



Tomorrow's Game

Irish Rugby Football Union
Annual Report 2007/2008





* Leinster women's rugby team warm up and stretch before a training session.



* Summer Scrummage – Young rugby fans enjoying the IRFU rugby summer camps.

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Fr. Godfrey Cup Final - Wesley team
huddle before their Cup Final match.



President's Report

D.V. Healy



The season of 2007/08 has been a very busy one in both strands of our professional and club game.

For our senior international team, it has been a difficult season, none more so than for our players. I am firmly of the belief that no player would go out to play anything but their best when playing for Ireland. On that basis, our RWC performance was a disappointing one for our players, but we should also remember of course the many good times they have delivered in previous seasons.

An independent review of our performance in RWC was conducted by Brian Porteous of Genesis Consulting during November and December and I am delighted to say that we are now at a stage where strategies are in place for the future seasons to address the issues identified in the report.

The RBS 6 Nations Tournament saw us winning 2 games and this again has been disappointing for our players and our Union. In March, Eddie O'Sullivan resigned from his position as National Coach. On behalf of our Union, I thank Eddie for his dedication during his tenure. I would like to wish Eddie every success in his future.

On a more positive note, congratulations to Leinster on their success in winning the Magners League and congratulations to Munster on reaching their fourth Heineken Cup Final to be played in Cardiff on 24th May. Our best wishes to Munster for that match.

The IRFU hosted the 6 Nations U.18 Festival held in Cork. I would like to complement our Tournament Director, Diarmuid Kelly, Tournament Manager, Olly Hodges, and their Committee for the professional way they delivered the tournament both on and off the field.

The tournament itself was a huge challenge for our players and whilst giving 101%, winning 1 of the 3 games has left us with challenges on how we prepare for these type of tournaments. I was struck by the opinion of one up and coming player in a recent newspaper article "The one thing schools rugby has to be careful of is that personal development isn't sacrificed, just so that

the team does well". I am in no doubt that with the co-operation of all stakeholders, particularly schools and players, that this gap I speak of, will be closed quickly.

It was satisfying to see that our U.18 club side fared well in the FIRA/AER European Championship, reaching the Final against France and performing well in that environment.

On the international stage, our referees again continue to perform at the highest level, with the highest honour going to Alain Rolland, taking charge of the RWC Final in Paris and David Keane taking charge of an IRB's 7 Series Final in Adelaide, with Aoife McCarthy taking charge of the Hong Kong 7's – Womens Final.

We have challenges in our club game such as:-

- (i) Retention of players in the 17–22 age bracket.
- (ii) Competition rules that are not friendly to our players - we need to suit the 13 that turn up as opposed to the 2 that don't.
- (iii) Lack of facilities limiting options – if more club facilities are floodlit, games could be played mid week as opposed to the more traditional kick-off times of a Saturday or Sunday.

If I might suggest for example to our AIB League clubs to look around at their nearest club and if both have floodlights, an arrangement be made to play their league matches on a Wednesday or Friday night with the reciprocal fixture going to the other club the next season. In spite of these challenges there is much progress to be proud of and I refer you to the later sections of this report on the domestic game.

Having attended at the AIB Cup and Junior Cup in Athlone, the 2 Finals were played before good crowds and with classic Cup Final atmosphere to boot. In thanking all our club Presidents, their Committees and members, I particularly thank you for the courtesy and hospitality shown to me when I dropped in on your games during the season.

I have no doubt that our club game is beginning to re-invent itself, with games being played at times to suit players. This is not meant to suggest going 'head to head' with our provincial



From a strategic point of view, the next phase of our strategic plan is well on course for the 2008-2012 period

teams, but filling a gap where your traditional club player and supporter is given the option to support his first choice, his club. This season we had the 2007 AIB League winners, Garryowen, compete on behalf of the IRFU in an amateur tournament in Languedoc. My particular thanks to AIB for their continuing support as our partners in the club game.

From a strategic point of view, the next phase of our strategic plan is well on course for the 2008-2012 period. The thrust of the existing plan was always meant to be a living document and to my mind whilst failing in areas, quite successful in others with the challenges to improve on the existing and new programmes as we face into the 2008-2012 phase.

This season we sadly lost Roy Loughhead RIP, with his passing last February. Roy's contribution to our game was immense over the years, having served in his club, Branch and Union in that time. Our sympathy is extended to Joan and her family on this sad loss.

At Committee level we have also reached the end of an era with the decision of Noel Murphy not to seek re-election as one of our IRB representatives. Noel's contribution to rugby has been a valued one. His reputation here and across the international rugby family is well known. The best compliment I can pay Noel is that his grasp of any brief was detailed and he was always well prepared for any debate. Even if you disagreed on an issue, it was only in relation to that particular issue and he always then moved on to deal with the many other issues that face Irish rugby – this being his major objective at all times.

Last November also saw the departure of Dr. Syd Millar, having served his term as Chairman of the IRB and Chairman of Rugby World Cup Ltd. Syd's contribution to our game has been a lifetime one, having served Ballymena, Ulster and Ireland both on and off the field. His commitment and resolve to any task he undertook was done with focus and resolve. His term of office at the IRB saw major policies bearing fruition, one of which was his support for Tier 2 Countries.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the work of all my colleagues on the IRFU Committee over the past 12 months and in particular that of the Chairman of the Management Committee, John Hussey, for his continued commitment, ably assisted by the various Chairmen of our Standing Committees, who continue to deliver the various policies of our Union.


Particularly, I thank our Hon. Treasurer, Tom Grace, for the way he has settled in to this onerous position with the changing horizons in the current financial climate an ongoing challenge to our Union.

Finally, to Philip Browne and all the staff at the now 10/12 Lansdowne Road, I thank you all for the continued support you give to our game. This support was particularly seen during the seamless transfer of the Union office from 3 locations to our new offices in Lansdowne Road before Christmas and again during our 3 games in Croke Park this season, living up to my remarks in the Italian programme of a staff with dedication, courtesy and commitment.

Thank you very much again for the honour bestowed on me for the season 2007/2008.

Honorary Treasurer's Report

T. Grace



It is my privilege to present to you the Union's Financial Statements for the year ended 30th April, 2008, the first to be prepared under my stewardship. Since my election last year I have engaged with representation from all aspects of the game and as a result I am acutely aware of the competition for the Union's resources between these areas.

Overall the Union has achieved a breakeven position against a budgeted deficit of €3.1m. However, if the financial impact of the realisation of the Union's long term investment with BIAM is stripped out the Union broadly met its budget target.

Income and Expenditure Account

Income from international matches is down by €3.8m from last year due to the absence of the Autumn Internationals and the reduction in 10 year ticket income is for the same reason. The Union's TV revenues were down slightly due to the deterioration of the Sterling exchange rate.

Commercial income increased by €0.8m due largely to new sponsorships negotiated and I would take this opportunity to pay tribute to the efforts of Pat Fitzgerald and the members of the Commercial and Marketing Standing Committee in achieving this increase against the backdrop of a faltering economy.

ERC and provincial income whilst less than last year is some €1m ahead of budget due to the performance of Irish provinces in both the Heineken Cup and the Magners League. It should be noted that the €5.4m earned from this source does not take into account the substantial gate receipts and commercial income earned by the provinces and used by them to fund their individual operations.

The increase in Other Rugby Income arises from the monies earned by the Union's new Leisure Rugby department from Tag Rugby.

Government grants at €3.5m are shown net of €165k to be paid out in respect of the Women in Sport initiative. The Irish Sports Council have also given €250k in respect of

initiatives in the area of elite player development the bulk of which expenditure will take place in season 2008/09. For this funding together with the funding provided to the Union, Branches and clubs under the capital scheme the Union is profoundly grateful.

Other income has risen from €1.3m to €3.1m largely due to the surplus realised on the disposal of the Union's long term investment after taking account of losses arising from the decline in the value of Sterling.

Professional game costs increased by €0.6m largely due to the high level of inflation suffered by the Union in relation to player and coaching costs. This increase was offset by the saving in match and team preparation costs arising from the fact that no Autumn matches were played.

Elite player development costs declined by c. €300k due to the absence of an U.20 World Cup, the location of the Churchill Cup in the UK and the high performance area only being up to full strength towards the latter part of the season.

Domestic game costs actually fell by €350k but the fact that the Union neither hosted nor participated in an U.19 World Cup resulted in a saving of over €650k. Also included in domestic game costs are the new Branch empowerment initiatives shown under the heading of YDO and provincial staff and the new Club Support Scheme.

Marketing costs increased by c. €40k due to RWC awareness campaign and brochure costs for premium tickets and boxes.

With the redevelopment of Lansdowne Road grounds costs have unsurprisingly fallen dramatically and what is now included here is largely PL insurance for matches, property repairs and maintenance of provincial grounds.

Administration and overheads have increased by just over €600k due to increased rent for new offices, cost of moving offices and a significant increase in legal and other professional fees.



The Union is currently undertaking a review of its operations to ensure that value for money is and will continue to be obtained across all of its activities

Balance Sheet

Tangible fixed assets increased by c. €11m due to expenditure in connection with the stadium redevelopment and additional properties acquired by the Union.

Financial assets include a loan of c. €11.5m to the Munster Branch in respect of the Thomond Park redevelopment.

Debtors and prepayments stood at just over €11m at 30th April compared with €9.7m last year whilst creditors increased to €10.3m from €8.6m reflecting increased activity in the last quarter of the year.

Note 9 to the accounts shows that over €51m has been received to date in respect of deposits for premium tickets and boxes in the new stadium which is a massive vote of confidence from the rugby public especially given that no advertising campaign was run in respect of this.

Cash balances at 30th April, 2008 stood at €52.5m up from €21.8m last year principally reflecting the receipt of premium ticket deposits and the sale of the Union's long term investment and after taking account of sums advanced in respect of the Thomond Park redevelopment and expenditure on additional properties and the new stadium.

At time of writing the Union has identified the key risks which it as an organisation faces and is currently documenting the assessment and management of these risks. I feel it appropriate to comment on one of these risks in particular, namely, the

performance of the overall economy. This could have future ramifications for the Union particularly in the areas of commercial and ticket revenue generation, property values and exchange rates and the potential impact must be continually monitored and where necessary appropriate action taken.

The Union is currently undertaking a review of its operations to ensure that value for money is and will continue to be obtained across all of its activities.

Overall the Union continues to be on target to meet its long term financial goals vis-à-vis the new stadium. However, given current changes to the economic environment the Union's financial performance must continue to be kept under constant review.

In conclusion, I would like to thank those who assisted me during the year namely my fellow Committee members, the Union Trustees and the staff at Lansdowne Road in particular the staff of the Finance Department. I would also like to acknowledge the excellent work being done in all of the Branches especially the efforts of my fellow Honorary Treasurers. Lastly, I would like to thank my predecessors in the role of IRFU Honorary Treasurer especially my immediate predecessor, John Lyons, for ensuring a solid financial base from which to operate.



Chief Executive's Report

P.R. Browne

You can never take anything for granted in sport and rugby is no exception to this maxim. It has been a year of mixed emotions from the euphoria of Ireland v. England in February 2007 to the disappointment of the performances in RWC in France in September and October 2007; and from the disappointment of RBS 6 Nations 2008 to the excitement of Munster in their fourth Heineken Cup Final and Leinster's capture of the Magners League. The IRFU, the players and coaches, Irish rugby and the public are all aboard this rollercoaster and like any rollercoaster it can be an exhilarating and a daunting ride all at the same time. There is one thing that shines out in all of this and that is the passion that everyone brings to our game whether they are players, coaches, spectators, media, administrators or even those with only a passing interest. Long may this continue as that passion and emotion is the essence of sport and in particular our game.

Without a doubt the disappointment of the poor performances in RWC and RBS 6 Nations along with the subsequent resignation of Eddie O'Sullivan as National Coach, and the selection process for a new Coach have dominated much of the Union's time over the past 6 to 8 months. Much has been written and spoken about the events leading up to RWC and also its aftermath, much of it written with the benefit of hindsight. Different decisions made along the way may have resulted in a more positive outcome for the national team but it is clear from the Genesis Consulting Report that the underperformance of the Irish team could not be attributed to any single cause but rather to a complex mix of operational, management and systemic issues. The Union having received this report have acted quickly to address the key issues so that our future structure around the national team and the underpinning high performance systems support success. To this end the IRFU will be appointing a National Team Manager to work along side the National Coach, providing him with support and advice across various operational areas. This will relieve the Coach of burdensome responsibilities allowing him time to concentrate on the core aspect of his job, preparing the team to succeed on the field.

The Union has also agreed to streamline the management of our high performance systems through a newly established Performance Committee. This Committee will be responsible for reviewing and monitoring the performance of the national team and management along with all other national representative teams. It will also, through the Provincial Team Management Boards/Committees, receive reports on the performance of the professional teams and team management at provincial level. It will subsume the roles of the current Appointments Committee in terms of national coaching and team management appointments as well as setting down the guidelines for foreign player movements into the provinces, currently a role of the Player Advisory Group. This emerges from criticisms in the Genesis Consulting Report in relation to the monitoring, review and management of the professional game which would be better managed by a single group. It will be staffed by both voluntary personnel and professional staff and will have the ability to co-opt persons with appropriate skill sets from outside the IRFU Committee, if required. The objective of the Performance Committee will be to ensure that an appropriate balance is found between the interests of the national team and those of the provincial teams in line with policies set by the IRFU Committee, all with a view to ensuring the success of the professional game.

The task of maintaining the balance between the aspirations of the provincial teams and the need for success for the national team is not straightforward and is complicated by the influx of quality players from the southern hemisphere, attracted by the rapidly inflating salaries available in French and English clubs in particular. We must ensure our provincial professional teams remain competitive in this evolving environment. Whilst there is significant benefit in bringing in genuinely world class players to our provincial teams, we must ensure that this is done in a controlled fashion and not at the expense of developing Irish players for the Irish national team which continues to generate the bulk of IRFU revenues. The challenge for the Union is not only maintaining this balance but also in meeting the escalating costs of the professional game, costs which are set by the market in England and France.



There is one thing that shines out in all of this, the passion that everyone brings to our game, whether they are players, coaches, spectators, media, administrators or even those with only a passing interest

Governance is a topic that the Union comes back to on a regular basis. The drivers for changes in governance are not confined to the changes arising from the professional game but are also driven by societal changes which demand greater accountability in all sports, which are in the main amateur in nature and managed by voluntary personnel. The Irish Sports Council lays down many of the guidelines in relation to minimum requirements in sensitive areas, such as, anti-doping and code of ethics for delivery of sport to minors. The IRFU is very much up to speed in these areas as a national governing body but there is a continuing challenge to ensure delivery on these guidelines at club level. In addition the Union has devolved a lot of responsibility and budgetary control for delivery of the IRFU game development programmes to the Branches and appropriate governance structures need to be in place to manage this responsibility. Some Branches are undertaking structural reviews and in this regard it would be important to improve governance but not at the expense of losing the important involvement of our voluntary administrators.

In the wider rugby world there has been much debate about the structure of the season for the international game, driven by the conflict in England and France between club and country over fixture clashes. This debate culminated in a 3 day workshop facilitated by Cap Gemini Consulting for the IRB in November 2007. Progress was made in defining “windows” in which international rugby fixtures will take place and limiting the number of international fixtures where Regulation 9 (Release of Players) must apply. There is broad agreement on the windows which in the case of the northern hemisphere are the 7 weeks of the 6 Nations

Championship, 3 to 4 weeks in June for summer tours and 3 weeks in November for the Autumn Internationals. The IRB are rewriting Regulation 9 to take account of these newly defined windows and thereby ensuring that players are released and available to play for their country in these periods. This preserves the priority of country over club and in the context of rugby this is vital for the future funding and growth of the game.

The other topic of debate in the IRB has been the introduction of Experimental Law Variations (ELVs). The IRFU and other Unions in Europe are very wary about introducing the extensive raft of law changes proposed by IRB and we have conducted our own research on the ELVs which are being applied in South Africa and in the Super 14. The main concern lies in our belief that some of the new sanctions do not fit the nature of the crimes committed and that has the potential to change the nature of the game moving it much closer to rugby league than at present. The basic tenet of our game is that it is a game for “all shapes and sizes”. Introducing laws that seem to encourage free kicks/“tap and go” penalties at the expense of scrums, not only reduces the contest in the defining set piece of Rugby Union but may also rule out “all shapes and sizes” as the new Laws seem to favour larger, faster and more mobile players. The IRB Council have introduced ELVs for 1 year throughout the game worldwide as of 1st August, 2008. They will be monitored carefully and reviewed before any decision is taken on their permanent introduction. The jury will remain out on their efficacy until they have been applied in the major European competitions in the 2008/09 season.

National Team

As outlined earlier in the report, it was a very disappointing 12 months for our national team and the consistency which the team worked so hard for deserted them with well publicised consequences.

The summer tour to Argentina was with a depleted squad as key players were rested and rehabilitated for RWC. Despite the endeavours of the players and team management, Argentina, who are a notoriously difficult team to beat at home, handed out 2 demoralising defeats.

Following an intensive programme of preparation for RWC in France, a number of warm-up fixtures were played in August against Scotland, Bayonne and Italy. Whilst beating Bayonne and Italy and losing to Scotland, it was clear at this stage that the good form shown by the team and individuals earlier in the season had been lost and this was further evidenced by the poor performances in the opening pool matches in RWC in France where Ireland struggled to beat Namibia and Georgia.

Success or failure in RWC was always going to boil down to Ireland performing against France and Argentina. This was made more difficult as a result of the French requiring a win against Ireland having earlier being defeated in the opening match of the tournament by Argentina. France duly outplayed Ireland by 25 points to 3 points, leaving Ireland's hopes hanging on to a victory against Argentina. Once again Ireland never rose to the level of performance earlier in the season and were beaten 30 points to 15 points and exited the tournament.

of organisational issues, team management issues, team preparation issues and high performance system issues and as outlined earlier in this report the IRFU has addressed these issues through the creation of the Performance Committee and the creation of a new post of National Team Manager.

The RBS 6 Nations campaign followed with 3 fixtures in Croke Park against Italy, Scotland and Wales. Again performances were mixed and despite victories against Italy and Scotland, there was a heavy defeat by France leaving Ireland's Championship hopes to be decided in the last home fixture against Wales. Despite having opportunities, the Irish team could not contain a resurgent Welsh team who won by 16 points to 12 points and who subsequently went on to win the Grand Slam. A defeat to England in the final fixture of the Championship left Ireland in fourth position, our worst placing in a 6 Nations Championship since it commenced in 2000.

In the week following the English match, Eddie O'Sullivan resigned his position as National Coach. Much has been written about the events of the past 6 months but Eddie O'Sullivan's record as Irish Coach is unsurpassed. The success of the Irish team over the past 6 years is a testament to his ability and commitment along with that of the players and the team management under his control. Our thanks to Eddie O'Sullivan and his staff for their contribution to Irish rugby's success over the past 6 years.



The team, management and the IRFU and of course the public were hugely disappointed and whilst some of the media punditry was excessive and personalised there were valid criticisms levelled at the team, the team management and at the Union itself. The Union appointed Brian Porteous of Genesis Consulting to carry out a review to establish possible causes for the poor performances and this involved detailed discussions with all concerned including many players views. The report identified a variety of deficiencies in the preparation and management of the team, the integration of our high performance systems and the management of same. These fell into 4 broad headings

Provincial Teams/Professional Game

Whilst there was understandably great disappointment with the performances of the Irish team, our professional provincial teams provided both players and spectators with an opportunity to "regroup". It was no different this season with Munster once again providing reasons to be cheerful as they overcame the odds in a very difficult Heineken Cup pool emerging to a Quarter Final where they beat Gloucester away and followed up with an away win in the Semi Final beating Saracens to reach the Final of the Heineken Cup to be held in Cardiff on 24th May.

Leinster and Ulster failed to make the knock-out stages of Heineken Cup though Leinster produced some memorable rugby at times, beating Toulouse at their new home in the RDS. Whilst not achieving qualification for the knock-out stages of the Heineken Cup, Leinster produced much greater consistency in their rugby culminating in winning the Magners League by a reasonably comfortable margin in the end, losing only 3 matches in their whole League programme.

Ulster had a disappointing season throughout and early season set backs in the Heineken Cup and Magners League led to the resignation of Coach, Mark McCall, in the new year. Matt Williams was subsequently appointed as his replacement in March and confidence and performances have improved since.

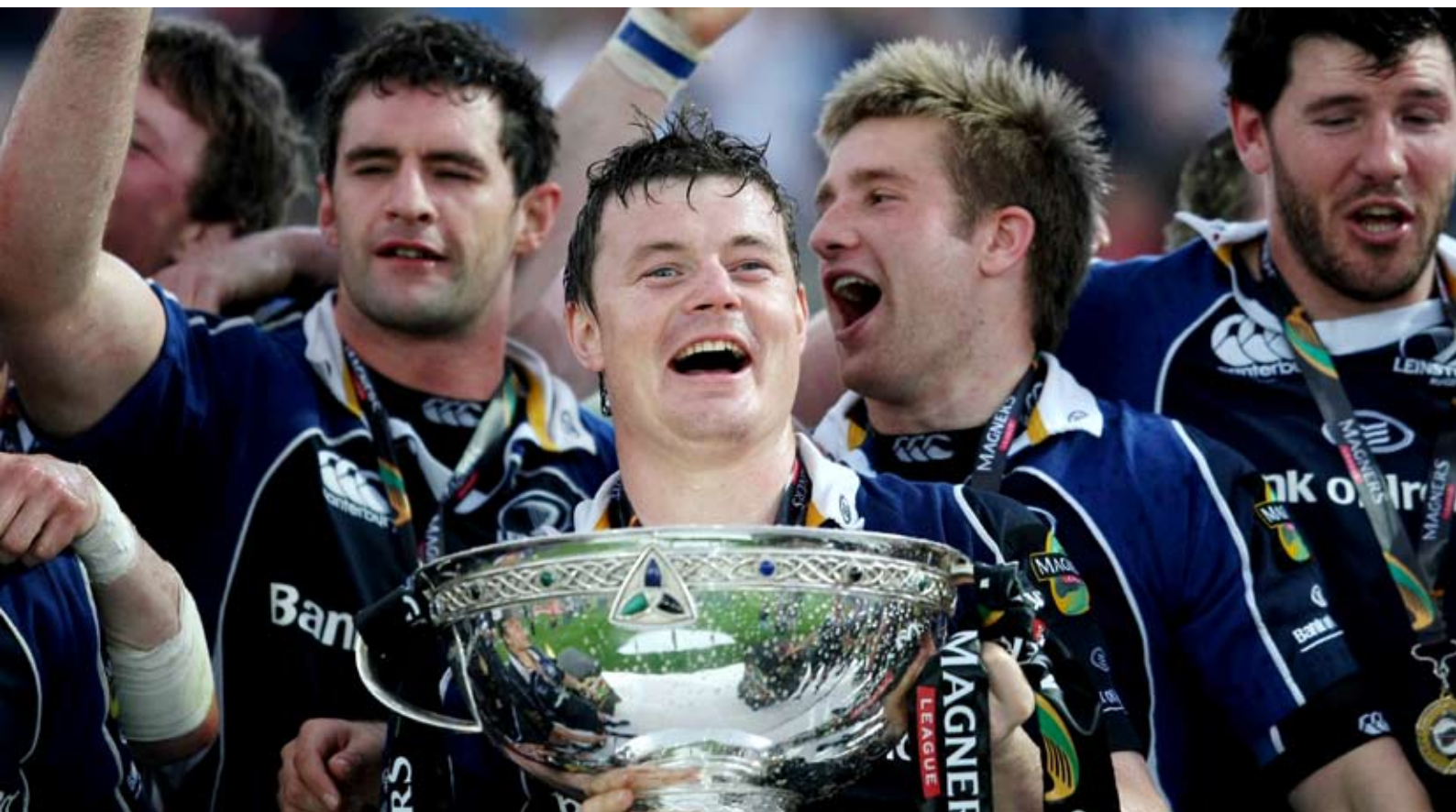
Connacht failed to make the knock-out stages of the European Challenge Cup but did put in some good performances most notably against Newcastle at home and also against Brive. Connacht continue to remain a competitive team particularly in the Magners League but their inability to close out matches seems to be a weakness. The Union is working closely with Connacht and the other provinces to encourage greater movement of players to Connacht to address this issue and also to give greater playing opportunities to players.

There are a number of key challenges facing the professional game in Ireland which the Union is continuing to address. As will be reported later in this document, there has been

considerable progress in relation to the development of spectator facilities. This was identified a number of years ago as critical if we are to meet the growing spectator demand for professional rugby and also to generate the additional revenues required to fund an ever more expensive cost of fielding professional teams.

The increasing costs of the professional game is a worry. The budgets of major European teams have grown significantly, partly due to the increasing attraction of the professional game, partly due to private finance and in the case of the most recent agreement reached between the English clubs and the RFU, partly due to the greater levels of subvention from the RFU in that jurisdiction. This is reflected in the increasing number of high profile players moving from the southern hemisphere to England and France in particular, and also in significant inflation in the cost of player salaries. The Irish professional teams must remain competitive in this environment and it is IRFU policy now to recruit up to 4 high profile foreign players in the Heineken Cup teams rather than recruiting foreign players of average ability. This represents better value for the professional teams and also will provide greater levels of skill and knowledge transfer to Irish players.

The increasing professionalisation of the provincial teams and their support structures have created an environment where there has been a considerable increase in the revenues generated by the game at that level. The cumulative budget for the 4 provincial teams is now in the region of €40m, built on commercialisation of the rugby





brands, development of bigger and better facilities, the success of the teams themselves and the growth in the popularity of the game. Managing these businesses has become a challenge and much thought has been given to the governance of the game at both provincial and Union level. There is a need to have proper lines of responsibility and accountability, control systems appropriate to the scale of the businesses now being operated and to have governance structures suited for the continued growth of the game and for facing the challenges of change in a rapidly evolving commercial rugby environment. This will be a key priority over the next 12 months and the Union will work closely with provincial Branches in this regard.

A further challenge is in producing players to populate our 4 professional teams and this continues to be addressed. The appointment of Allen Clarke as the Elite Player Development Manager has been significant in that he brings experience as a professional player, professional coach as well as his own academic background to the task and already there has been some very positive developments in terms of developing real and practical linkages between our high performance systems at provincial level with the leading rugby schools and the Irish Exiles. This has led to the introduction of both national and provincial talent select programmes in our U.16 and U.18 schools and youth systems, supported by funding from the Irish Sports Council. This linkage is fundamental to the earlier player contact needed by the IRFU high performance coaching staff. It was self evident in the U.19 World Cup in Belfast last year and in the 6 Nations

U.18 Festival in Cork this year that our players in these age groups are a number of “training years” behind their counterparts in the other Unions. Together the IRFU and the schools can work together to help players fulfil their playing ambitions whilst at the same time ensuring that their academic and personal development is not hindered in any way.

In terms of professional rugby competitions, the Magners League fixture list continues to underpin the professional game in the Scottish, Welsh and Irish Unions. With the imminent demise of the EDF Cup at the end of the 2008/09 season, in which the Welsh regional teams participate, a more streamlined and meaningful fixture list can now be created for the 2009/10 season which will allow the Magners League develop as a competition. Furthermore, there has been good progress made between the Celtic Unions to set aside differences for the good of the tournament. Progress has been made in relation to governance issues and commercial matters which will help drive the development of the competition into the future.

At European level a new Shareholders Agreement has been signed in respect of ERC Ltd. which overcomes the difficulties that threatened the future of the Heineken Cup arising from demands being made by the English and French clubs. This allows ERC Ltd. as an organisation to concentrate on developing the tournament further for the benefit of professional rugby in the 6 shareholding Unions.



Other Representative Teams

The programme of fixtures for our other national representative teams is a vital element in the development of our emerging elite players and provides opportunities to access their progress against their peers from other Unions. The Ireland “A” team participated again in the Churchill Cup in June 2007, played in England. The team was once again coached by Michael Bradley and managed by Joe Miles and played 3 fixtures beating Canada and losing to New Zealand Maoris in the pool stages and beating Scotland “A” by a point in an exciting finale for third position. There were 2 further fixtures during the 6 Nations Championship against England “A” and Scotland “A”. Despite losing the match there was a good performance put in against England “A” and there was a very heavy defeat to Scotland “A” 3 weeks later. This Scottish result in particular demonstrates the need for our emerging elite players to be playing more regular fixtures in professional rugby whether that be in Magners League or the provincial “A” series of fixtures. The Scotland “A” team consisted of Magners League regulars and the disparity showed.

The Ireland U.20 team, under the guidance of Eric Elwood, Dan McFarland and Philip Orr, had a mediocre 6 Nations U.20 Championship, winning against Italy and Scotland and losing to Wales, England and France. Having said that the team was very competitive in all matches.

As there is no longer an IRB U.19 Championship, 2 friendly games were played against Italy and France. Ireland U.19 beat Italy comprehensively at Malahide, however the team lost 36-10 away to France. Once again greater physical conditioning was evident.

At U.18 level, we field 2 teams, the U.18 Clubs XV which competes in the FIRA/AER European Championship, and the Ireland U.18 Schools XV which competes in the 6 Nations U.18 Festival which was held this year in Cork. The U.18 club side performed very well, beating Russia and England to reach the final of the FIRA/AER European Championship losing narrowly to a stronger French side. The U.18 schools side played in the U.18 6 Nations tournament where the stronger sides at this age level compete. Unfortunately the Ireland U.18 team did not fare well, losing 2 out of 3 fixtures and as mentioned earlier in this report it is very evident that our schools players are not at the same stage of physical conditioning as their counterparts, many of whom are already part of professional academy and high performance programmes. This is an area of priority for the IRFU and Allen Clarke, Elite Player Development Manager.

The Ireland Womens XV had a much improved performance in the Womens 6 Nations Championship, being much more competitive in all the fixtures, winning 2 out of the 5 fixtures.

Finally the Ireland Club XV coached by Brian Walsh had a tremendously exciting game against a Scottish Club XV at Donnybrook, the Ireland Club XV winning narrowly. This fixture is becoming better supported and is greatly appreciated by non-professional club players who can now aspire to represent their country.

Details of all match results are recorded on the attached cd.

Domestic Game

Domestic rugby continues to grow through the dedication and commitment of club members, on the back of the ever-increasing popularity of the professional game. Disappointingly, the health of the domestic game is often measured in a similar way as the professional game, through attendance at matches. The increase in the popularity of the professional game has resulted in commentary that the “Club Game is Dying”. But the facts indicate that the domestic game is healthy with more players in Irish rugby and more clubs across the provinces undertaking major facilities development programmes which will allow more matches to be played. Surely these 2 benchmarks suggest that the club game is thriving and continuing to grow. The number of players set out in the table below clearly indicates a growing trend in our game.

The thousands of mini players playing rugby on Sunday mornings across the country highlights the popularity of the game and gives Irish rugby the opportunity to use sport as a continuing means of making a positive influence on Irish youth.

Of course there are challenges with the domestic game, not least the retention of more young adults. The IRFU are facing these challenges. As a sporting body however, we must not be afraid to celebrate what we have achieved and the huge voluntary effort which is taking place in our clubs and schools which directly contributes to the growth of our game. 2008 brings to conclusion the first quadrennial plan for the domestic game (2004-2008). It is worth noting that the majority of the 2004-2008 domestic game strategic goals have been achieved or exceeded.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of the Irish Sports Council for our domestic programme.

Participants in the different areas of the domestic game

	Ulster	Munster	Leinster	Connacht	Total 2008 ¹	Total 2007
Adult ²	6,802	5,916	9,014	1,666	23,398	25,171
Secondary schools	12,200	4,716	11,692	2,200	30,808	26,244
Youth	3,312	8,473	7,212	1,637	20,634	14,448
Mini Rugby	2,027	4,266	5,752	1,808	13,853	12,774
Primary School TAG	8,605	12,592	12,663	3,928	37,789	35,990
Women	366	823	509	101	1,799	
Total - 2008	34,950	39,826	48,628	11,613	128,281	114,627

¹ These figures subject to a Branch audit in May 2008, and may be subject to change.

² In previous years Women adult players have been included in Adult category. This is the first year that Women player numbers have been calculated as a separate category.

Governance

Finbarr Crowley was appointed as Chairman of the Domestic Game Committee in July 2007. Under his leadership the Domestic Game Committee has been structured into 4 strategic groups, each chaired by a co-ordinator. The co-ordinators work in tandem with the Chairman and the Domestic Game Manager in nominating Working Parties to consider and address issues within the remit of the domestic game.

Strategic Group	Led by
Age grade rugby	<i>Louis Magee</i>
Third level rugby	<i>Gerry Quaid</i>
Club rugby	<i>Leo Galvin</i>
Administration, governance and strategic planning	<i>Stephen Hilditch</i>

Due to the significant volume of work required to develop domestic rugby and a desire by the IRFU to engage the knowledge and expertise present in the Union, Branches and clubs, a number of Working Parties were established this season. These Working Parties ensured that the Irish domestic game embraces the appropriate best practice in creating policy. The Working Parties engaged in 2007/08 were:

Working Group	Chair
Child welfare	<i>Pat O'Connor</i>
Age grade rugby	<i>George Spotswood</i>
Womens rugby	<i>Denis Keohane</i>
Market research	<i>Stephen Hilditch</i>
Media and communications	<i>Paul Deering</i>
Role and duties of development officers	<i>Des Lamont</i>
Facilities development	<i>Gerry Drennan</i>

To date, 5 Working Parties have issued interim reports and recommendations, including:

1. Child Welfare

A new IRFU Child Welfare Policy document which is being implemented across Branches and clubs.

2. Women's Rugby

A new strategy for increasing participation in women's rugby, which has been included in the 2008–2012 strategic review.

3. Facilities Development

A full club facilities audit has been completed. This has allowed a clear strategy in prioritisation of resources to developing world class facilities for the domestic game. A key output from this Working Party was the development of IRFU Publications and Guidelines in relation to Artificial Pitches, All Weather Pitches, Club Development Planning and Facilities Development. This information will be sent to all clubs during the summer.

4. Roles and duties of Development Officers

Review of the Regional Development Officers (RDO) and Youth Development Officers (YDO) is presently being undertaken which will result in their respective roles being redefined.

5. Age Grade

It was proposed that the age year is set at 1st January for club/youth rugby and that there is a continuing of separate pathways for schools and youth at U.16, U.18 and U.19. The aspiration of the IRFU is that there will be a merger in the future of the U.19 pathway.

6. Awakening of the Colleges and Universities

The Working Party recommended increased attention and resources be allocated to this sector to allow youth to continue to play rugby into third level education. The new strategic plan identifies this sector as an area of opportunity to grow the game.

In addition to the above, a number of additional recommendations arising from the work of these Working Groups have helped to inform and shape the new 2008–2012 strategic plan.



Market Research

As reported last year, the IRFU commissioned *Onside Marketing* to conduct independent research into the game. Project DRIVE centred on the needs and motivations of players and volunteers in club rugby. Some of the extracts of the research, collated through Branch focus groups, are worth noting and are highlighted below:-

“Players

The foundations for the future of domestic rugby (clubs and schools) are solid however 1 in 4 felt the appeal of club rugby was poor at present.

Among various issues addressed, most debate centred on (1) the disconnect between schools v. club rugby, (2) the need for a basic standard of facilities (spacious changing rooms and warm showers), match quality floodlights and all weather pitches and (3) a critical need for heightened marketing and promotion of the game. Beyond these challenges, proposed solutions to managing the drop-off from the game post-school included bridging the gap between U.20’s and seniors rugby and closer “communication” with players for the 5 years after they leave school.

Strong interest was evidenced among players for developments such as mid-week games on all-weather pitches under floodlights and Derby days. While player’s views of the IRFU are positive – with only 6% of players expressing a negative overall view of the organisation - perceived commitment to club rugby

was less strong – although genuine belief that the IRFU would address this was clearly evident.

Club Management

Determined prioritization of age grade rugby is seen as the single biggest challenge for the domestic game in Ireland among club management; key challenges in driving the club game are social economic changes and the recruitment from schools rugby systems.

While a substantial majority felt that the IRFU are genuinely working for the benefit of the game, only 1 in 5 believe that there is sufficient priority placed by the IRFU on club rugby.”

The full research report was considered in detail by a Working Party chaired by Stephen Hilditch. The following key findings have been adopted by the IRFU in the new strategic plan 2008-2012 including:-

- Programme to improve and modernise club facilities.
- Focused recruitment and retention of more adult players, with emphasis on supporting the 18-23 year olds during the transition from school to club rugby.
- Quality environment for all (Coaching, Refereeing, Facilities and Competition Structures).
- Increased communication and promotion of the game and associated programmes.

- Change the perception that club rugby is not important to IRFU; more resources than ever have been allocated to the domestic game and going forward the IRFU pledges to actively promote the domestic game.

Branch Empowerment

We are now into the second year of the Branch Empowerment Programme. Provincial Domestic Game Managers who report to Branch CEOs and Branch Domestic Game Chairmen, are now fully responsible for driving the domestic game within their Branches. The cornerstone of the Branch Empowerment Programme is the annual

Development Staff

The IRFU continues to fund the employment of approximately 120 full time and part time Development Officers through the Branches who report to the Provincial Domestic Game Managers. It is also worth noting that most Branches have also funded additional Development Officers themselves. This is a positive and welcome development.

The role and duties of Development Officers has been reviewed by a Working Party chaired by Des Lamont to ensure that human resources are effectively deployed to achieve the strategic goals for domestic rugby. It is important



agreement between the IRFU and Branch which sets out targets covering every aspect of the game. The performance of each Branch is annually reviewed by an IRFU review group chaired by George Spotswood.

The first review in 2007 positively reported that the “process of revitalization of the domestic game was well underway” and the sport was growing annually at a rate of up to 15%. This season’s interim review indicates good successes in the recruitment of referees and development of coaches across each Branch. However, areas were identified which required greater focus by the IRFU and Branches, and these have been incorporated into this season’s Branch agreements. From an IRFU perspective the Branch empowerment process is working and we are satisfied that the management and development of domestic rugby is a major area of focus and activity within each Branch.

Long Term Player Development (LTPD)

The IRFU “6 to 6 Nations” LTPD model launched in 2006 continues to be rolled out. The focus this season has been to inform all clubs and schools fully about the model and its impact on them. All development staff have been trained and inducted in the LTPD Model and all coaching courses are now fully aligned to it.

that development staff are visible and accessible to our clubs and schools at times that suit their needs. Branch Club Development Managers continue to support clubs with their facility development and volunteer recruitment plans.

Our Leisure Rugby Department under Olly Hodges successfully launched Budweiser Tag last summer and plans to increase the number of venues from 10 to 21 in 2008 with over 9,000 participants. A key aspect of the Budweiser Tag programme is that profits are shared with the host clubs, creating additional revenues for clubs.

Women’s Rugby

The popularity of the women’s game continues to grow. Over the last 12 months the IRFU and the Irish Women’s Rugby Football Union have been working together to seamlessly integrate women’s rugby. As part of the integration plan, a Women’s Rugby Sub Committee reporting to the Domestic Game Committee, will be established to provide leadership and guidance in all areas of the women’s game.

The women’s game is vitally important to the IRFU, as it expands the popularity of the game to new population. As an indication of the IRFU commitment to the women’s game we are in the process of appointing a National Women’s Development Manager.

Programmes to promote and recruit girls into rugby are successfully run by each Branch with the generous support of the Irish Sports Council *Women in Sport Fund*. There is a marked increase in participation at U.15 and U.18 levels and the emergence of a significant number of development teams.

Facilities

The development of club facilities is a key priority to the IRFU; it is vital that our clubs continue to develop and provide modern facilities that attract and retain players and participants at all levels.

last year. Facility development is a key component of the 2008-2012 strategy, and it is the IRFU intention to work closely with the Club Development Officers to increase the number of clubs accessing financial resources.

Schools Rugby

For many players school is their first introduction to the sport and for some it becomes a rite of passage to becoming a professional player. The schools role in creating Ireland's future rugby players needs to be acknowledged and celebrated. As the sport is rapidly evolving, it is the intention of the IRFU to work closely with the schools sector to



In the last 12 months more than 55 clubs have applied for Government Sports Capital Grants. This indicates that 40% of Irish rugby clubs are currently undergoing major facility development projects.

This is a clear sign that our clubs are still very much alive and well. Developments range from new floodlights to new clubhouses. When you visit clubs like Ashbourne, Clonmel, Ballyhaunis and Letterkenny, it is inspiring to see modern rugby facilities that are open in a meaningful way to their communities. Ashbourne RFC was in fact the first club to access the IRFU/AIB Capital Funding Scheme launched

develop and implement a strategy to achieve the following:-

1. All players to have the opportunity to develop their technical and physical competencies at the appropriate rate, as outlined in the IRFU LTPD model.
2. The best schools players to be afforded the opportunity to follow an elite player pathway.
3. Allowing all students, regardless of their playing ability the opportunity to play the game and be encouraged to remain involved with the sport beyond their student years.

It is intended to establish a new IRFU Age Grade Committee; the IRFU looks forward to the schools contribution to the development of age grade policy in relation to the schools sector and achieving the above outlined strategic objectives.

Volunteers

The need to recruit and retain volunteers remains a priority for our game. The IRFU thanks the many thousands of volunteers working in clubs and schools, who without their support would not create a vibrant club scene for players and supporters alike. There are volunteer recognition

The scheme provides support for areas of the game that the IRFU believe require greatest attention. These include, coach development, adult/U.20/women's team participation, referee development, child protection and club development, etc. One of the positive impacts has been the increased number of applications for and interest in our coaching programmes.

We continue to recognise the role played by schools and/or clubs in the development of professional players. Through the Reward for Development Scheme, close to €90,000 has been awarded in the last year to clubs and/or schools



schemes in place in each Branch and we encourage all clubs and schools to participate in these schemes. Unfortunately we reside in an environment with constantly changing legislation; it is the intention of the IRFU to stay ahead of Government changes to protect those who support the game and ensure that volunteers retain their passion to support the game and their club.

Child Welfare

The protection and safety of all participants in rugby is a key principle of IRFU governance and operations. As a recommendation of the Child Welfare Working Group, a national 'Child Welfare' programme is being implemented with the assistance of the Irish Sports Council, and requires each club to acknowledge the importance of this area through the identification of a 'Child Welfare Officer'. Child Awareness Tutor Training has been provided to all Rugby Development Officers and they are running these courses for clubs as required. This programme will be overseen by Pat O'Connor, the IRFU designated Child Protection Officer.

Club Support Scheme

As announced last year, 2007/08 season saw the implementation of a new Club Support Scheme. Funding available under the scheme has increased to €1.9m. This increase was possible through a contribution from the professional game from each province. This is an important principal, as a component of the provincial professional game revenues are being invested into clubs. Branches are now administering the scheme directly.

who contributed to the development of Ireland future professional players.

IRFU continues to support development of all age grade and women's rugby by fully funding team insurance and heavily subsidising the insurance costs of adult sides.

Participation Programmes

The primary schools area continues to grow with 36,000 children across 1,131 schools participating in IRFU Primary Schools Rugby Programme.

The Ulster Bank summer camps—"Summer Scrummage" completed its third year, with over 15,000 children participated in the camps during the 2007 summer term break. In line with our Branch Empowerment Programme the summer camps will be run this year by each Branch. The camp curriculum and coaching qualifications are standardised by the IRFU, with each Branch responsible for the implementation of the camp to suit local requirements. For example, Connacht Branch should be applauded for running summer camps in the Irish Language.

The Community Development Programme now encompasses Donegal, Tallaght, Ballymun, Swords, Fingal and Dublin City centre. In excess of 7,000 children are experiencing rugby on a weekly basis.



Referees

The twin objectives of the IRFU Referee Development Programme, now in its second year are:-

- to educate and promote the development of new referees
- to continue to provide high quality elite referees for Magners League, Heineken Cup and international rugby.

There has been significant growth in the number of referees in the game over the past 12 months. We now have 469 (net increase of 17% over 2 seasons) qualified referees at IRFU and Branch level and up to 3,000 Associate Referees who have undertaken foundation referee courses. The Referee Department under Owen Doyle has delivered 214 referee courses/workshops during the season. Despite the growth in numbers and the interest of some clubs, the situation still requires a far greater commitment from clubs in general to focus on referee recruitment, and to encourage their members who may have the ability to go forward into the system.

Going forward the continued pro-active involvement of all stakeholders in referee recruitment will be necessary to build on results to date and to reach our overall targets.

The appointment of Alain Rolland to the Final of RWC 2007 represented a tremendous endorsement of the Development programme. Alain had been identified and fast-tracked in 1999 and, in 8 seasons, has reached the pinnacle of the game.

Alan Lewis refereed the Heineken Cup Final and the RWC Quarter Final – South Africa v. Fiji. George Clancy refereed the Churchill Cup Final. Both David Keane and Simon McDowell refereed Finals in the IRB World 7's; and Aoife McCarthy the Hong Kong Women's 7's Final.

Coaching

By the end of this season, a total of 76 coaching courses at Leprechaun, Mini, Foundation and Level 1 will have been run in the 4 provinces, with in excess of 2,000 coaches attending. This brings the total number of registered coaches on the IRFU Coaching Pathway to almost 7,000.

In addition, update clinics were undertaken for Level 1 and Level 2 coaches with the aim of exposing those who had previously attended these courses to new initiatives now included in the courses. The National Coaching Courses at Level 2 and Level 3 are once again expected to assemble a very talented and experienced group of coaches and tutors and the accreditation process for previous attendees at these levels is ongoing.

The IRFU Coach Development Department has also introduced some new initiatives this year, including the first ever National "Scrum Experts Symposium" and the launch of the IRB "Rugby Ready" Safety and Awareness Programme. In conjunction with Carlow IT, the IRFU Coach Development Department has also developed and assisted with the first ever National Diploma course in rugby.

AIB Cup and League

With the continued closure of Lansdowne Road, Cup Finals Day was again held in Dubarry Park Athlone on 12th April and hosted by AIB. There were another 4 new finalists this season and congratulations go to Shannon for defeating Blackrock in the AIB Cup Final and to Navan in the AIB Junior Cup for their victory over Tullamore.

The results of the AIB League are covered on the attached cd. Congratulations to winners of Division 1 Cork Constitution, Division 2 Buccaneers and Division 3 Bruff. The Division 2 and 3 Divisional Finals were played

Medical

The Medical Department of the IRFU has launched a number of important initiatives over this period to include:-

- The IRFU Rugby First Aid and Automatic Electrical Defibrillator programme. This programme provides all the necessary elements in rugby First Aid to make rugby safer. Ms. Mary Harney, Minister for Health and Children, launched the programme at a function in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland in January.



in Donnybrook on 19th April with UCC defeating Young Munster and Instonians beating Bruff in 2 excellent matches. The Division 1 Final was again played in Musgrave Park, Cork in early May with Cork Constitution defeating Garryowen.

The AIB League Sub Committee met on 5 occasions during the season and the AIB League Working Party met 3 times to ensure the smooth running of the AIB League. A number of minor regulations changes have been agreed for next season.

- Guidelines and recommendations on sports supplement use in young players were produced and circulated to all rugby playing clubs/schools. These guidelines along with fact sheets to support the recommendations were developed and are available from the IRFU website.
- A process has been put in place to assist clubs/schools to report serious injuries. It is expected this will assist in the development of Injury Prevention strategies.

Other highlights during this year included:-

- Successful implementation of the IRFU Concussion programme using the ImpACT Concussion testing system.
- Research activity included: a survey into referees perception of concussion; a study of injury occurrence in Tag rugby; a study of energy expenditure among Academy players; case reports on ankle and hamstring injuries.
- Ongoing Physiotherapy In-service education programme.
- The development of a Medical Section on the IRFU Website.
- Representation by Dr. Barry O'Driscoll as Anti-Doping Commissioner at the RWC to include the RWC Final.
- Invited lectures – Injury Prevention and Surveillance in Rugby (Dr. Conor McCarthy); Aspects of Athlete rehabilitation (Cameron Steele); Rehabilitation following knee injuries in rugby (Brian Green).

Anti-doping

The IRFU once again commissioned anti-doping tests through the Irish Sports Council (ISC) supplementing the ISC National Anti-Doping Programme. Details of the tests performed are outlined below, there were 2 positive tests for non-performance enhancing drugs.

2007/08 Anti-doping Programme

In Competition Testing

<i>Team</i>	<i>No. of Players tested</i>
Senior XV	14
“A” Team	02
U.20	04
U.18	02
Women	02
ERC and Magners League	30
AIB League Club XV's	08

Out of Competition Testing

<i>Team</i>	<i>No. of Players tested</i>
Senior	25
Provincial Squads	39
Clubs	39

Charitable Trust

The Charitable Trust under the chairmanship of Jeff Smith continues its valuable work in providing support to players who have been seriously injured whilst playing rugby. It is registered as a charity in both the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland.

Injuries within rugby are inevitable, some of which will be serious. There are currently 33 seriously injured players registered with the Charitable Trust, with the oldest injury going back as far as 1962. The Charitable Trust has to be able to provide assistance to these injured players, and continues to call on maximum support from both the rugby community and elsewhere to help them to do so. The Trust Committee maintains regular contact with all these injured players and their families to ensure that their current circumstances are known and their particular needs addressed as far as possible.

The financial assistance to players this year will be in excess of €200,000 although as the players needs increase this is expected to increase in coming years. This is funded by grants from the IRFU, contributions from the match programmes, donations and gifts together with significant regular ongoing fundraising events. This year these events included a sponsored walk to coincide with the RWC, a Pro Am Golf Tournament, supported by the PGA, as well as the Friends of the Charitable Trust Scheme.

Facilities

As mentioned earlier in the report there has been good progress in addressing the requirement for better facilities for spectators of the professional game.

The development of the new stadium at Lansdowne Road is well underway with the main contractor, Sisk, appointed in October 2007. The earlier appointment of demolition and substructure contractors allowed demolition of the old stadium and all the major enabling and railway works to be completed before the main contractor came on site. The complicated works around the railway were completed over 2 bank holiday weekends when the railway was closed to facilitate the works. The stadium bowl is now taking shape and the project is on budget and on schedule for completion by the end of April 2010. The support of the Minister of Sport, Seamus Brennan TD, and his colleagues in the Departments of Art, Sport and Tourism and Finance are gratefully acknowledged as is the support of the Office of Public Works.

The Thomond Park development is due for completion in October 2008 and is already a landmark building on the Limerick skyline. There were 3 Heineken Cup pool matches played in the partly completed stadium during the season



Progress on the stadium development has been very impressive to date with the first level of the public concourse now complete

and when completed it will have a capacity of 26,000 along with the important revenue generating facilities expected in a modern stadium. Ireland v. Canada will be played at the new venue on 8th November and it is fitting that Munster will play New Zealand on 18th November, the 30th anniversary of their famous victory.

Leinster's move into the RDS has proved a great success, providing seating for up to 19,000 spectators and a level of comfort that was simply unavailable in the old Donnybrook. For next season there will be a roof over the seating on the new stand further enhancing the experience for a great number of spectators. Along with this has been a development of new changing facilities on site which has improved the experience for the playing staff as well. Attendances at Leinster fixtures have increased significantly as a result of this development.

Meanwhile back at Donnybrook, the new stand which caters for 2,500 was opened in January 2008 and was used throughout the Leinster Schools Cup competitions to great effect. This provides Leinster with the smaller facility required to cater for both club and school fixtures and with the move of the professional team to the RDS, the quality of the pitch surface at Donnybrook has much improved with less usage. The next phase of the Donnybrook development will see investment in improved clubhouse facilities for players as well as additional spectator and hospitality facilities.

In Ulster the long awaited planning permission has been granted for the phased development of Ravenhill. The first phase is due to commence in the summer and we will

see the development of a new stand opposite the existing stand, which will provide much improved spectator and hospitality facilities. There will be other improvement works elsewhere effectively leaving the capacity more or less unchanged but with scope to increase the capacity through further phases of development.

The debate continues in relation to the development of a modern multi-sport stadium in Belfast and the Ulster Branch are very much part of discussions and proposals for a new stadium at the Maze site. This development or alternative proposals will hopefully come to fruition soon as there is no doubt that the Ulster public have an appetite for professional rugby and in particular Heineken Cup.

In Connacht there are further improvements being made to Galway Sportsground in terms of a very impressive new gym facility and plans are on the table for improvements to the terracing area opposite the Bord na nGon stand.

Lack of training facilities for our national team, and indeed other representative teams, has been an issue for some years and we have had to rely on the goodwill of clubs and schools in this regard. The Minister of Arts, Sport and Tourism recently announced the appointment of architects and project managers for the Sports Campus to be developed at Abbotsstown. This project is due to be completed in 2011. It will include training areas and pitches (indoor and outdoor) specific to the needs of our national teams along with sports science and sports medical expertise on site. There will be a residential accommodation block as well and the IRFU will certainly be planning to use this facility extensively in the future.

Commercial and Marketing

From a commercial point of view, this season has been one of further growth and development and the Union's commercial programme has performed strongly. This demonstrates a strong Irish rugby brand with considerable commercial cache in turbulent times for the Irish economy. The following outlines the headlines of the activity in this area.

RWC Commercial Programme 2007

In a season where RWC meant the loss of Guinness Autumn Series income, we put together a commercial and promotional programme in conjunction with team sponsors, O₂, which manifested itself in open training sessions around the country prior to the tournament. In France, a substantial revenue generating corporate luncheon was run in conjunction with the Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce which was attended by over 400 Irish and French business people. Our thanks to all involved, in particular our official touring partners Guinness, and all those Irish companies that supported the event.

Sponsorship Programme Update

Our thanks also to CEO, Danuta Grey, and her team at O₂ our national team sponsor. Their commitment, support and help to the Union and the team are greatly appreciated. We wish Gerry McQuaid, O₂ Commercial Director, (a central

figure in the sponsorship) well as he leaves O₂ for pastures new and welcome Damian Devaney as O₂ Marketing Director who has recently joined the organisation. We look forward to working closely with him and O₂ in the future.

Our thanks to all of our other sponsors and partners for their generosity. Without the support from corporate Ireland, the game cannot aspire to the level it does.

New sponsorships this past season include:-

- **D4 Hotels** as sponsors of the cryotherapy programme
- **Treasury Holdings** as sponsors of Irish Colleges Rugby
- **Independent News and Media** as sponsors of the Ireland 7's team
- **Anglo Irish Bank** as sponsors of the Irish women's team
- **Budweiser** as sponsors of IRFU Adult Tag Rugby
- **Bowen Group** as sponsors of the U.18's Festival 2008

Renewed sponsorships:-

- **Kellogg's Nutri-Grain** as official snack food
- **Powerade** as official sports drink
- **Coca-Cola** as official soft drink



- **Elvery's** as official retail partner

Sales of our official merchandise with partners, Canterbury of New Zealand, and retail partners, Elvery's Sports, remain strong and we look forward to developing further opportunities in the future.

New Stadium Commercial Programme

The development of the New Stadium (which is reported on elsewhere) also requires considerable funding.

The IRFU 10 Year Ticket Scheme was launched in August 2007 and was very quickly oversubscribed. The Union has also been marketing corporate boxes to our commercial partners and sponsors and these are also sold out. The third revenue stream revolves around the Naming Rights for the Stadium. An international agency has been appointed to handle the process to ensure maximum return. We look forward to securing an appropriate partner who will help us to develop this world class facility and derive a valuable benefit from the stadium as a marketing platform.

Marketing and Communications Review

The marketing effort has been to help drive additional numbers into both the participation and the spectator sides of the game.

Along with our community rugby partners, AIB, we have been working to help promote club rugby in Ireland and to put into place better communicational vehicles to keep all stakeholders abreast of developments in the game.

'Engage' our club newsletter (which takes the form of an online e-zine) has been published monthly across the past season and is now circulated to over 20,000 players in our domestic game.

'In Touch' the official magazine of the IRFU was published to coincide with RWC and was again distributed free with the Irish Independent resulting in a circulation of over 166,000 copies and a readership figure of nearly 500,000 people. A second issue was also published prior to the RBS 6 Nations. Further issues are planned for next season and we are actively exploring ways to increase its distribution.

From a broadcasting point of view rugby continues to deliver growing viewership figures. The coverage of our RBS 6 Nations matches was again excellently produced and showed very robust 'share of audience' figures comparing favourably to the heights attained during the historic matches in Croke Park last season.

RTE's 'Against the Head' weekly magazine programme, has transmitted more AIB League, Cup and Club International rugby than ever before. Additional coverage on the U.20 matches in Athlone, provincial Schools Cup competitions and Magners League and of course the Heineken Cup further highlights the choice of televised live rugby on offer for the Irish armchair viewer.

On the participation side of the game, the marketing effort has been channelled into supporting Rugby Department programmes driving numbers into our schools tag rugby,





and our summer camps. Also the IRFU Budweiser Adult Tag Rugby Programme is performing beyond expectation. This has proven to be a very significant source of revenue to the clubs involved during the traditionally fallow summer months.

The RWC was the major undertaking in terms of communications and media management for the Union of the past season. Irrespective of the success of the team, the value of participation in the RWC serves to bring the game more into the public consciousness showcasing the inspirational role models of the world game which helps in the recruitment of more people, especially the young, into the game. This was augmented by an advertising and marketing campaign with the tagline of 'Put your Play into Practice' to drive more people into the sport. Results have been very positive.

Communications and media management continues to demand more and more attention as rugby maintains its pace of expansion and growth. The needs of a constantly changing media have increased the activity in this area. The reach of the game to non-traditional rugby areas and populations has manifested itself in a greater share of voice, more column inches, more radio talk show segments and more television coverage as instanced above than ever before. A further challenge is the diversification and increased fragmentation of the media into new forms through advancements in technology.

IrishRugby.ie

The official IRFU website, IrishRugby.ie, continues to enjoy strong growth in visitor numbers and advertising revenues. It is one of the top ranked sports sites in Ireland achieving over 3.8 million page views during the RWC 2007 tournament. Over the course of the last season we have achieved over 22 million page views generated from 3.3 million visitors.

The emphasis on promoting the club game has also paid dividends with the Club and Community section consistently ranked in the top 10 most visited sections of the website providing useful news and information on the club game.

The Irish Rugby Supporters Club

The Supporters Club is now into a third season. The club reached a record high of over 14,000 members in the lead up to the 2007 RWC. With membership numbers still robust the emphasis in 2007/08 season turned to enhancing the member experience further.

The club also hosted a number of player focused events including an open day, a members' match day event in Croke Park and a charter trip to Twickenham. Going forward we are hoping to grow our overseas membership even further and will be targeting the Irish diaspora particularly in the UK, the US and the southern hemisphere.

Corporate Affairs

Martin Murphy departed Corporate Affairs after 12 years service with the IRFU to take up appointment as Stadium Director of the New Stadium. We wish Martin every success in his role and look forward to working closely with him as we plan for when the stadium is open for business in 2010. Kevin Potts was appointed to succeed Martin as Director of Corporate Affairs.

International Teams and Events is the primary activity of the Corporate Affairs Department in addition to supporting the various Committees and Sub Committees of the

At the time of writing IRFU staff are planning and finalizing logistical arrangements for the below events:-

- Barbarians v. Ireland (National Team) in Gloucester
- Ireland Summer Tour to New Zealand and Australia
- Churchill Cup in Chicago and Toronto
- IRB U.20 World Championship in Cardiff
- Women's European Championships in Amsterdam
- 7s RWC Qualifiers
- Autumn Internationals - New Zealand and Argentina in Croke Park; Canada in Thomond Park



Union. Staff provide support and made arrangements for the management and squads of 9 separate national teams involved in international competition. There were 69 international matches played with over 50% held in Ireland. This season also included the logistical requirements of participating in the RWC in France. In addition the U.18 6 Nations Festival was hosted in Cork for the first time. We are very grateful to the Munster Branch and the Chairman of their Festival Committee, Diarmuid Kelly, for their excellent running of this important event.

Match and training kit was issued to each squad and management and referees for the 69 matches. Referees were appointed to officiate at 51 senior internationals and 766 other matches which entailed travel arrangements. The movement of teams and referees is a considerable exercise particularly during the 6 Nations, with up to 4 teams travelling at the same time. This is coordinated through our IRFU Travel and Accommodation staff.

Matches at Croke Park require a significant amount of time and effort. The IRFU is responsible for the running of each match and IRFU staff worked closely with staff at Croke Park to ensure their success. We are very grateful to Peter McKenna, Stadium Director of Croke Park, and his team for their support and assistance. We have developed over the 2 seasons a very good working relationship with Croke Park which is an important factor in the success of these events. Over 220,000 tickets for all matches were printed and managed by the IRFU Ticket Office.

The activity of the various IRFU Committees and Sub Committees is also supported by IRFU Staff. Over 115 meetings were managed by the team. Our strategic plan 2004–2008 has now concluded and a new plan for the 2008–2012 period is being finalised and published for the start of the new season.

Given the size of the IRFU and provincial Branches, senior management meets monthly to keep abreast of activities across the IRFU and provinces. We are extremely grateful to all of our IRFU staff for their dedication during what has been and remains a hectic year.

Human Resources

Long running negotiations with IRUPA on a new format professional player contract were concluded in late 2007 with agreement that the new contract would be effective from 01 January, 2008. Agreement has also been reached in relation to international match fees, win bonuses and tour fees for the next 4 years to December 2011.

After a period of extensive consultation and debate involving all internal stakeholders and a number of external advisors and practitioners in the area of career and lifestyle support for professional athletes, the IRFU and IRUPA have established the position of Player Services Advisor (PSA). This person is employed by IRUPA with 50% of the funding being provided by the IRFU for the first 2 years. The PSA will provide advice and support to professional rugby players at all stages of their playing career and ultimately work to ease their transition out of rugby and into a new career.

After some discussions with the appropriate authorities in the third level education sector, we have secured agreement in principle to a proposal that a number of third level institutions will facilitate some element of 'Modularised Education Programmes' for professional rugby players. Our success in this area is due in no small measure to the efforts of Prof. Roger Downer from the University of Limerick and we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge his contribution and express our sincere thanks for his help in bringing this idea to fruition. This programme will be administered by a multi disciplinary team representing all constituents and it is hoped that the facility will be available to successful player applicants at the commencement of the next academic year.

With growing staff numbers at Branch level and the diversity of supports required to service both the domestic and professional games, it seems certain that dedicated HR support in the Branches will become more critical in the near future. Some Branches have begun taking steps in this direction and others are currently considering how they can best address this need. The HR Department in the IRFU are working closely with the Branch Chief Executives on this issue and will endeavour to ensure that policies and the standards of service delivery are as consistent as is practicable across all areas. This is reflected in the HR strategy that has been drafted and which sets out key objectives for the next 4 year cycle.

Committee

The scope of activities carried out under the authority of the IRFU Committee is becoming ever wider and ever more complex. Activities are not just confined to the game itself but include complex commercial projects such as the redevelopment of Lansdowne Road – a €400m project, significant legal, insurance and employment issues and constant review of the changing rugby and economic environment. The decision-making process of the IRFU has had to adapt to these changing circumstances and in particular a much heavier workload has been placed on the IRFU Management Committee who have had to consider and make decisions on various significant matters between scheduled IRFU meetings. Without this work it would not be possible to run the IRFU effectively and the wisdom of setting up the structure a number of years ago has been more than justified.

As I have said in previous Annual Reports, rugby can be justifiably proud of the contribution made by its voluntary administrators in the context of the increasingly complex and varied challenges facing the game at club, Branch and Union level.

Irish rugby has been well served in particular by those who have represented the IRFU at IRB and 6 Nations level and in this regard I must make special mention of Noel Murphy who is retiring from his positions in the IRFU, IRB and 6 Nations at the end of this season. Noel has achieved at all levels in rugby, as a player, coach, manager and administrator and his knowledge of both the game and the key people in the game worldwide is unsurpassed. His enthusiasm and selfless work on behalf of Irish rugby has been immense for many years and he brought these attributes to the international arena where he has been an IRFU representative on the IRB since 2000. Noel's real passion however is for the club game and in particular his own club, Cork Constitution, and I have no doubt that is where he will be found during his retirement. Best wishes to both Noel and his wife, Noelle, on his retirement and our thanks for his wonderful contribution to the game.

Obituaries

Tony O'Sullivan

Galwegians FC,
15 Caps (1957–1963).

Sir Tasker Watkins VC

President Glamorgan Wanderers,
President WRU (1993-2004).

Roy Loughead

Bangor RFC,
President Ulster Branch (1981-1982),
President IRFU (2001-2002).

Bob FitzGerald

Former President Leinster Branch (1960-1961),
Former Secretary of the IRFU (1964-1986).

Office Bearers and Committee

President

D.V. Healy

Senior Vice President

J.P. Lyons

Junior Vice President

J.R. Callaghan

Hon. Treasurer

T. Grace

Chairman of Management Committee

J.D. Hussey

Immediate Past President

P.J. Boyle

Committee

C. Fitzgerald C.C. Powell

P. Fitzgerald G.C. Quaid

T.H.N. Jackson C. Watson

P. Whelan (co-opted)

Branch Representative Members

F. Crowley D. Keohane

G. Drennan L.P. Magee

L. Galvin F. MacLoughlin

W.B. Glynn M. O'Sullivan

S.R. Hilditch

International Rugby Board Representatives

N.A. Murphy P.J. Boyle

Trustees

A.R. Dawson W.S.H. Lavery

T.J. Kiernan Dr. S. Millar

Chief Executive

P.R. Browne

Director of Corporate Affairs

K. Potts

Director of Rugby

E. Wigglesworth

Financial Controller

C. O'Brien

Director of Commercial and Marketing

P. Power

Director of Human Resources

M. Dowling

Operations Manager

D. O'Brien

Medical Director

Dr. Conor McCarthy

National Coach

E. O'Sullivan

Standing Committees and Sub Committees

Management

J.D. Hussey, T. Grace, P.J. Boyle, N.A. Murphy, T.H.N. Jackson, D.V. Healy, P. Fitzgerald, F. Crowley, P. Browne and J.P. Lyons.
(In attendance E. Wigglesworth and K. Potts)

Representative Game

T.H.N. Jackson, P.J. Boyle, N.A. Murphy, C. Watson, M.J. O'Sullivan, W.B. Glynn, J.D. Hussey, P. Whelan, P. McNaughton, P. Browne, E. Wigglesworth, E. O'Sullivan, M. Dowling, G. Black, C. O'Brien and N. Woods.

Domestic Game

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

Finance

T. Grace, D.V. Healy, S.R. Hilditch, C. Fitzgerald, L. Galvin, F. Crowley, P. Whelan, P. Browne, C. O'Brien, K. Potts and L. Quinn (co-opted).

Commercial and Marketing

P. Fitzgerald, T. Grace, J.R. Callaghan, C. Fitzgerald, D. Keohane, P. Browne, P. Power, J. Redmond, K. Richardson, H. McCaughey (co-opted) and P. Piggott (co-opted).

Charitable Trust

J.F. Smith, J.R. Callaghan, J.D. Hussey, P. Fitzgerald, C. Fitzgerald, Dr. C. Beirne, S.O. Campbell, K.D. Crossan, W.J. Dawson, J. Doherty, E.G. Feely, J.E. Gallagher, P.F. Madigan, M.A. Quinn, Dr. L.N. O'Mahony, J.B. Stevenson and N. Woods.

Disciplinary

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

Appeals

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

Exiles

J.P. Lyons and F. MacLoughlin.

Medical

W.B. Glynn, Dr. C. McCarthy, Dr. L. Hennessy, Dr. W. Rainey, Dr. B. O'Driscoll, Dr. W. O'Flynn, Prof. A. Tanner, Dr. T. O'Sullivan, Dr. G. O'Driscoll, C. Steele and B. Greene.

Referees

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

Regulations

F. Crowley, G. Black and G.C. Spotswood.

Representative Game Appointments

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

Schools

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

Youth

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

Player Advisory Group

T.H.N. Jackson, P. Whelan, J.D. Hussey, T. Grace, P. Browne, E. Wigglesworth, E. O’Sullivan, M. Dowling and C. O’Brien.

Remuneration Committee

J.D. Hussey, T.H.N. Jackson and T. Grace.

AIB League

L. Galvin, G. Black, O. Allen, E. Hosty, P. Deering and D. Workman.

IRB Representatives

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

ERC Representatives

P.J. Boyle and P. Browne.

Celtic League

J.D. Hussey and P. Browne.

Women’s

D. Keohane.

IRFU Directors of Lansdowne Road Stadium Development Co. Ltd.

J.D. Hussey, N.A. Murphy and P. Browne.

FIRA Representative

S.R. Hilditch.

The President of the Union and the Chairman of the Management Committee are automatically included in all Committees.

The IRFU wishes to acknowledge the following sponsors of Irish Rugby.



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Official Sports Drink of the IRFU



Supporting Irish Rugby



Official Partner to the IRFU



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Official Sponsor of the Irish 7s Team



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Accounts

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Income and expenditure account

for the year ended 30 April 2008

		2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
		€	€	€
Income:	Schedule			
Representative matches	1	42,082,957	48,741,571	39,398,903
Share of profit after tax of joint ventures	(Note 7)	17,330	-	-
Other income	2	7,641,571	6,758,886	7,029,528
		<hr/> 49,741,858	<hr/> 55,500,457	<hr/> 46,428,431
Expenditure:				
Professional game costs	3	27,977,032	27,374,513	25,575,678
Elite player development	4	2,614,313	2,896,585	2,125,136
Games support costs	5	660,228	691,528	612,055
Domestic & community rugby	6	10,348,535	10,713,727	9,222,150
Marketing	7	1,167,100	1,121,108	926,666
Grounds	8	509,952	1,631,957	1,975,878
Administration and overheads	9	5,241,183	4,615,410	3,927,341
Depreciation	(Note 3)	1,321,598	1,281,272	1,247,512
		<hr/> 49,839,941	<hr/> 50,326,100	<hr/> 45,612,416
(Deficit) surplus for year		<hr/> (98,083)	<hr/> 5,174,357	<hr/> 816,015

T. Grace
Honorary Treasurer

P. R. Browne
Chief Executive

Statement of total recognised gains and losses

for the year ended 30 April 2008

	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
	€	€	€
(Deficit) surplus for the financial period attributable to the Union	(98,083)	5,174,357	816,015
Difference between expected and actual return on pension scheme assets	(1,060,000)	140,000	577,000
Experience gains (losses) on pension scheme liabilities	209,000	100,000	(320,000)
Effect of changes in actuarial assumptions	653,000	(321,000)	(4,000)
Total (deficit) surplus relating to the period	(296,083)	5,093,357	1,069,015
Prior period adjustment (Note 5)	-	-	(828,000)
Total (deficit) surplus recognised since the last annual report	(296,083)	5,093,357	241,015

Reconciliation of movement in union funds

for the year ended 30 April 2008

	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
	€	€	€
Balance at 1 May as previously reported	21,525,507	16,432,150	16,191,135
Prior period adjustment (Note 5)	-	-	(828,000)
	21,525,507	16,432,150	15,363,135
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
	24,064,983	18,971,626	17,902,611
Total recognised (deficit) surplus relating to the period	(296,083)	5,093,357	1,069,015
Balance at 30 April	23,768,900	24,064,983	18,971,626

Balance sheet

as at 30 April 2008

	Note	30/04/08	30/04/07
		€	€
Fixed Assets			
Tangible assets	3	35,567,520	28,467,212
Stadium redevelopment in progress	4	4,483,090	606,468
		<u>40,050,610</u>	<u>29,073,680</u>
Financial assets			
Loans to clubs		1,784,271	1,548,693
Financial investments	6	11,547,130	5,078,952
Joint ventures:	7		
- Share of gross assets		8,335,895	2,461,450
- Share of gross liabilities		(8,318,563)	(2,461,449)
		<u>13,348,733</u>	<u>6,627,646</u>
Current assets			
Pension asset	8	-	123,000
Debtors and prepayments		11,052,677	9,674,389
Cash at bank and in hand		52,462,451	21,775,787
		<u>63,515,128</u>	<u>31,573,176</u>
Current liabilities			
Creditors and accrued expenses		10,369,176	8,566,594
		<u>53,145,952</u>	<u>23,006,582</u>
Net current assets			
		<u>106,545,295</u>	<u>58,707,908</u>
Total assets less current liabilities			
Pension liability	8	(6,000)	-
Deferred ticket fund	9	(82,770,395)	(34,642,925)
		<u>23,768,900</u>	<u>24,064,983</u>
Financed by:			
Union funds		23,768,900	24,064,983

T. Grace
Honorary Treasurer

P. R. Browne
Chief Executive

Notes to the accounts

for the year ended 30 April 2008

1. Accounting policies

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the financial statements.

a. *Basis of preparation*
The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with accounting standards generally accepted in Ireland. Accounting Standards generally accepted in Ireland in preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view are those published by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland and issued by the Accounting Standards Board.

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

c. *Depreciation*
Depreciation is charged in order to write off the assets over their expected useful lives, on a straight line basis, at the following annual rates:

Land	Nil
Stand, buildings, etc.	2.5%
Fixtures, fittings & equipment	33.33%, 25% and 12.5%
Computer equipment	20%
Grounds purchased & leased to clubs	Nil

d. *Stadium redevelopment in progress*
The Union has contracted to redevelop Lansdowne Road through a separate company which is jointly owned by the Union and the Football Association of Ireland, each of whom hold 50% of the ordinary share capital of the company.

The nature of the agreements in place between the Football Association of Ireland, the joint venture company and the Union are such that the risks and rewards relating to the redeveloped stadium lie principally with the Union and, therefore, in accordance with Accounting Standards, the Union have recognised stadium expenditure as an asset of the Union. Once the redevelopment has been completed it will be transferred to tangible assets.

The stadium at Thomond Park is also being redeveloped as described in Note 3. The nature of the agreements relating to that development are such that the risks and rewards relating to the redeveloped stadium do not lie with the Union. Consequently the Union have not recognised expenditure in connection with the redeveloped Thomond Park as an asset.

e. *Joint ventures*
The Union's 50% interest in Lansdowne Road Stadium Development Company Limited and Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited are accounted for using the gross equity method in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard 9 Associates and Joint Ventures.

The Union's share of the profits less losses are included in the income and expenditure account. The Union's interest in the net assets is indicated as a fixed asset investment in the balance sheet at an amount representing the Union's share of the fair values of the net assets at acquisition plus the Union's share of post acquisition retained profits.

The amounts included in the financial statements of the Union are taken from the latest audited financial statements of the joint venture companies.

1. Accounting policies (cont'd.)

f. *Financial fixed assets*

Investments

Investments are shown at cost less provision for permanent diminution in value. Income from investments is recognised in the income and expenditure account in the year in which it is receivable.

g. *Grants*

Capital grants received are set off against the cost of related fixed assets.

Grants towards revenue expenditure are released to the income and expenditure account as the related expenditure is incurred.

h. *Foreign currencies*

Functional and presentation currency

Items included in the financial statements are presented in 'Euro', the currency of the primary economic environment in which the entity operates (the 'functional currency').

Transactions and balances

Transactions in foreign currencies are recorded at the rate ruling at the date of the transaction or at a contracted rate. Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies are retranslated at the rate of exchange ruling at the balance sheet date or the contracted rate. All differences are taken to the income and expenditure account as part of the fair value gain or loss.

i. *Pension costs*

The Union operates a defined benefit scheme for certain employees.

Income and expenditure account

The pension costs in respect of defined benefit schemes are charged to the income and expenditure account on a systematic basis, based on the actuary's calculations. Amounts charged are calculated using the following rates:

Current service cost	Discount rate at the start of the year
Interest cost	Discount rate at the start of the year
Expected return on assets	Expected rate of return at the start of the year

Past service costs are recognised in the income and expenditure account on a straight line basis over the period in which the increases in benefit vest.

Differences between the amounts charged in the income and expenditure account and payments made to pension funds are treated as assets or liabilities.

Balance sheet entries

Assets in the scheme are measured at their fair value at the balance sheet date. Defined benefit liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method. The assets and liabilities of the scheme are subject to a full actuarial valuation by an external professionally qualified actuary triennially and are reviewed annually by the actuary and updated to reflect current conditions.

The excess/shortfall in the value of the assets in the scheme over/below the present value of the scheme liabilities is recognised as an asset/liability when the amounts can be recovered through reduced contributions or refunds from the scheme.

Notes to the accounts (continued)

for the year ended 30 April 2008

1. Accounting policies (cont'd.)

i. *Pension costs (cont'd.)*

Actual gains and losses that arise on the valuation of the scheme's assets and liabilities are released to the statement of total recognised gains and losses.

j. *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 9.

2. Income and expenditure recognition

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

3. Tangible assets

	Cost at 30/4/07 €	Additions €	Cost at 30/4/08 €
Premises and grounds	36,414,986	7,887,153	44,302,139
Fixtures, fittings & equipment	6,638,485	534,753	7,173,238
Grounds purchased and leased to clubs	368,713	-	368,713
	43,422,184	8,421,906	51,844,090
	Accumulated depreciation at 30/4/07 €	Charge for year €	Accumulated depreciation at 30/4/08 €
Premises and grounds	9,359,849	654,391	10,014,240
Fixtures, fittings & equipment	5,595,123	667,207	6,262,330
Grounds purchased and leased to clubs			
	14,954,972	1,321,598	16,276,570
Net book value	28,467,212		35,567,520

(i) As more fully explained in Note 11 the stadium at Lansdowne Road is being redeveloped. The Union consider the accumulated cost, less related depreciation, on expenditure previously capitalised in respect of prior construction work on the stadium as enhancing the value of what is to be constructed. Consequently the Union have ceased depreciating such expenditure until the new stadium has been completed and is in use. The net amount included above in respect of this asset is €7,251,840.

(ii) Under a Memorandum of Understanding dated 10 December 2007 the Union entered into arrangements with the Munster Branch Irish Rugby Football Union and Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited to redevelop the stadium at Thomond Park. As part of these arrangements the Union advanced a loan to the Branch (Note 6) and acquired a 50% interest in Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited (Note 7). In addition the Union will grant an option to the Branch to acquire the freehold interest that the Union holds in Thomond Park. The option price will be based on the original cost of the grounds to the Union adjusted for inflation by reference to the Consumer Price Index from the date of the granting of the option. This option will be exercisable by the Branch on the earlier of ten years from the date of practical completion of the stadium or by 1 January 2019.

3. Tangible assets (cont'd.)

During the year various properties were acquired in order to facilitate the redevelopment of the stadium at a total cost of €4,042,500. These properties were transferred to the Union for nil consideration.

The accumulated cost of the old stadium, less related depreciation amounts to €4,239,791. The Union have ceased to depreciate this expenditure and propose to carry this amount pending the possible exercise of the option.

The formal loan agreement, the option agreement for the acquisition of the freehold interest, the shareholders agreement with regard to the Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited and the lease agreement between the Union and the company, although largely agreed, had not been fully executed at the date of finalisation of the accounts.

4. Stadium redevelopment in progress

	30/4/08	30/4/07
	€	€
Balance at 1 May	606,468	606,468
Expenditure in year	60,184,410	12,865,465
Grants	(53,780,288)	(12,865,465)
Funding received from FAI	(2,527,500)	-
Balance 30 April	4,483,090	606,468

5. Prior period adjustment

Financial Reporting Standard 17 - Retirement Benefits was adopted in full by the Union with effect from 1 May 2005. The adoption of FRS 17 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.

6. Financial investments

	30/4/08	30/4/07
	€	€
At cost		
Unit trust funds	-	5,078,952
Loan to Munster Branch Irish Rugby Football Union	11,547,130	-
	11,547,130	5,078,952

The market value of the unit trust funds at 30 April 2007 was €9,296,903. These were realised during the year at a surplus of €3,077,744.

During the year the Union advanced funds to the Munster Branch in order to assist with the development of Thomond Park. The amounts advanced will be secured on the Branches share in Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited and on the loan advanced by the Branch to that company. Interest is chargeable on the loan to the Branch based on the effective cost of funds to the Union.

Notes to the accounts (continued)

for the year ended 30 April 2008

6. Financial investments (cont'd)

The amount advanced may increase to €19,015,000 provided that the principal be reduced to €12,100,000 by 30 April 2009. This latter amount is to be repaid in varying instalments over the following eight years.

The formal loan agreement had not been executed at the date of the finalisation of the accounts.

7. Joint ventures

The Union holds 50% of the ordinary share capital of Lansdowne Road Stadium Development Company Limited and 50% of the ordinary share capital of Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited (companies formed to develop the stadiums at Lansdowne Road and Thomond Park respectively).

Additional disclosures in respect of Lansdowne Road Stadium Development Company Limited, based on that company's audited accounts for the year ended 31 December 2007, required under Financial Reporting Standard 9 Associates and Joint Ventures are as follows:

	31/12/07	31/12/06
	€	€
Share of fixed assets	24,992	27,536
Share of current assets	5,294,462	2,433,914
Share of gross assets	5,319,454	2,461,450
Share of current liabilities	5,319,453	2,461,449
Share of net assets	1	1

The turnover, profit before and after tax of Lansdowne Road Stadium Development Company Limited for the year ended 31 December 2007 and for the period to December 2006 were nil in all cases.

Additional disclosures in respect of Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited, based on that company's audited accounts for the period from incorporation, 21 September 2006, to 30 June 2007, required under "Financial Reporting Standard 9 Associated and Joint Ventures" are as follows:

Share of turnover	€
	-
Share of operating profit	26,131
Share of tax	(8,801)
Share of profit after tax	17,330
Share of fixed assets	1,493,136
Share of current assets	1,523,305
Share of gross assets	3,016,441
Share of current liabilities	397,342
Share of non current liabilities	2,601,768
Share of gross liabilities	2,999,110
Share of net assets	17,331

The Union has entered into lease agreements with each of the above companies to lease land on which the stadiums are being redeveloped on the following terms.

7. Joint ventures (cont'd.)

Company	Term of lease	Annual rent
Lansdowne Road Stadium Development Company Limited	99 years from Dec 2005	€750,000 p.a.
Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited	55 years from Oct 2006	Market rent to be determined

The rents due only become payable after the date of practical completion of Thomond Park and from the commencement of commercial operations in the case of Lansdowne Road.

Although the terms of the lease between the Union and Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited have been largely agreed, the formal lease had not been executed at the date of finalisation of these accounts and the quantum of rent payable has not been finally agreed.

8. Pension commitments

The pension entitlements of certain 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 2008. The valuations have been completed using the projected unit method.

	30/4/08	30/4/07	30/4/06
	%	%	%
Main assumptions:			
Rate of increase in salaries	4.50	4.00	3.75
Rate of increase in pensions payment	5.00	4.50	4.25
Discount rate	6.00	5.00	5.00
Inflation assumption	3.00	2.50	2.25
Rate of return on plan assets	6.37	6.38	6.50

Assumptions regarding pre and post retirement mortality rates remained unchanged.

Notes to the accounts (continued)

for the year ended 30 April 2008

8. Pension commitments (cont'd.)

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

	30/4/08		30/4/07		30/4/06	
	Long-term rate of return expected	Value	Long-term rate of return expected	Value	Long-term rate of return expected	Value
	%	€	%	€	%	€
Equities	7.0	3,521,000	7.0	3,968,000	7.0	3,054,000
Bonds	4.7	650,000	4.4	615,000	4.3	412,000
Properties	6.0	236,000	6.0	246,000	6.0	229,000
Others	3.0	306,000	2.5	297,000	2.5	122,000
Total market value of assets		4,713,000		5,126,000		3,817,000
Present value of scheme liabilities		(4,719,000)		(5,003,000)		(4,224,000)
Pension (liability) asset		(6,000)		123,000		(407,000)

Analysis of the amount charged to income and expenditure account:

	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€
Current service cost	289,000	269,000

Analysis of the amount credited to other income:

	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€
Expected return on assets in the scheme	(337,000)	(276,000)
Interest costs	258,000	219,000
Net return	(79,000)	(57,000)

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

	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	(1,060,000)	140,000
Experience gains arising on scheme liabilities	209,000	100,000
Effect of changes in assumptions underlying the present value of scheme liabilities	653,000	(321,000)
Actuarial losses recognised in the statement of total recognised gains and losses	(198,000)	(81,000)

8. Pension commitments (cont'd.)

Movements in (deficit) asset during the period:

	30/4/08	30/4/07
	€	€
At 1 May	123,000	(407,000)
Total operating charge	(289,000)	(269,000)
Total other finance income	79,000	57,000
Actuarial losses recognised in the statement of total recognised gains and losses	(198,000)	(81,000)
Employer contributions	279,000	823,000
At 30 April	(6,000)	123,000

History of experience gains and losses:

	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
Difference between the expected and actual return on scheme assets:			
Amount (€)	(1,060,000)	140,000	577,000
Percentage of scheme assets	(22.49)	2.73	15.12
Experience gains(losses) on scheme liabilities:			
Amount (€)	209,000	100,000	(320,000)
Percentage of the present value of scheme liabilities	4.43	2.0	(7.58)
Total amount recognised in statement of total recognised gains and losses:			
Amount (€)	(198,000)	(81,000)	253,000
Percentage of the present value of scheme liabilities	(4.20)	(1.62)	5.99

Reconciliation of net assets and reserves under FRS 17

	30/4/08	30/4/07
	€	€
Net assets and reserves		
Net assets and reserves as stated in balance sheet	23,768,900	24,064,983
FRS 17 defined benefit liability (asset)	6,000	(123,000)
Net assets excluding defined benefit (asset) liability	23,774,900	23,941,983

Notes to the accounts (continued)

for the year ended 30 April 2008

9. Deferred ticket fund

	30/4/08	30/4/07
	€	€
Balance at 1 May	34,642,925	38,576,419
Issued during the year	-	232,800
Transfer to revenue account	(2,960,602)	(4,166,294)
	<hr/> 31,682,323	<hr/> 34,642,925
Deposits received on new Lansdowne Road tickets and boxes	51,088,072	-
Balance at 30 April	<hr/> 82,770,395	<hr/> 34,642,925

The deposits received during the year may become repayable in certain circumstances.

10. Revenue grants

The following grants were received and used for the stated purpose in the year ended 30 April 2008

	30/4/08	30/4/07
Irish Sports Council		
- game development and participation	€3,533,000	€3,606,200
International Rugby Board		
- game development and participation and elite player development	STG£400,000	STG£400,000

11. Commitments and contingencies

Capital commitments

Under the terms of agreements to develop Lansdowne Road the Union have a capital commitment of approximately €104,000,000 over the next two to three years.

At 30 April 2008, the Union had contracted to purchase other fixed assets of which €6,350,000 (2007: €8,100,000) remains outstanding.

Commitments under operating leases

During the year the Union entered into an operating lease in respect of property at 10/12 Lansdowne Road at an annual rent of €475,000. This lease will expire on 12 November 2010. The amount charged in respect of this rent in the current period amounted to €237,500. During the year the Union incurred operating lease rentals on motor vehicles amounting to €319,829. The commitment in respect of existing lease agreements on vehicles all of which expire within twelve months amount to €97,082.

Contingencies

In terms of agreements between the Union, the FAI, Lansdowne Road Stadium Development Company Limited and the Government for the provision of grants amounting to €191 million for the redevelopment of Lansdowne Road, the Union have agreed that in the event that the land on which the stadium is built is not used for sporting and recreational activities for a period of thirty years from the date of payment of the grants, the grant or a portion of the grant could become repayable. Grants received to date on Lansdowne Road amount to €76,370,527.

11. Commitments and contingencies (cont'd.)

Contingencies (continued)

In terms of agreements between the Union, the Munster Branch Irish Rugby Football Union, Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited and the Government for the provision of grants amounting to €9 million for the redevelopment of Thomond Park, the Union have agreed that in the event that the Stadium is not used as a facility for the playing of Rugby Union and associated social, recreational and cultural activities for the people of Munster and surrounding district for the period of fifteen years from the date of payment of the grants, the grant or a portion of the grant could become repayable. The Union have pledged the lands at Thomond Park as security in respect of any liability which may arise in this regard. Grants received to date on Thomond Park amount to €2,850,000.

12. Comparative figures

The figures for prior years have been restated, where necessary, so as to be on a consistent basis with those for the current year.

13. Approval of accounts

The accounts of the Union were approved by the Committee on 29 May 2008 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 2008

We have audited the financial statements on pages 35 to 47 which have been prepared under the historical cost convention and the accounting policies set out on page 38 to 40.

Respective responsibilities of the Committee and the auditors

As described on page 46, 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 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 2008 and of the deficit of the Union for the year then ended.

Grant Thornton
Registered Auditors
Chartered Accountants

24-26 City Quay
Dublin 2

29 May 2008

Income

for the year ended 30 April 2008

Schedule 1: Representative matches

	2007/08 €	2006/07 €	2005/06 €
International rugby income	25,945,267	29,780,411	23,744,705
Commercial income	7,790,011	7,898,965	6,760,257
Deferred ticket income	2,960,602	4,465,745	4,798,587
ERC and provincial income	5,387,077	6,596,450	4,095,354
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	42,082,957	48,741,571	39,398,903

Schedule 2: Other income

	2007/08 €	2006/07 €	2005/06 €
Other rugby income	993,966	784,431	625,050
Percentage of admissions	-	1,043,869	1,931,550
Government Grants	3,533,000	3,606,200	3,530,000
Other income	3,114,605	1,324,386	942,928
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	7,641,571	6,758,886	7,029,528

Expenditure

for the year ended 30 April 2008

Schedule 3: Professional game costs

	2007/08 €	2006/07 €	2005/06 €
National tours, camps and squads	627,570	989,105	802,211
National match costs	3,047,851	3,637,466	2,748,339
Player and management costs	24,301,611	22,747,942	22,025,128
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	27,977,032	27,374,513	25,575,678

Schedule 4: Elite player development

	2007/08 €	2006/07 €	2005/06 €
Irish "A" team	243,294	382,290	163,265
Under 20's	431,766	533,967	529,163
Sevens	27,987	-	736
Academies	1,179,173	1,080,175	1,050,140
High performance unit	392,094	513,519	-
Fitness programme	339,999	386,634	381,832
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	2,614,313	2,896,585	2,125,136

Schedule 5: Games support costs

	2007/08 €	2006/07 €	2005/06 €
Referee costs	294,451	353,010	374,876
Medical costs	365,777	338,518	237,179
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	660,228	691,528	612,055

Expenditure

for the year ended 30 April 2008

Schedule 6: Domestic and community rugby

	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
	€	€	€
Under 19's	189,270	859,973	286,409
Irish schoolboy team	217,696	189,153	183,307
Irish youth team	194,678	230,451	168,078
Women's team	166,889	127,722	-
Club Ireland	52,464	82,669	-
Domestic competitions	426,820	820,614	688,499
General development salaries	1,106,012	1,393,898	1,574,622
General development expenses	148,480	266,289	342,351
Development resources	16,538	137,075	17,036
Coaching courses	285,188	224,597	181,486
Youth and schools	458,071	477,447	302,972
YDO and provincial staff	1,842,414	977,473	997,583
Clubs and schools support	2,208,404	1,777,885	1,880,379
Referee development	365,637	350,433	322,393
Leisure and community rugby	759,953	375,108	303,448
Other development and operational grants	973,380	1,017,735	689,948
Other community rugby funding	936,641	1,405,205	1,283,639
	10,348,535	10,713,727	9,222,150

Schedule 7: Marketing

	2007/08 €	2006/07 €	2005/06 €
Marketing	773,014	779,480	355,672
PR and communications	153,631	110,961	206,466
Website	240,455	230,667	364,528
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	1,167,100	1,121,108	926,666

Schedule 8: Grounds

	2007/08 €	2006/07 €	2005/06 €
Rates and insurance	215,260	648,297	578,248
Repairs and renewals	82,027	207,181	480,085
Wages, cleaning and pitch	28,212	351,682	473,896
Gas, electricity and water	3,742	140,371	89,383
Provincial grounds	180,711	284,426	354,266
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	509,952	1,631,957	1,975,878

Schedule 9: Administration and overheads

	2007/08 €	2006/07 €	2005/06 €
Governance costs	525,361	568,937	497,529
Salaries and pension	2,200,959	1,907,647	1,729,351
Printing, postage and stationary	198,787	190,271	171,997
Rates, rent, insurance and telephone	835,885	619,209	571,178
Office maintenance	258,594	244,450	172,634
Professional fees	877,469	704,445	518,879
Miscellaneous administration costs	344,128	380,451	265,773
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	5,241,183	4,615,410	3,927,341

Funds flow statement

for the year ended 30 April 2008

	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€
Net (deficit) surplus	(98,083)	5,174,357
<i>Non-cash adjustments:</i>		
Depreciation	1,321,598	1,281,272
Movement in debtors	(1,378,288)	(191,724)
Current service cost and net return on pension	210,000	212,000
Share of profit on joint venture	(17,330)	-
Movement in creditors	1,802,582	(2,782,661)
Profit on disposal of long-term investments	(3,077,744)	-
Transfer to revenue account – five and ten year tickets	(2,960,602)	(4,166,294)
Operating cash outflow	(4,197,867)	(473,050)
<i>Other sources of funds</i>		
Realised on long-term investments	8,156,696	-
Issue of ten year tickets	-	232,800
Receipt of deposits on tickets and boxes	51,088,072	-
Net repayment of loans by clubs	-	233,013
	59,244,768	465,813
<i>Application of funds</i>		
Loan advanced to Munster Branch	(11,547,130)	-
Expenditure on fixed assets	(12,298,528)	(2,785,927)
Net advances of loans to clubs	(235,579)	-
Pension fund contributions	(279,000)	(823,000)
	(24,360,237)	(3,608,927)
Net cash flow	30,686,664	(3,616,164)
Opening cash balances	21,775,787	25,391,951
Closing cash balances	52,462,451	21,775,787



Budweiser Tag Rugby - 2 Irish rugby fans playing at a Budweiser Tag Rugby event.



332 coaching staff help prepare the teams for the AIB League.



Irish Rugby Football Union
10/12 Lansdowne Road,
Dublin 4.
www.IrishRugby.ie