In excess of 30,000 children from 580 schools participated in the schools Coca-Cola TAG rugby programme during the season.
- First Ulster Bank National Summer Camp programme run in 2005 with 3,700 participants. Goal in 2006 to increase this to in excess of 5,000.
- Community Development Programme:-
 - Tallaght Scheme saw first player represent Ireland at Youths level.
 - Continue to provide coaching through thirty-two primary and eleven secondary schools to 3,500 children every week.
 - In excess of 38,000 children have now experienced rugby for the first time through this programme since inception in 1999.
 - Pilot schemes have expanded to Swords and Ballymun.
 - Integration strategy under development to hand over to volunteer base in the area.
- Coach Development:-
 - New programme of Update Clinics developed and rolled out. Aimed at providing up to date skills to coaches already on pathway. Initial focus is at Level 1 where majority of schools coaches are. Eleven clinics will be run by end of season. Plan to extend to Level 2 and Level 3 in 2006/07.
 - Long Term Player Development Programme (LTPD) is in development and nearing completion. Has been piloted in a number of schools and clubs. National Launch expected to occur at start of next season.
 - There are now in excess of 4,450 coaches registered on our pathway.
 - Michael Bradley has become the first Coach to achieve Level 3 Accreditation.
 - Forty-five coaching courses were run nationally in current season.
 - 19 x Mini
 - 16 x Foundation
 - 8 x Level 1
 - 1 x Level 2
 - 1 x Level 3
 - The Union continues to run the Powerade Conditioning Programme with seventy clubs/schools personnel going through the process on an annual basis.

The playing census gathered for 2005/06 is tabulated below. The introduction of a new player registration system will in the future help provide more accurate and timely information on our playing base.

	Ulster	Munster	Leinster	Connacht	Total
Adult Players	7211	6143	7075	1311	21740
Women Players	362	352	550	492	1756
Number of Secondary Schools Players	8490	4200	8800	2096	23586
Number of Youth Players	2535	4748	3600	1589	12472
Number of Mini Rugby Players	3205	3254	2700	1808	10967
Primary School TAG	6084	10569	11815	3741	32209
TOTAL PLAYERS	27525	28914	33990	10545	100974

Number of Teams	Ulster	Munster	Leinster	Connacht	Total
Adult	193	156	291	58	698
Women* <i>included in adult above</i>	8	14	22	4	48
Secondary Schools	419	210	440	123	1192
Primary Schools TAG	203				
Youths	86	161	144	75	466
Mini	170	296	225	148	839
TOTAL TEAMS	1071	823	1100	404	3195



AIB Cup and Leagues

The past season saw the introduction of the AIB Cup and Junior Cup as part of the renewed and increased AIB sponsorship of Irish rugby. Seventeen teams qualified from the Provincial Leagues or Cup to participate in the AIB Cup and two representatives from each province were nominated for the AIB Junior Cup.

The Junior Cup produced particular excitement amongst the competing clubs and it is noteworthy to mention that the luck of the draw ensured that every match was cross provincial meaning that clubs met for the first time and there have been stories of some wonderful new friendships made. AIB hosted a Cup Finals Day at Lansdowne Road on April 8th and congratulations to the inaugural winners, Cork Constitution, in the AIB Cup and Rainey Old Boys in the AIB Junior Cup.

The results of the AIB League are covered on the attached CD. Congratulations to the AIB Division I Champions, Shannon, and the sectional winners, Garryowen, to Terenure for winning Division II and to Clonakilty for winning Division III. The Division I and III League Finals were played at Lansdowne Road on 13th May providing an excellent day for Irish club rugby. The Division II League Final unfortunately had to be postponed because of formal objections lodged in relation to alleged breaches of the Regulations by Dolphin R.F.C. requiring a formal hearing.

The AIB League Working Party met on four occasions during the year. This was the first year of the League in its current format with a review to be carried out after two years. The Working Party agreed a number of changes to the regulations for next season including a tightening up on the eligibility of foreign players to play in the League and also for the first time placing a restriction on the number of fully contracted players that can play for a club in an AIB League or Cup match.

Refereeing

This season has seen the commencement of a restructuring of the Referee Development programme. The Referee Development Officers are now taking on new responsibilities in line with this, and full implementation will be in place in autumn 2006.

The appointment of a Development Officer in Ulster has a significant bearing on our planning. These plans are now fully inclusive of Coaching Workshops for 'Trial Member' and Level 1 referees. The final programme will have a seamless series of I.R.F.U. Workshops from the new recruit right through to elite level.

The key role and responsibility for the volunteer Associations/Society is to ensure that Trial Members are fully evaluated and participate regularly by receiving regular appointments.

New recruitment and retention initiatives are to be introduced and tested over the coming twelve months with the Domestic Game Manager and Provincial Development Managers. It is essential that this succeeds in persuading clubs to promote the refereeing role and to identify those who will enjoy participating in this way. Failure to do so, will impact very negatively on the game in Ireland.

To date, over 2,500 have received I.R.F.U. training and this highly successful scheme will continue to have regular workshops. These will be both for new associates, and those being reaccredited.

Our three I.R.B. 'A' Panel referees continue to receive regular high profile matches at both European and Test level. The talent identification, coaching and fast tracking of the next generation of elite officials should ensure that we have future contenders for I.R.B. Panels and for Celtic and European competitions.

Medical

The Medical Department of the I.R.F.U. under Dr. Conor McCarthy provides central support for the national and provincial medical teams in the provision of medical care to professional rugby players. A secondary remit is to provide the amateur game with leadership in medical affairs affecting the game. With the support of an active Medical Committee, a number of important and innovative initiatives over the last eighteen months have been introduced, including the following:-

The support of the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, the Officials from his Department and the members of the Department's Steering Committee has been most important to the project and the Union would like to acknowledge this support with gratitude.

Player Welfare

A tailored, web-based injury monitoring and tracking software system (Irish Rugby Injury Surveillance, IRIS) has been developed in consultation with the national and provincial medical teams. This innovative system functions as a record keeping system, to facilitate the centralisation of the medical files and also allows in-depth analysis of all injuries and illnesses that occur in the professional game. The system is now fully operational and will assist in the design and analysis of injury prevention protocols.

Attendance by the National Team Physiotherapist at the World Congress on Injury Prevention is indicative of the I.R.F.U.'s commitment to player welfare.

Education and Training

Significant financial support has been secured for a number of initiatives to including an I.R.F.U Medical Education Programme, the development of an I.R.F.U. First Aid Handbook, the development of the Sports Medicine Library of relevant textbooks and journals.

The first I.R.F.U. Sports Medicine Conference took place in January 2006. More than forty doctors and physiotherapists attended this conference. It is planned to have an annual I.R.F.U. Sports Medicine Conference.

A new initiative has been the Physiotherapy In-service Training Programme.

Research

A number of important research initiatives were developed over the last eighteen months culminating in the presentation of a total of nine scientific abstracts to the Irish Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicines, Annual General Scientific Conference in September 2005. Two of these presentations were given as oral presentations. The Government Taskforce on Sudden Cardiac Death has used the findings of our report on cardiac echocardiography in professional rugby players, to finalise their position statement, which was published in February 2006. The implications of the Government Taskforce's report for Irish Rugby will be carefully considered by the I.R.F.U. Medical Committee.

Medical Advisory Committee

Dr. Michael Molloy was appointed as the first International Rugby Board (I.R.B.) Medical Director. He brings a large body of experience and expertise to this position. He has, for over twenty years, provided an excellent service to the I.R.F.U.

Dr. Barry O'Driscoll has stepped down from his position on the Medical Advisory Committee of the I.R.B. A position which he held for over five years. He will remain on the I.R.B. Anti-Doping and Disciplinary Committees; Dr. Conor McCarthy has replaced him on the I.R.B. Medical Advisory Committee.

The medical teams at provincial and national level deserve special mention and thanks for looking after the wellbeing of our players in the context of a very busy season.

Anti-doping

The I.R.F.U. once again commissioned anti-doping tests through the Irish Sports Council (I.S.C.) supplementing the I.S.C. National Anti-Doping Programme. Details of the tests performed are outlined below. Regrettably, a provincial player failed an in-competition drug test, testing positive for cannabis, and was suspended for two months by an I.S.C. hearing.

2005/06 Anti-doping Programme	
<i>In Competition Testing</i>	
Team	No. of Players tested
Senior XV	08
"A" Team	02
U.21 XV	10
Women	02
U.19	08
Celtic League	10
AIB League Club XVs	32
<i>Out of Competition Testing</i>	
Team	No. of Players tested
National Squad	09
Provincial Squads	36
Clubs	24
U.21	03
U.19	07



Donncha O'Callaghan
wins ball in lineout



AIB Cup 8/4/2006
General view of
Lansdowne Road



Gordon D'Arcy
places the ball back
from a ruck





Facilities

The redevelopment of Lansdowne Road has been a priority this year given the continuing deterioration of the existing structures. The closure of the North Terrace during the Autumn Internationals to allow for structural weaknesses to be corrected is evidence, if ever it was needed, that we are very much on borrowed time in the existing stadium.

Progress on the redevelopment has been very positive with the Stadium Development Company submitting concept designs to Government in September 2005 and receiving approval to proceed. A Planning Application was submitted to Dublin City Council in January 2006 on schedule and resulted in a range of objections that one would expect for a project of this scale. The Dublin City Council issued forty-eight questions and responses are due to be lodged in May. At present, the project is both on schedule and within the agreed budget of €365 million, with commencement of works on site planned for early 2007. The support of the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, the Officials from his Department and the members of the Department's Steering Committee has been most important to the project and the Union would like to acknowledge this support with gratitude.

In order to facilitate this development, agreement is necessary with both Lansdowne F.C. and Wanderers F.C. Whilst agreement has been reached with Lansdowne, it has not been possible to reach agreement with Wanderers as yet. Unfortunately, the lack of agreement with Wanderers moved into the public arena but with some goodwill on both sides, it is hoped the matter will be resolved soon. The importance of this project for the future of Irish rugby cannot be overstated and there needs to be unity within Irish rugby to ensure the development succeeds.

Thomond Park was the subject of much media speculation as the Munster Branch conducted a feasibility study on various stadium options in Limerick. The outcome was a decision to redevelop Thomond Park and, under the chairmanship of Pat Whelan, a local Committee has now moved matters on considerably to the extent that an agreement has been reached in relation to several necessary property acquisitions and a Planning Application is now being prepared for the

€38 million project which will see Thomond Park redeveloped into a 26,000 capacity stadium with 15,000 seats. The project is to be funded by the Munster Branch through ten year ticket sales and locally raised finance and hopefully with grant aid from the Government's Sports Capital Grant Programme. This new facility will finally provide the Munster rugby public with a stadium worthy of the efforts of their team and will provide Munster with critical revenue generating facilities which will not only benefit the Munster team but also the local club game as well.

In Leinster the redevelopment of Donnybrook is nearer fruition with Planning Permission having been received for new stands and the redevelopment of the Old Wesley end of the ground providing accommodation for Leinster, changing room facilities and seating. This will see Donnybrook emerge ultimately as a modern 8,000/10,000 capacity facility. However, this will not cater for the bigger attendances at Heineken Cup matches. Leinster this season used the R.D.S. Arena to good effect where a seated capacity of 15,000 is possible. The I.R.F.U. is now working closely with the R.D.S. to improve the playing surface of the arena with a view to not only Leinster using the facility but also to allow other suitable representative fixtures to be played there in the future.

In Ulster there has been much speculation about the development of a new 42,000 capacity stadium funded by the Government at the Maze near Lisburn. The I.R.F.U. and the Ulster Branch met with the Authorities and have given support in principle to the development pending more detailed information and plans. In the meantime, a planning application has been submitted for a phased redevelopment of Ravenhill to increase the seating capacity and hospitality facilities through the construction of new stands and ultimately to increase the overall capacity to around 14,500 when all phases of the development are completed.

In Connacht the addition of floodlights funded by the Sports Capital Grant Programme at the Galway Sportsground has provided Connacht with the ability to stage evening floodlit matches with a significant potential to increase attendances and revenues as a result. There are plans to extend and cover



the terracing opposite the main stand at some point in the future, finance permitting.

The closure of Lansdowne Road in 2007 means the Six Nations fixtures in 2007, and possibly beyond, will be played in Croke Park by kind permission of the G.A.A. The decision by the G.A.A. in this regard was hugely significant for that organisation and obviously hugely significant for Irish rugby given that it ensures that the Irish team does not have to travel abroad for its home fixtures. The I.R.F.U. is conscious of the significance of this decision for the G.A.A. and is grateful for their neighbourly gesture and undoubtedly the sporting public of Ireland is looking forward to the Ireland v. France Six Nations fixture in Croke Park in February 2007.

Charitable Trust

A review of the I.R.F.U. Charitable Trust Deed was carried out by the Trust Committee and Trustees. As a result, written procedures and guidelines for the governance of the Trust were drawn up and approved and will be reviewed on a regular basis in the future.

As part of the review of the Trust Deed, and following various approaches from persons living in Northern Ireland, the Trust Committee have agreed in principle to form an I.R.F.U. Charitable Trust (Northern Ireland). The principle purpose of such a body would be to enable persons living in Northern Ireland, and the U.K. in general, to benefit from any Tax benefits available from making Charitable donations.

This new Trust would remain in the control of the I.R.F.U. Charitable Trust and the I.R.F.U. itself and any funds raised would be applied for the benefit of seriously injured players in the North and in the South of Ireland.

In total, there are thirty seriously injured players in the "care" of the Trust. For the past number of years, each of the seriously injured players has been paired with a member of the Committee, with whom he remains in regular contact.

As times passes, and costs increase, the financial needs of the seriously injured players continue to grow. To date, in excess

of €204,000 (Stg£142,800) excluding Christmas cheques, has been granted in assistance this year. A further €31,857 (Stg£22,300) has been donated by way of Christmas cheques. This is significantly higher than previous years, and is likely to be greater by the end of the season.

To date, in excess of €387,000 was raised by the Trust this year from donations, Irish Lions Challenge Walk, Mount Juliet Pro Am Golf Tournament, Friends of the Charitable Trust Dinner and Charitable Trust Wristbands. Further fundraising schemes are under active consideration for next season and beyond.

As reported elsewhere, it has been agreed with I.R.U.P.A. to merge the I.R.U.P.A. Injured Players Fund with the I.R.F.U. Charitable Trust which will be a benefit in terms of giving a single body the mandate to raise funds on behalf of Irish rugby for injured players.

Commercial and Marketing

Commercially this past season has been one of growth with substantial new sponsorship deals concluded and increased revenue generating programmes put in place. The focus has been on maximising and leveraging the success and the high profile that Irish rugby is currently enjoying to help offset the deficit and the ever-increasing costs of administrating the game at all levels.

In this regard, it is appropriate to thank permanent tsb who will be moving on having spent thirteen years as sponsors of the national team. I fully endorse the words of our President, Andy Crawford, when he stated recently: *"On behalf of the I.R.F.U. I would like to sincerely thank permanent tsb for the support and sponsorship of the Ireland rugby team over many years. From the amateur era and into the professional one, the bank has played a central role in helping us build the team."*

The relationship the I.R.F.U. and Irish rugby enjoys with Corporate Ireland is unique and of vital importance to our sport. I would like to thank all of the generous sponsors of Irish rugby for their support and contribution to the game over the past season. With the increased success and profile, the Irish rugby brand is being enhanced and I am confident that this will continue



to lead to added value and additional benefits to all of our sponsors and partners.

O₂ were announced as the new team sponsor of the national team. The company has been a sponsor and partner of the I.R.F.U. for several years now. The step up to the national team, the flagship of Irish rugby, marks a commitment and an investment in our team and the game of rugby in Ireland for which we are extremely grateful. We look forward to working closely with O₂ for the mutual benefit of both organisations over the forthcoming seasons.

The following is a list of new and renewed contracts:-

New Sponsorships;

- O₂ as sponsors of the Irish team.
- Guinness as sponsors of the Autumn Tests.
- PriceWaterhouseCoopers as sponsors of the U.19s, U.21s, Irish Universities and Irish Colleges and the High Performance Unit.
- Kennedy McSharry & Magee's as official outfitters to the Irish team.

Contracts Renewed/Extended;

- AIB as sponsors of the Community Rugby Programme.
- Guinness as official beer to the Irish team.
- Paddy Power as official betting partner.
- Ford as official car supplier to the I.R.F.U.
- Gilbert as official match ball supplier.

On the marketing front, the aim has been to leverage the high profile of Irish rugby and this has resulted in increased marketing activity at all levels of the game.

In addition to growing all of our adolescent grassroots programmes including the Ulster Bank 'Summer Scrummage' camps, Kellogg's Easter clinics and Coca-Cola Tag rugby, particular attention this past season has been put into the rejuvenation of club rugby in Ireland.

To that end the relationship with AIB, our community rugby partner, has led to many significant initiatives. On the field, the AIB Club International match was held in Donnybrook on the eve of the full International and proved to be a great

success, the inaugural AIB Junior and AIB Cups reached their conclusion in Lansdowne Road in April and once again our AIB League Finals provided an end of season fanfare.

Off the field the I.R.F.U. launched a series of club development initiatives aimed at helping clubs to put structures in place to achieve a more secure future. Further such initiatives are planned for next season.

In terms of raising the profile of our game our television broadcast partnerships are continuing to show increased viewership figures illustrating the growth and popularity of our sport. 'Against the Head' the weekly magazine programme on R.T.E. has transmitted more AIB League highlights than ever before. The broadcaster also transmitted the AIB Club international live. With Setanta's coverage of seventy-eight Celtic League matches and Leinster Schools rugby, with the Heineken Cup on R.T.E. and Sky, Irish rugby fans now have a greater choice and variety of rugby on television. The recent RBS Six Nations transmitted on R.T.E. and B.B.C. resulted in record viewership figures something that can only be good for the growth of the game and our associated sponsors.

The decision to make the Buccaneers Club in Athlone the home of our international U.21 rugby team for 2006, sponsored by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, paid dividends financially and promotionally as it brought international rugby to the midlands resulting in significant crowds and a fitting theatre from which R.T.E. transmitted two live matches.

Further to maximising the increased profile of Irish rugby, the Strategic Plan highlighted the need for additional resources within the department structure resulting in the appointment this past season of Barry Cunningham as Website and Supporters Club Manager and to that end both of these communicational and revenue generating operations have developed greatly this past season:-

www.irishrugby.ie has continued to show significant growth in 2005/06 season. Over 1 million visitor sessions per month in the first three months of 2006 compared with 1.1 million over the entire period last year. The highest ever month was February with 1.2 million page views in this period alone. The



site has also enjoyed a 16% increase in hits on dynamic pages - fixtures, results, league tables and player profiles - on this time last year.

IrishRugby.ie is now the premier site for up to date news on the Irish team - with team announcements, behind the scenes picture features, news and even live match updates providing top level content for users.

The Irish Rugby Supporters Club is just over a year old and has been growing at a very satisfying rate. We now have over 4,000 members worldwide allowing us to reach the wider Irish rugby community outside of our traditional base of clubs and schools which is very encouraging. The members' only website has been a huge success with the members' forum, the exclusive articles and the RBS Six Nations squad diary and competitions proving extremely popular. Without a doubt a very successful part of the club has been the opportunity for our members to meet our international stars and coaches as indeed Supporters Club events across the season have proved extremely popular and credit is due to our players and coaches for participating.

Corporate Affairs/Human Resources

Another busy year saw the increasing activity of international teams, Committees and events supported by the Union office. Planning, event management, team support, logistics and administration are all ongoing activities with rolling schedules for each event. Planning and preparations are already well advanced for R.W.C. 2007 during which Ireland will play two matches in Bordeaux and two in Paris in the pool stages. Planning for the Six Nations Championship matches in 2007 at Croke Park is also well advanced. Croke Park will present new opportunities and challenges which we are all looking forward to. Work on the design of the new stadium at Lansdowne Road is also being assisted by input from the staff who have operational experience in event and stadium management.

Our staff continue to work out of four office locations which is less than ideal. Efforts are ongoing to secure a suitable location to house all of the staff at one location. It is hoped to resolve this issue in the near future.

The need for a Human Resource Department was recognised and acted on some years ago and this Department has become increasingly busy given the numbers employed in administration/support services, rugby department and the professional game. The need to have robust and appropriate HR policies and practices across the organisation and Branches is being addressed. A significant proportion of the time of the Director of HR is taken up with managing contractual matters with professional playing and coaching personnel and with I.R.U.P.A. as highlighted earlier in this report.

A key issue for the past year has been to undertake the necessary amendments to the document used by the I.R.F.U. for contracting professional players. Having finalised and issued the draft document to the Players Association last September, the Union has engaged in a protracted period of negotiations with I.R.U.P.A. and their legal advisors. While there are a number of issues that remain unresolved at this time, it is our stated intention to conclude these discussions before the end of the current season.

Activity in the area of recruitment has been focused on replacement of staff who have exited the organisation and in securing competent staff to fill new roles at I.R.F.U. and Branch level as provided for in the I.R.F.U. Strategic Plan. One positive aspect of staff turnover is the creation of promotional opportunities for existing staff – eight staff members moved to new roles within the I.R.F.U. during this reporting period. Assessment Centres were again successfully utilised to source entry level staff.

Committee

The I.R.F.U. Committee, as in recent years, has had to deal with a huge range of issues across all aspects of the sport. As voluntary elected representatives they are faced with complex issues, tough decisions and vast amounts of paperwork. For many of the I.R.F.U. Committee they fulfil similar roles at Branch level or even club level. Rugby like any sport is indebted to its volunteers at all levels of the game. It is simply not possible to run a sport nationwide without the voluntary structures and personnel we are so fortunate to have. Volunteerism is an aspect of modern society that is

Off the field the I.R.F.U. launched a series of club development initiatives aimed at helping clubs to put structures in place to achieve a more secure future.

perhaps under pressure. Irish rugby must continue to value its volunteers and provide professional staff to support but not to supplant voluntary personnel.

Barry Keogh retires from the I.R.F.U. Committee following his year as immediate Past President. He joined the I.R.F.U. in 1995 and made a significant contribution as the Chairman of the first I.R.F.U. Marketing Committee helping to develop marketing strategies for the promotion and development of the game. He became President in 2004/05 season. Best wishes to Barry and his wife, Margaret, on his retirement from the I.R.F.U. Committee.

Obituaries

Des J. O'Brien

London Irish, Cardiff, Old Belvedere - twenty caps (1948-52)

Victor Alexander Hewitt

Instonians - six caps (1935-36)

George W. Thomson

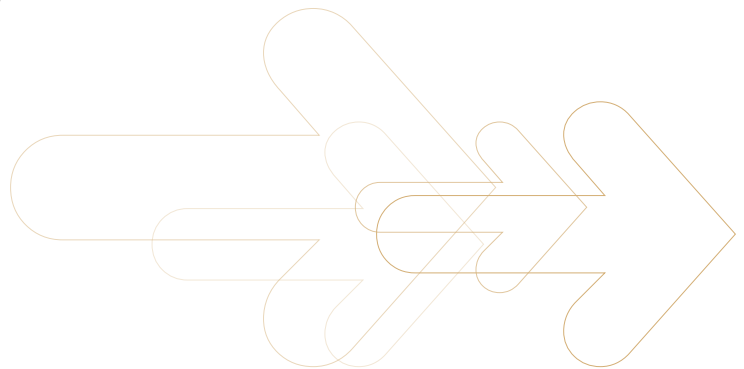
President S.R.U. 1982-83

C.E. (Eric) Campbell

Old Wesley - one cap 1970

Ronnie W. Gilliland

*Collegians R.F.C., refereed seven Tests 1964-67,
President of Ulster Society of Rugby Football Referees 1979-80.*





Leinster player
Bernard Jackman
coaches children at
Portlaoise Rugby Club



Heineken Cup Final
Peter Stringer scores
a try for Munster



The Irish mascot Broc



Heineken Cup Final
Anthony Foley lifts the
cup for Munster



OFFICE BEARERS AND COMMITTEE

President

D.A. Crawford

Senior Vice President

P.J. Boyle

Junior Vice President

D.V. Healy

Hon. Treasurer

J.P. Lyons

Chairman of Management Committee

J.D. Hussey

Immediate Past President

B.T. Keogh

Committee

J.R. Callaghan

C. Fitzgerald

P. Fitzgerald

T.H.N. Jackson

C.C. Powell

G.C. Quaid

P. Whelan (Co-opted)

Branch Representative Members

F. Crowley

L. Galvin

W.B. Glynn

S.R. Hilditch

D. Keohane

L.P. Magee

F. MacLoughlin

M. O'Sullivan

C. Watson

International Rugby Board Representatives

N.A. Murphy

P.J. Boyle

Trustees

A.R. Dawson

T.J. Kiernan

W.S.H. Lavery

Dr. S. Millar

Chief Executive Officer

P.R. Browne

Director of Corporate Affairs

M.P. Murphy

Director of Rugby

E. Wigglesworth

Financial Controller

C. O'Brien

Director of Commercial and Marketing

P. Power

Director of Human Resources

M. Dowling

National Coach

E. O'Sullivan



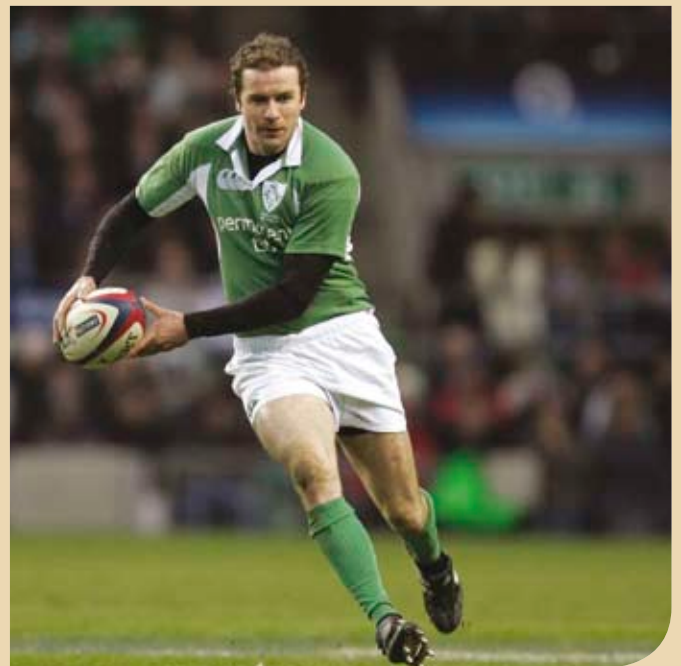
Brian O'Driscoll leads the Irish team



Denis Leamy chased by Steve Borthwick



Girvan Dempsey celebrates winning Triple Crown



Geordan Murphy





STANDING COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES

Management

J.D. Hussey, D.A. Crawford, P.J. Boyle, J.P. Lyons, N.A. Murphy, T.H.N. Jackson, D.V. Healy, P. Fitzgerald, P. Browne, M. Murphy and E. Wigglesworth.

Representative Game

T.H.N. Jackson, N.A. Murphy, C. Watson, M.J. O'Sullivan, P.J. Boyle, W.B. Glynn, P. Whelan, B. McLoughlin, P. Browne, E. Wigglesworth, E. O'Sullivan, M. Dowling, S. Anderson and G. Black.

Domestic Game

D.V. Healy, J.R. Callaghan, S.R. Hilditch, G.C. Quaid, D. Keohane, C.C. Powell, L.P. Magee, F. Crowley, L. Galvin, E. Wigglesworth, K. Potts and G. Black.

Finance

J.P. Lyons, P.J. Boyle, S.R. Hilditch, C. Fitzgerald, L. Galvin, F. Crowley, P. Whelan, P. Browne, M. Murphy, C. O'Brien and L. Quinn (co-opted).

Commercial and Marketing

P. Fitzgerald, J.P. Lyons, C. Fitzgerald, J.R. Callaghan, P. Browne, M. Murphy, P. Power, K. Richardson, J. Redmond and J.F. Smith (co-opted).

Academy

P. Whelan, E. Wigglesworth, E. O'Sullivan and S. Anderson.

Charitable Trust

J.F. Smith, J.R. Callaghan, G.C. Quaid, C. Fitzgerald, P. Fitzgerald, J. Doherty, J.B. Stevenson, S.O. Campbell, P.F. Madigan, Dr. L.N. O'Mahony, J.E. Gallagher, M.A. Quinn, T. Ringland, W. Dawson, Dr. C. Beirne and E. Feely.

Discipline

P.J. Boyle, F. Crowley and G. Black, Union Committee Members as required and co-optees.

Appeals

W.B. Glynn and G. Black, Union Committee Members as required and co-optees.

Exiles

P.J. Boyle and F. MacLoughlin.

Medical

W.B. Glynn, Dr. W. O'Flynn, Dr. L.Hennessy, C. Steele, Dr. A. Tanner, Dr. W. Rainey, Dr. B. O'Driscoll, Dr. G. O'Driscoll and Dr. C. McCarthy.

Referees

J.R. Callaghan, T. Aplin, J. Irvine, B. Smith, D. Templeton and O.E. Doyle.

Representative Team Appointments

N.A. Murphy, T.H.N. Jackson, P. Whelan, P. Browne and E. Wigglesworth.

Schools

C.C. Powell, S.R. Hilditch, G.C. Quaid, L.P. Magee, B. Derrane, C. Cullinane, Fr. J. Gough, D. Harty, F. Gault, S. Graham, P. Cafferky, P. Rossiter, K. Patton and J. Murphy.

Youth

J.R. Callaghan, G.C. Quaid, S.R. Hilditch, L.P. Magee, J. Best, D. Eakin, W. Gribben, B. Mescal, H. Woodhouse, T. McCoy and H. Kruger.

Player Advisory Group

T.H.N. Jackson, P. Whelan, J.D. Hussey, P. Browne, E. Wigglesworth, E. O'Sullivan and M. Dowling.

AIB League

F. Crowley, O. Allen, E. Hosty, Dr. W.A. Mulcahy, D. Workman and G. Black.

AIB League Working Party

D.V. Healy, F. Crowley, G. Black and E. Wigglesworth.

Six Nations Representatives

N.A. Murphy and P.J. Boyle.

E.R.C. Representatives

P. Whelan and P.J. Boyle.

Celtic League Representatives

J.D. Hussey and P. Browne.

F.I.R.A. Representative

S.R. Hilditch



Jerry Flannery
RBS Six Nations
Ireland v Scotland



Denis Leamy celebrates
scoring a try against
England in Twickenham



Geordan Murphy
wins the ball in the air
over Hugo Southwell
of Scotland



Paul O'Connell
wins the lineout
against Scott Murray
of Scotland

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Brand Partner of IrishRugby.ie



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Irish Rugby supported by the Irish Sports Council

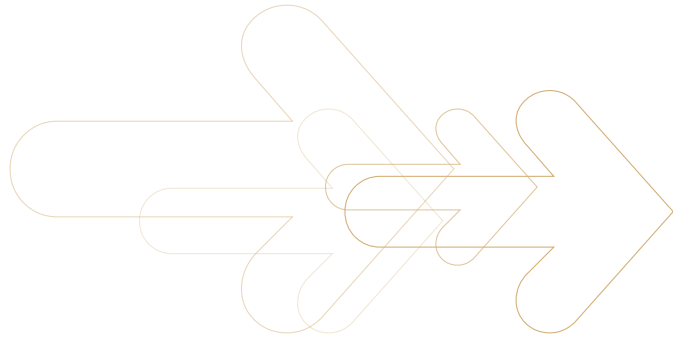


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ACCOUNTS



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Income and expenditure account

for the year ended 30 April 2006

		2005/06 €	2004/05 € <i>(restated)</i>	2003/04 € <i>(restated)</i>
Income:	Schedule			
Representative matches	1	39,398,903	32,937,287	27,938,784
Other income	2	7,029,528	5,915,250	6,797,583
		<hr/> 46,428,431	<hr/> 38,852,537	<hr/> 34,736,367
Expenditure:				
Professional game costs	3	25,575,678	23,485,308	23,255,027
Elite player development	4	2,125,136	1,721,347	1,425,271
Games support costs	5	612,055	422,814	572,769
Domestic and community rugby	6	9,222,150	8,131,350	7,800,202
Marketing	7	926,666	1,036,073	1,345,072
Grounds	8	1,975,878	1,878,611	1,661,399
Administration and overheads	9	3,927,341	3,602,442	3,571,697
Depreciation	(Note 3)	1,247,512	1,448,340	1,355,795
		<hr/> 45,612,416	<hr/> 41,726,285	<hr/> 40,987,232
Surplus (deficit) for year		<hr/> 816,015	<hr/> (2,873,748)	<hr/> (6,250,865)

J. P. Lyons
Honorary Treasurer

P. R. Browne
Chief Executive

Statement of total recognised gains and losses for the year ended 30 April 2006

	2005/06 €	2004/05 € <i>(restated)</i>	2003/04 € <i>(restated)</i>
Surplus (deficit) for the financial period attributable to the Union	816,015	(2,873,748)	(6,250,865)
Difference between expected and actual return on pension scheme assets	577,000	(36,000)	166,000
Experience gains and losses on pension scheme liabilities	(320,000)	(170,000)	(47,000)
Effect of changes in actuarial assumptions	(4,000)	(4,000)	-
Total surplus (deficit) relating to the period	1,069,015	(3,083,748)	(6,131,865)
Prior period adjustment (Note 4)	(828,000)	(781,000)	(1,001,000)
Total surplus (deficit) recognised since the last annual report	241,015	(3,864,748)	(7,132,865)

Reconciliation of movement in union funds for the year ended 30 April 2006

	2005/06 €	2004/05 €	2003/04 €
Balance at 1 May as previously reported	16,191,135	19,227,883	25,579,748
Prior period adjustment (Note 4)	(828,000)	(781,000)	(1,001,000)
	15,363,135	18,446,883	24,578,748
Ground development reserve	1,269,738	1,269,738	1,269,738
Financial assistance to clubs reserve	1,269,738	1,269,738	1,269,738
	17,902,611	20,986,359	27,118,224
Total recognised surplus (deficit) relating to the period	1,069,015	(3,083,748)	(6,131,865)
Balance at 30 April	18,971,626	17,902,611	20,986,359

Balance sheet

as at 30 April 2006

	Note	30/04/06 €	30/04/05 € <i>(restated)</i>
Fixed tangible assets	3	26,962,557	25,828,877
Fixed financial assets			
Loans to clubs		1,781,707	1,855,463
Financial investments	5	5,078,952	5,078,952
		6,860,659	6,934,415
Current assets			
Debtors and prepayments		10,089,133	7,730,129
Cash at bank and in hand		25,391,951	17,809,297
		35,481,084	25,539,426
Current liabilities			
Bank overdraft		-	542,372
Creditors and accrued expenses		11,349,255	10,897,176
		11,349,255	11,439,548
Net current assets		24,131,829	14,099,878
Total assets less current liabilities		57,955,045	46,863,170
Pension	6	(407,000)	(828,000)
Deferred ticket fund	7	(38,576,419)	(28,132,559)
		18,971,626	17,902,611
Financed by:			
Union funds		18,971,626	17,902,611

J. P. Lyons
Honorary Treasurer

P. R. Browne
Chief Executive

Notes to the accounts

for the year ended 30 April 2006

1. Accounting policies

Basis of accounting

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Fixed tangible assets

Fixed tangible assets are shown at their historic cost net of any capital grants received or receivable.

Depreciation

Depreciation is charged in order to write off the assets over their expected useful lives at the following annual rates: -

Land	Nil
Stand, buildings, etc.	2.5% straight line
Fixtures, fittings & equipment	25% and 12.5% straight line
Computer equipment	20% straight line
Grounds purchased & leased to clubs	Nil

Foreign currencies

Foreign currencies are expressed in Euro. Assets and liabilities in foreign currencies are translated at the exchange rates ruling at the balance sheet date.

Pension

The Union operates a defined benefit pension scheme for certain employees. The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of the Union. The contributions are charged to the income and expenditure account so as to spread the cost of pensions over the service lives of employees. Variations from the regular costs are spread over the average expected remaining lives of current members.

Grants

Capital grants received are netted against the cost of fixed assets.
Revenue grants are recognised as income in the period to which they relate.

Deferred income

Monies received in respect of five and ten year tickets has been treated as deferred income and have been released to the income and expenditure account over the period to which they relate based on the estimated number of fixtures and the expected admission prices. Details of the amount deferred are set out in note 7.

2. Income and expenditure recognition

Income and expenditure are recognised in the season in which they are incurred.

Notes to the Accounts

for the year ended 30 April 2006 (continued)

3. Fixed tangible assets

	Cost at 30/4/05 €	Additions €	Cost at 30/4/06 €
Premises and grounds	31,947,564	1,883,548	33,831,112
Fixtures, fittings & equipment	5,938,788	497,644	6,436,432
Grounds purchased and leased to clubs	368,713	-	368,713
	38,255,065	2,381,192	40,636,257
	Accumulated depreciation at 30/4/05 €	Charge for year €	Accumulated depreciation at 30/4/06 €
Premises and grounds	7,735,547	798,142	8,533,689
Fixtures, fittings & equipment	4,690,641	449,370	5,140,011
Grounds purchased and leased to clubs	-	-	-
	12,426,188	1,247,512	13,673,700
Net book value	25,828,877		26,962,557

4. Prior period adjustment

'Financial Reporting Standard 17 - Retirement Benefits' has been adopted in full by the Union with effect from 1 May 2005. The adoption of FRS 17 has required a change in the accounting treatment of defined benefit pension arrangements so that the Union now includes the assets and liabilities of these arrangements in the balance sheet. Current service costs and net financial returns are included in the income and expenditure account in the period to which they relate. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised in the statement of total recognised gains and losses.

The impact of the adoption of FRS 17 on the Balance Sheet is the recognition of a net pension liability of €407,000 as at 30 April 2006 and a net pension liability of €828,000 as at 30 April 2005.

5. Financial investments

Financial investments comprise term investments at cost of €5,078,952, the market value of which at 30 April 2006 amounted to €9,109,215 (2005 €7,994,347).

6. Pension commitments

The pension entitlements of employees of the Union arise under a defined benefit scheme which is funded by annual contributions by the Union to a separately administered pension fund.

The latest actuarial valuation for the scheme was dated 1 August 2005. The principal assumptions made by the actuary were that the rate of return on investment would exceed the increase in pensionable salaries by 3%. The assets of the fund, which amounted to €2,826,000, showed that on an immediate discontinuance basis the assets of the fund were adequate to meet the plan's statutory minimum funding liabilities. The assets represent 84% in aggregate of the benefits which would accrue to members at the valuation date after allowing for future salary increases. The actuarial report is not available for public inspection.

The valuations employed for FRS 17 disclosure purposes have been updated by the scheme's independent and qualified actuary to take account of the requirements of the new accounting standard in order to assess the liabilities of the scheme as at 30 April 2006. The valuations have been completed using the projected unit method.

	30/4/06	30/4/05	30/4/04
	%	%	%
Main assumptions:			
Rate of increase in salaries	3.75	3.75	4.00
Rate of increase in pensions payment	4.25	4.25	4.50
Discount rate	5.00	4.50	4.75
Inflation assumption	2.25	2.25	2.50

The assets and liabilities of the scheme and the expected rate of return at 30 April were:

	30/4/06		30/4/05		30/4/04	
	Long-term		Long-term		Long-term	
	rate of return	Value	rate of return	Value	rate of return	Value
	expected	€	expected	€	expected	€
	%		%		%	
Equities	7.0	3,054,000	7.5	1,993,000	8.0	1,615,000
Bonds	4.3	412,000	4.0	368,000	4.6	352,000
Properties	6.0	229,000	6.5	212,000	7.0	156,000
Others	2.5	122,000	2.5	110,000	3.0	19,000
Total market value of assets		3,817,000		2,683,000		2,142,000
Present value of scheme liabilities		(4,224,000)		(3,511,000)		
Pension liability		(407,000)		(828,000)		

Notes to the accounts

for the year ended 30 April 2006 (continued)

6. Pension commitments (continued)

Analysis of the amount charged to income and expenditure account:

	2005/2006	2004/2005
	€	€
Current service cost	226,000	209,000

Analysis of the amount credited to other finance income:

	2005/2006	2004/2005
	€	€
Other finance costs: expected return on assets in the scheme	(193,000)	(172,000)
Other finance costs: interest costs	163,000	145,000
Net return	(30,000)	(27,000)

Analysis of the amount recognised in statement of total recognised gains and losses:

	2005/2006	2004/2005
	€	€
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	577,000	(36,000)
Experience losses arising on scheme liabilities	(320,000)	(170,000)
Effect of changes in assumptions underlying the present value of scheme liabilities	(4,000)	(4,000)
Actuarial gains (losses) recognised in the statement of total recognised gains and losses	253,000	(210,000)

Movements in deficit during the period:

	30/4/06	30/4/05
	€	€
At 1 May	(828,000)	(781,000)
Total operating charge	(226,000)	(209,000)
Total other finance income	30,000	27,000
Actuarial gains(losses) recognised in the statement of total recognised gains and losses	253,000	(210,000)
Employer contributions	364,000	345,000
At 30 April	(407,000)	(828,000)

6. Pension commitments (continued).

History of experience gains and losses:

	2005/2006	2004/2005	2003/2004
Difference between the expected and actual return on scheme assets:			
Amount (€)	577,000	(36,000)	166,000
Percentage of scheme assets	15.12	(1.34)	7.75
Experience losses on scheme liabilities:			
Amount (€)	(320,000)	(170,000)	(47,000)
Percentage of the present value of scheme liabilities	(7.58)	(4.84)	(1.61)
Total amount recognised in statement of total recognised gains and losses:			
Amount (€)	253,000	(210,000)	119,000
Percentage of the present value of scheme liabilities	5.99	(5.98)	4.07

Reconciliation of net assets and reserves under FRS 17

	30/4/06	30/4/05
Net assets and reserves	€'000	€'000
Net assets and reserves as stated in balance sheet	18,971,626	17,902,611
FRS 17 defined benefit liability	407,000	828,000
Net assets excluding defined benefit liabilities	19,378,626	18,730,611

7. Deferred ticket fund

	30/4/06	30/4/05
	€	€
Balance at 1 May	28,132,559	31,274,380
Issued during the year	14,721,750	-
Transfer to revenue account 2005/06	(4,277,890)	(3,141,821)
Balance at 30 April	38,576,419	28,132,559

Notes to the accounts

for the year ended 30 April 2006 (continued)

8. Revenue and capital grants

The following grants were received from the Irish Sports Council and used for the stated purpose in the year ended 30 April 2006:

Revenue grant for game development and participation	€ 3,530,000
--	----------------

9. Capital commitments

At the 30 April 2006, the Union had contracted to purchase fixed assets of which €765,000 (2005: €Nil) remains outstanding.

10. Future developments

In January 2005 the Government approved the concept of building a new 50,000 seated stadium at Lansdowne Road. The Government have allocated €191 million to the project with the IRFU and the FAI contributing the balance of €174 million.

The development is to be carried out as a joint venture between the IRFU and the FAI through a jointly owned development company, called Lansdowne Road Stadium Development Company Limited. The IRFU will lease the appropriate tranche of land to the development company for the useful life of the stadium after which the land will revert to the IRFU.

11. Approval of accounts

The accounts of the Union were approved by the Committee on 26th May, 2006 and signed on its behalf by the Honorary Treasurer and the Chief Executive.

Statement of Committee's responsibilities

The Committee is required to prepare financial statements, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Union at the end of each financial period and of the surplus or deficit for the period. They are responsible for keeping proper accounting records, for safeguarding assets, and for preventing and detecting fraud and other irregularities.

The Committee confirms that suitable accounting policies have been consistently applied, that reasonable and prudent judgments and estimates have been used in the preparation of the financial statements, and that it is appropriate to assume that the Union will continue in being and to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

Independent auditors' report to the members

year ended 30 April 2006

We have audited the financial statements on pages 34 to 42 which have been prepared under the historical cost convention and the accounting policies set out on page 37.

Respective responsibilities of the Committee and the auditors

As described on page 43, the Committee is responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and the accounting standards issued by the Accounting Standards Board and published by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland).

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

This report is made solely to the members as a body. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Basis of audit opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the Committee in the preparation of the financial statements, and whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Union's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the accounts are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

Opinion

In our opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, of the state of affairs of the Union as at 30 April 2006 and of the surplus of the Union for the year then ended.

Grant Thornton
Registered Auditors
Chartered Accountants

24-26 City Quay
Dublin 2

Date: 26th May, 2006

Income

for year ended 30 April 2006

Schedule 1: Representative matches

	2005/06 €	2004/05 €	2003/04 €
International rugby income	23,744,705	20,918,891	15,996,530
Commercial rugby income	6,760,257	4,546,060	4,994,362
Deferred ticket income	4,798,587	3,608,632	3,741,787
ERC and provincial income	4,095,354	3,863,704	3,206,105
	39,398,903	32,937,287	27,938,784

Schedule 2: Other income

	2005/06 €	2004/05 €	2003/04 €
Other rugby income	625,050	(restated) 447,543	(restated) 229,334
Percentage of admissions	1,931,550	1,055,532	2,248,661
Government Grants	3,530,000	3,500,000	3,500,000
Other income	942,928	912,175	819,588
	7,029,528	5,915,250	6,797,583

Expenditure

for year ended 30 April 2006

Schedule 3: Professional game costs

	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04
	€	€	€
National tours, camps and squads	802,211	538,499	1,847,532
National match costs	2,748,339	2,696,109	1,713,789
Player and management costs	22,025,128	20,250,700	19,693,706
	<hr/> 25,575,678	<hr/> 23,485,308	<hr/> 23,255,027

Schedule 4: Elite player development

	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04
	€	€	€
Irish "A" team	163,265	1,494	4,919
Under 21s	529,163	509,993	553,642
Sevens	736	131,807	5,378
Academy and HPU	1,050,140	693,177	596,114
Fitness programme	381,832	384,876	265,218
	<hr/> 2,125,136	<hr/> 1,721,347	<hr/> 1,425,271

Schedule 5: Games support costs

	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04
	€	€	€
Referee costs	374,876	281,355	366,476
Medical costs	237,179	141,459	206,293
	<hr/> 612,055	<hr/> 422,814	<hr/> 572,769

Expenditure

for year ended 30 April 2006 (continued)

Schedule 6: Domestic and community rugby

	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04
	€	€	€
Under 19s	286,409	256,066	245,228
Irish schoolboy teams	183,307	263,801	161,901
Irish youth teams	168,078	223,227	215,987
Domestic competitions	688,499	784,307	833,914
General development salaries	1,574,622	1,200,187	1,175,714
General development expenses	342,351	348,798	369,495
Development resources	17,036	11,878	31,657
Coaching courses	181,486	233,557	105,842
Youth and schools	302,972	204,148	214,430
YDO schemes	997,583	1,082,371	787,840
Clubs and schools of Ireland scheme	1,880,379	1,607,667	2,049,242
Referee development	322,393	284,133	249,067
Tag, buntas and Tallaght scheme	303,448	299,373	199,818
Other development and operational grants	689,948	872,039	857,191
Other community rugby funding	1,283,639	459,798	302,876
	9,222,150	8,131,350	7,800,202

Expenditure

for year ended 30 April 2006 (continued)

Schedule 7: Marketing

	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04
	€	€	€
Marketing	355,672	335,923	531,553
PR and communications	206,466	138,871	94,487
Website	364,528	561,279	719,032
	926,666	1,036,073	1,345,072

Schedule 8: Grounds

	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04
	€	€	€
Rates and insurance	578,248	702,384	591,181
Repairs and renewals	480,085	470,250	310,425
Wages, cleaning and pitch	473,896	386,397	336,186
Gas, electricity and water	89,383	27,862	83,239
Provincial grounds	354,266	291,718	340,368
	1,975,878	1,878,611	1,661,399

Expenditure

for year ended 30 April 2006 (continued)

Schedule 9: Administration and overheads

	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04
	€	€	€
Governance costs	497,529	(restated) 454,480	(restated) 422,835
Salaries and pension	1,729,351	1,439,291	1,370,423
Printing, postage and stationary	171,997	152,174	173,232
Rates, rent, insurance and telephone	571,178	566,371	588,130
Office maintenance	172,634	228,899	213,143
Professional fees	518,879	499,853	502,448
Miscellaneous administration costs	265,773	261,374	301,486
	<hr/> 3,927,341	<hr/> 3,602,442	<hr/> 3,571,697

Funds Flow Statement

for year ended 30 April 2006

	2005/06	2004/05
	€	€
		<i>(restated)</i>
Net surplus (deficit)	816,015	(2,873,748)
<i>Non-cash adjustments:</i>		
Depreciation	1,247,512	1,448,340
Movement in debtors	(2,359,004)	(10,793)
Current service cost and net return on pension	196,000	182,000
Movement in creditors	452,079	(1,259,523)
Transfer to revenue account - five and ten year tickets	(4,277,890)	(3,141,821)
Operating cash outflow	(3,925,288)	(5,655,545)
<i>Other sources of funds</i>		
Issue of ten year tickets	14,721,750	-
<i>Application of funds</i>		
Expenditure on fixed assets	(2,381,192)	(2,334,402)
Pension fund contributions	(364,000)	(345,000)
Net movement on loans to clubs	73,756	193,935
	(2,671,436)	(2,485,467)
Net cash flow	8,125,026	(8,141,012)
Opening net cash balances	17,266,925	25,407,937
Closing net cash balances	25,391,951	17,266,925

Notes

Notes

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