

THE GOLDEN MOMENT

IRISH RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION
ANNUAL REPORT 2008/2009





THE GOLDEN HORDE

THE TRIPLE CROWN, THE GRAND SLAM

AND THE SIX NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP 2009

THE GOLDEN RESULTS

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FRANCE	21
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ITALY	9
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IRELAND

ENGLAND



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SCOTLAND

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J.P. LYONS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



AFTER A LAPSE OF 61 YEARS, THE DEFINING MOMENT - MARCH 21ST, 2009, AT THE MILLENNIUM STADIUM, CARDIFF, AND THE SCORELINE: WALES 15 - IRELAND 17 - WILL FOREVER ENDURE AS AN HISTORIC LANDMARK.

It was my good fortune as President of the Irish Rugby Football Union for season 2008/09 that my term in office should coincide with the landmark of Ireland achieving a Grand Slam victory in the RBS 6 Nations Championship.

After a lapse of 61 years, the defining moment – March 21st, 2009, at the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff, and the scoreline: Wales 15 – Ireland 17 – will forever endure as an historic landmark.

Its perspective is measured by rapturous acclaim from the Island of Ireland – and far beyond. The feel good factor it has generated is palpable and while the Heavens above downtown Dawson Street will forever echo to the acclamation given to Brian O'Driscoll and his players and Declan Kidney and his Management Team when they presented the trophy to an 18,500 strong public who had come to welcome home the heroes; the general approval and awareness of what has been achieved has had the effect of lifting a Nation's gloom. That is the measure of the success for Irish rugby.

I am delighted to say that achieving the heady heights of Grand Slam winning status represents an enormous promotional awareness of rugby in Ireland and for which the Union, its Branches and clubs are eager to utilise. Events on the international scene, highlighted for me this season by such magical moments as Jamie Heaslip's try against France... Tommy Bowe's tries against Italy and Wales... Brian O'Driscoll's

try against England... the timely tackles by Bowe and O'Driscoll against Scotland... and that drop goal by Ronan O'Gara against Wales, are fundamental to promoting the game. They have the effect of attracting greater numbers and volunteers into our clubs, communities, schools and other areas that may not otherwise be associated with the playing of rugby.

The crowning glory of Grand Slam victory is the fulfilment of an aspiration shared by generations down through the decades, only for expectation to be dashed by disappointment on so many occasions. It is an accomplishment in which we all proudly share and which were so memorably recognised by invitations issued and gratefully accepted by us from President Mary McAleese at Aras an Uachtarain and by Minister of State, Shaun Woodward, at Hillsborough Castle, when we met Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and at a Civic Reception in Cork hosted by Lord Mayor Cllr. Brian Birmingham and the County Mayor Noel Harrington.

Further endorsement of the healthy state of Irish rugby was then forthcoming in the selection of 14 Irish players, highlighted by the nomination of Paul O'Connell as captain, for the summer Lions tour to South Africa. This was followed by Munster being crowned Magners League Champions, their success on the pitch being reflected off it by the official opening, performed by An Taoiseach Brian Cowen and myself, of the fine new Thomond Park Stadium, for whose development I congratulate Pat Whelan and his Stadium Committee. It is an indicator of the current strength of Irish rugby that Munster replaced Leinster

as Magners League Champions and in turn Leinster ended Munster's reign as Heineken Cup title holders on a never-to-be-forgotten day at Croke Park when a piece of rugby history was made with a world record crowd for a club match of 82,208 being established as Leinster reached the Final for the first time. They went on to beat Leicester in the Heineken Cup Final in Murrayfield – a tremendous finale to a unique season.

In this new Golden Era of success, it is a matter of great satisfaction to me as President that while our all conquering teams are representative of the professional elite of rugby in Ireland; it is at the same time symbolic of everyone involved in the game. I believe this season's success is reflective of all the efforts and structures that have been put in place by the Union and the Provincial Branches down through the years, so as to keep in place the solid base upon which our game is founded and currently thrives. In that regard, I wish to acknowledge everyone involved on a job well done.

In this review of my term as President, I also want to record my feeling of satisfaction that so much good envelopes the Union, its Branches and clubs, notwithstanding there are issues that demand our constant vigilance. I believe we are lucky to have very experienced and qualified volunteers working in the common cause of our game. On the IRFU and Branch Committees I have sat for 18 years with highly qualified people from many disciplines - honest to goodness rugby enthusiasts who co-exist seamlessly with our professional staffs and give of their time and expertise on a voluntary basis. I commend you all and thank you for your contributions.

One of the messages I am taking from my term as President is the experience of visiting clubs across the country and witnessing first hand the sense of enthusiasm and commitment and the evidence of the selfless, relentless and determined effort by so many people to sustain our game. The depth of welcome afforded me throughout the 2008/09 season as ambassador for the Union was indeed heart-warming. It was plainly in conflict with the view of a lobby who proclaim a gulf exists between the Union and its Branches with the grassroots. That is simply not the case in my experience and while I noted the praise heaped upon those of us charged with the administration of the game in the light of our successes and the structures in place from which those dividends emanated, it is nonetheless regrettable that negative comments are forthcoming on perceived issues relating to the domestic game which in my view are frankly not sustainable.

In my travels I particularly recall my visits to Bruff, Navan, Ballyhaunis and UL Bohemians for special occasions and also while attending AIB Cup and League games and play-off deciders, I was moved to experience the excitement and colour which surrounded the games – and the proud celebrations engaged in by the winning teams and their club supporters. Another club related highlight of my tenure was the tribute dinner arranged by Bective Rangers to mark my Presidency. It was my great honour to be the club's fourth President of the Union.

With reference to the club game, which I emphasise is at the very heart of the Union's endeavours, I must also record that in these challenging times for us all, responsibility for ensuring

the welfare of our game is, from top Union level, downwards through the Branches and onwards to the clubs, colleges and schools; a shared responsibility. Only by us all playing our part, will we preserve our game in good health.

Against that background therefore, it was my honour while President to have launched the IRFU's second Strategic Plan. It covers the period 2008 to 2012 and is highlighted by RWC 2011 in New Zealand. The cycle encompasses a period of great challenge for the governance and wellbeing of rugby in Ireland. As I hand on the Presidential badge of office to John Callaghan, I stand down reassured that I have every confidence in the abilities of the Union and Branch Committees to realise many more of the key objectives we have set ourselves, notwithstanding what has already been accomplished. I congratulate and thank all those who contributed to the formulation of the Plan, under the chairmanship of John Hussey. John has now completed 6 years as Chairman of the Management Committee and it is important to acknowledge his commitment and contribution, as highlighted in the Strategic Plans. I am delighted that the Plan has been agreed with the co-operation of the Committee volunteers, the IRFU professional staff, Branch staff and representatives and most importantly grassroots stakeholders.

An element of the Strategic Plan that especially pleases me deals with the domestic game. Drawn up under the chairmanship of Finbarr Crowley, it is designed to find a new direction for domestic rugby that will allow for a competitive, quality and enjoyable pastime which will serve the game at all levels, other than professional. A revamping of the AIB League format, the provision of Facilities and Event Guidelines for clubs and a newly devised Age Grade programme are other elements devised with the view to improving the lot of the club.

The Union is also steadfast in its determination to consolidate the welfare of all colleges, universities, schools and age group fare. In this area, I witnessed at first hand in Parma the value of the efforts at schools level. Stirring victories over Wales and Italy set up a place in the final of the tournament only for England – controversially I might add – to decline to play on the grounds that the pitch was not of sufficient quality. I also travelled to Toulon in support of the Irish U.18 club side. They finished a commendable third, after the set back of losing for the first time in 3 years.

I mentioned earlier the compatibility which exists between the volunteers and the professional staffs. Here I would like to acknowledge how fortunate we are to have a person of the calibre of Philip Browne as our CEO. He and his staff at Lansdowne Road – and may I especially acknowledge Tanya Ellis, Jane Healy and Jane Kilkelly, who were so helpful to me in managing my diary - perform Trojan duties on behalf of the Union. Philip also doubles as the Chairman of the Lansdowne Road Development Company and with our new Aviva Stadium on schedule to be opened in the first half of next year; I believe it will be seen to be a fitting monument to all the shared effort that goes into propagating our game.

This is a good note on which to end the report of my year in office, only to finally sign-off by thanking my wife, Bernadette, and family for the supportive manner in which they encouraged me throughout what was a momentous year as President. Thank you. ■

HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

T. GRACE



THE BALANCE SHEET REFLECTS THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR IN RESPECT OF THE AVIVA STADIUM DEVELOPMENT.

Once again it is my privilege to present to you the financial statements for the IRFU for the year ended 30th April, 2009. It has been an extraordinary year on the pitch for Irish rugby and in no small measure this is reflected in the financial statements. Overall the Union achieved a surplus of just under €2m compared with a breakeven situation last year. The reasons for this I address below.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

International rugby income which encompasses gate receipts and broadcasting income has improved from €26m in 2007/08 to over €32m in 2008/09. The main reasons for this were the inclusion of a full programme of autumn matches in the year under review together with additional income earned through performance on the pitch. The Union also undertook an additional match against the Barbarians last May. Ten year ticket income increases in line with the number of matches played.

Commercial income at €7.2m has declined by €560k from last year with the main reason being the significantly changed economic environment in which the Union must now operate. This is particularly reflected in the decline in advertising revenues and an increase in bad debt provision.

ERC and provincial income maintains its high level from last year due to the success of Irish teams in both the Heineken Cup and the Magners League.

Other income incorporates funding from the Irish Sports Council together with interest and rental income. Irish Sports Council funding was higher than that reported in 2007/08 due to the inclusion of the NTS grant of €250k received in 2008 and amounts in respect of the 2008 Women in Sport grant. The Union is most appreciative of all of the monies it receives from the Irish Sports Council and it forms an integral part of the Union's overall funding model. Interest income increased significantly from 2007/08 due to the higher cash levels held by the Union. The overall drop in other income arises because as you may recall in last year's accounts the Union benefited from the disposal of its long-term investment.

Total expenditure increased by €5.2m to €55m from 2007/08. Professional game costs cover the costs of the National Team, the Union's contribution to the 4 Provincial Teams and the operating costs of international matches. This increased by €3.8m due largely to the costs of hosting a full autumn programme of matches, player inflation and performance-related costs in respect of both the international and provincial game. There was also a significant cost associated with the Grand Slam winners' homecoming.

Elite player development costs covers the Union's contribution to the Provincial Academies, the cost of the Ireland "A", U.20 and Sevens teams, the High Performance Unit and the cost of National fitness programmes. The increase of €710k from 2007/08 arose as a result of a full Sevens programme taking place, NTS costs and the High Performance Unit being in operation for a full year.

Domestic game costs increased by €200k due largely to an increase in insurance premium arising from a late claim and additional referee development staff.

Administration and overheads increased by €440k largely due to the running costs of the Union's new offices together with pension and insurance costs.

BALANCE SHEET

The balance sheet reflects the contributions made over the course of the year in respect of the Aviva Stadium development. The Union is now making sizeable contributions on a monthly basis and whilst it is reassuring to note the €38.3m the Union had in cash at year end I would draw your attention to Note 16 which identifies a capital commitment of €77.5m in respect of the Aviva Stadium. As a consequence the Union will move into debt in the coming year and is projected to remain in debt until 2013.

Included in financial fixed assets under the description financial investments is the loan to the Munster Branch in respect of the Thomond Park development.

In relation to debtors with the exception of amounts specifically provided against and longer term loans with Branches substantially all debtors were received within 3 weeks of year end. The increase in creditors and accruals reflects the high level of activity taking place in the Union in the lead up to 30th April.

I would draw particular attention to the pension liability of €1.05m in the balance sheet and to note 10 of the accounts.



The corresponding liability one year ago was only €6k. This disimprovement arose largely as a result of the substantial decline in world financial markets over the course of the year and has been a matter of some concern to the Union Committee over the same period. The Union is considering its options in relation to the scheme on a go forward basis.

In my Report last year, I indicated that the performance of the Irish economy was one of the most significant risks facing the Union. Over the course of the year this has affected the Union's financial results in a number of ways namely the decline in the value of the assets of the pension scheme, reduced hospitality and advertising revenues, increase in bad debt provision and exchange rate instability. For the coming year and indeed subsequent years the state of the Irish and world economies will impact on the Union and this and indeed all of the other risks facing the Union are carefully monitored and taken into consideration in the Union's financial planning and decision making. That said I am pleased to report that the Union continues to be on target to meet its medium and long-term financial goals especially in relation to the Aviva Stadium development.

The Union are also carrying out a full cost review with the aim of reducing the Union's cost base without affecting current programmes.

In conclusion I would like to thank those who assisted me during the year especially Conor O'Brien and his staff in the Finance Department and my fellow members of the Finance Standing Committee for their diligent work during a difficult year. ■





P. BROWNE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT



THE RUN INTO THE RWC 2011 REQUIRES CAREFUL CO-ORDINATION OF THE PLAYING AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES OF OUR NATIONAL SQUAD PLAYERS TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARRIVE IN NEW ZEALAND IN 2011 WITH THE BEST POSSIBLE PREPARATION OVER THE PREVIOUS 2 YEARS LEAD-IN.

The highlight of the past 12 months was undoubtedly the RBS 6 Nations Championship and the Irish Grand Slam victory in that competition after 61 years since the previous Grand Slam. Great credit must go to the commitment and skills of the players; to the spark and self-belief created by Declan Kidney and his new Management Team; and to the medical and fitness personnel who kept the Team in top condition through the Guinness Autumn Internationals and into the RBS 6 Nations Championship. The victory had a special resonance for the general public in these economically difficult times and this, followed on by the outstanding all Ireland Heineken Cup Semi Final between Leinster and Munster at Croke Park and then Leinster's victory in the Heineken Cup Final, has placed Irish rugby in a position within Irish society that it has never occupied before. The significant challenge now is to use this profile for the benefit of the game at clubs and schools level and to continue the steady growth of our game throughout Ireland.

The success of the National Team and our provincial teams over the past few years is not accidental as both the voluntary and professional personnel involved in the IRFU and the provinces have worked hard to put the systems and structures in place to deliver team performance within the professional

game along with building the capacities of the Branches and clubs to deliver rugby in a coherent and systematic fashion to the growing numbers of male and female participants. There continue to be significant challenges, none more so than the difficult economic conditions which affect all aspects of life in Ireland. Sport and rugby is not immune to these difficulties and whilst the successful profile of Irish rugby could not come at a better time, the IRFU and it's Branches need to cut costs where possible and to ensure value for money in terms of our investment in the professional and recreational game. This has been reflected in some of the governance initiatives undertaken over the last 12 to 18 months. The formal Service Level Agreements between the IRFU and the Branches provide a greater degree of empowerment for Branches in delivery of our domestic rugby development programmes to clubs and schools along with a much greater degree of accountability for the local delivery of these programmes. This process is working well and is providing a more focused and cost effective approach to programme delivery. Further changes to the rugby development structures will help ensure further improvement in programme delivery in the future.

Similarly, in the professional game the rising costs of player salaries and the cost of associated support personnel seem to

show little abatement despite the economic environment. The need to ensure that there is value for money and accountability for all aspects of performance of the provincial teams to the IRFU has been addressed this season. As outlined later in the report, each provincial team will be managed by a Professional Game Board separate from the Branch but reporting and accountable to the Branch. These Boards will have greater latitude in running all aspects of the professional game both on and off the pitch, bringing in suitable external expertise to Board level as required. Each Branch will report upwards to the IRFU Management Committee several times a year on all aspects of Branch activities and in particular in relation to the professional game and financial performance.

As reported later the new Aviva Stadium is now less than 12 months to completion. The Aviva Stadium will be the financial engine for Irish rugby for the foreseeable future and has been designed to maximise commercial activity both during event days and non-event days. The nature of the various commercial and legal agreements underpinning this development require that once the stadium is operational all our international fixtures will be played at the venue, otherwise the IRFU will be the subject of significant financial penalties. This rules out the use of Croke Park for occasional fixtures and as we enter our last season in Croke Park, I must once again express our appreciation to the GAA for the continued use of that magnificent facility. There will be an inevitable drop in capacity from 82,000 at Croke Park to 50,000 when we return to the Aviva Stadium. The Union will be reviewing how to deal with this drop in capacity in terms of future ticket allocations in the Aviva Stadium. The handover of the Aviva Stadium is scheduled for the end of April 2010 and I am confident that Irish rugby will be pleased with its new home.

Following the review of the 2007 RWC the Performance Committee was created, chaired by Der Healy. It allows for a single group to have a management overview of the performance of all professional and representative teams through regular meetings with the appropriate personnel from the provinces and National Team Management. It deals with all aspects of team performance including player contracting, approval of overseas players, player succession planning at provincial and national level, player development through the provincial academies, coaching appointments and co-ordination of the provincial and national playing and training programmes. The run into the RWC 2011 requires careful co-ordination of the playing and training programmes of our National Squad players to ensure that they arrive in New Zealand in 2011 with the best possible preparation over the previous 2 years lead-in. This requires the players get proper pre-season and in-season development periods, proper vacation time, minimum and maximum game time requirements and that the National Team Management have access to players for the necessary time to allow the National Team to perform to its maximum. This has to be balanced, to the extent possible, with the needs of the provincial teams who must perform to their capability in Magners League and Europe. It is not a straightforward exercise particularly in a year when Lions players will return to the provinces later than normal. However, the importance of the National Team to the game in terms of revenues generated and profile means that this balance must be found to ensure that the National



Team is not disadvantaged compared to its competitors. This is a challenge that both the Performance Committee and provincial team managements must resolve.

The work of the Representative Game Committee and its Chairman, Neill Jackson, must also be acknowledged here as the implementation of professional game policies and liaison with the 4 Provincial Team Management Committees is that Committee's brief. Neill Jackson completes his second and final term as Chairman of the Representative Game Committee and his work and commitment to the organisation and running of the professional game over the last 6 years is greatly appreciated.

At IRB level the main discussion point has been in relation to the Experimental Law Variations (ELVs) which were in place this season. In general, opinion has been divided between the northern hemisphere and southern hemisphere with the European Unions largely against the ELVs, a position echoed by public sentiment. The contentious ELVs were not accepted by a special IRB Conference and in May the IRB accepted this position. There is general agreement that whilst the principle and intention of the ELV programme was correct, the process was perhaps flawed in that the scope of change was too great and the level of engagement with the technical expertise in Unions was insufficient. There remains however a number of issues within the Laws which still need to be resolved particularly relating to the maul and the breakdown which the IRB will need to address in due course.

In September the IRFU launched its second Strategic Plan – “Building on Solid Foundations”. The Plan covers the period from 2008 to 2012.

It builds on the achievements of the 2004 Plan. While the IRFU ultimately achieved the majority of the strategic goals set out in the 2004 Plan, we must continue to aim higher in the delivery of a sport that will provide all of our stakeholders with enjoyment and satisfaction. The new Plan sets out key objectives for each area and these are set below:-

DOMESTIC RUGBY – A QUALITY EXPERIENCE

- Provide a quality rugby environment for all, through clubs that have the structures, know-how and resources needed



- Greater adult participation across all forms of rugby union football
- The highest standards in age grade sport nationally to give young players the best possible foundations and motivation for pursuing a prolonged playing career well into adulthood

PROFESSIONAL GAME – A CULTURE OF SUCCESS THROUGH WINNING TEAMS

- National Team
 - At least reach the Semi Final of the RWC 2011 and win a 6 Nations Championship
- Provincial Teams
 - An Irish province to win the Heineken Cup
 - An Irish province in the Semi Final of the Heineken Cup each year
 - Irish provinces to win 2 Magners Leagues
- Provide world class medical support at national and provincial level
- Refereeing: achieve and maintain 3 referees in the top level of the international game

COMMERCIAL, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Increase revenues by 35% to €69m by 2012
- Enhance the profile of the game in Ireland

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- Governance audit – complete review and implement a new governance model for Irish rugby
- Production of Irish Rugby 2020 – the long term vision for Irish rugby

The IRFU wishes to acknowledge the vital role played by the Irish rugby community over the past 4 years and to thank the players, volunteers, supporters, employees and our many partners for contributing to the growth and success of our sport on so many levels.

The most important benefit of our Strategic Plan is that it provides a clear focus for Irish rugby until 2012, the achievement or otherwise of the goals will be monitored and reported on a regular basis.

NATIONAL TEAM

Following the resignation of Eddie O’Sullivan as National Coach after the 2008 RBS 6 Nations Championship, the IRFU Appointments Committee set up a process for the appointment of a new coach and appointed Declan Kidney as National Coach in April 2008. At the same time Paul

McNaughton was appointed National Team Manager. Given Kidney’s involvement with Munster in the Heineken Cup Final, a temporary team management was appointed to bring the National Team on tour to New Zealand and Australia led by Coach, Michael Bradley, Assistant Coach, Niall O’Donovan and Team Manager, Joe Miles. The first Test was against New Zealand in Wellington played in appalling weather conditions – New Zealand winning by 21 points to 11 points. This was followed by a match against Australia in Melbourne with Ireland ultimately losing by 18 points to 12.

Declan Kidney spent much of the summer assembling a coaching team with the appointment of Gert Smal, Les Kiss and Alan Gaffney. Their first match in control was against Canada in the new Thomond Park, the first of the Guinness Series matches. This allowed some latitude to experiment with the notable success of Keith Earls scoring a try in his first international at his home ground and marking him down as one to watch in the future. Ireland won the match comfortably 55 points to nil. A much stiffer challenge was New Zealand in Croke Park and whilst Ireland played well in the first half, a try conceded by Ireland just before half time gave the initiative to New Zealand who dominated the second half winning by 22 points to 3 points. The final Guinness Series Test against Argentina proved to be a dogged physical affair with Ireland winning the physical battle and the match by 17 points to 3 points. The outcome of the Guinness Series and particularly the win against Argentina was significant in terms of IRB ranking and the RWC 2011 draw. It placed Ireland in the second tier of seeds giving Ireland potentially a more favourable draw. The statistics for these and the other international fixtures are documented on the attached CD.

To some extent the Guinness Test Series may have come too soon for the new Management Team to make a significant impact and certainly the results did not give any hint of what was to come. With more information about their players and further squad sessions the new Management Team were able to go into the RBS 6 Nations Championship better prepared and the opening challenge against France in Croke Park would ultimately set the tone for the rest of the competition. As it turned out it was a free flowing and exciting game which Ireland deservedly won 30-21 scoring 3 tries in the process. This was followed by a typically rugged encounter against Italy in Rome which Ireland won by 38-9. The match against England at Croke Park was another physical affair with the English Team putting the Irish defence under significant pressure in the final quarter but Ireland did enough to win by a single point 14-13. Ireland has always had difficulty playing Scotland in Murrayfield and this was a tense affair with Ireland winning by 22-15, Heaslip scoring the only try of the game in a second half dominated by Ireland.



Much has already been written about the final match against Wales in Cardiff. For the record Ireland won 17-15 scoring the only 2 tries of the game in the process. The Welsh remained in the game due to the excellent kicking of Stephen Jones. The exchange of the lead in the final minutes through Jones' drop goal followed quickly by O'Gara's drop goal ensured a thrilling finish. A missed penalty by Wales in extra time resulted in Ireland's first Grand Slam in 61 years. A fitting result for a talented and dedicated group of players and management followed up by the reward of the appointment of Paul O'Connell as Captain of the Lions in addition to 13 selections to the Squad for the Lions Tour to South Africa.

Declan Kidney and his Team Management embark on an Irish tour to USA and Canada in late May without the Lions tourists and the Leinster players involved in the Final of the Heineken Cup. The National Team Management will also take the Ireland "A" squad to the Churchill Cup in USA in June giving an opportunity for extra time with emerging players.

PROVINCIAL TEAMS/PROFESSIONAL GAME

Whilst success at both international level and provincial level in Irish rugby is not mutually exclusive, it is a challenge for our small pool of players to perform at both levels. This season has been unprecedented in that the success at international level has been matched by significant success at provincial level and follows on from the magnificent Heineken Cup success of Munster who won the Final in Cardiff against Toulouse in May 2008. This season under new Coach, Tony McGahan, Munster applied themselves to the Magners League to the extent that they won the Magners League with 2 rounds still to be completed. In parallel Munster emerged at the top of a very tough Heineken Cup pool to beat Ospreys comprehensively in a home Quarter Final at Thomond Park. That set up an all Ireland Semi Final between Leinster and Munster, Leinster

having topped their pool and beaten Harlequins away in a very tight game in The Stoop. The GAA obliged by making Croke Park available and over 82,000 spectators witnessed a pulsating Semi Final which was won 25-6 by a Leinster team taking on Munster in a way that no other team has done for some time. Whilst there was disappointment for Munster, for Irish rugby there were no losers and it was a tremendous showcase for the game not only in Ireland but across Europe. Leinster met Leicester in the Final in Edinburgh and in front of 40,000 ecstatic Leinster fans they beat the English champions 19 points to 16 to record another great victory for Leinster and Irish rugby.

Ulster had a mixed season, their comprehensive victory against Munster in Thomond Park in the New Year being perhaps the highlight. However, it was encouraging to see a greater level of consistency come into their game as they moved up the Magners League table after a shaky start to the season. The ability to close out games will be the focus for next season given a lot of matches were lost whilst gaining a losing bonus point.

Connacht equally had a mixed season, reaching the knock-out stages of the European Challenge Cup before being put out of that competition in the Quarter Final by Northampton Saints. Their ability to compete consistently with the English and French clubs in the European Challenge Cup is still problematic and is proving difficult to resolve.

It would be remiss not to mention the official opening match in Thomond Park between Munster and New Zealand. Munster, fielding a largely reserve XV played the game of their lives narrowly losing to New Zealand 16 to 18. The commitment shown by the players, the enthusiasm of the supporters and the magnificent new stadium added up to a very special evening, capturing much of what the rugby ethos is all about.

The challenges in the professional game are no different to previous years and involve in the main, governance, finance



and playing resources. In terms of governance, considerable amount of time has been spent at Union and Branch level in addressing the management and reporting structures for professional rugby. Following a consultation process, there is agreement that all 4 provinces will set up Professional Game Boards which will manage all aspects of the professional game both on and off the pitch. As outlined earlier in the report, membership of these Boards will not be confined to representatives of the Branch or the IRFU but will provide for persons who can bring commercial/business expertise to the Board. These Professional Game Boards will have a reporting relationship to the respective Branches and through their Branches to the IRFU by way of regular meetings with the IRFU Management Committee. These regular meetings will ensure that there is a greater two way flow of information between the IRFU and the Branches and that there is a clear line of reporting and accountability to the IRFU for the activities in the Branches and in particular, in relation to the professional game.

In terms of finance the ability of the Union and the Branches to finance the professional game continues to be a challenge. Whilst the success of our professional teams and the National Team may help the situation, there is no doubt that the current economic environment will have a negative impact. The continued determination in France and to a lesser extent in England to buy players from other countries has had a dual impact, firstly, inflating the player market and secondly, raising the competitive standards which requires the Irish provinces to bolster their teams with a limited number of high quality overseas players. This obviously comes at a significant cost. Whilst the Union continues to carry most of the cost of the professional players, there is a growing contribution from the Branches. This has brought into focus the revenue generating abilities of the 4 provinces and the need for stadia with the capacity and facilities capable of sustaining this business model. Munster and Leinster are well served with large revenue generating facilities. Ulster is hampered by the limitations at Ravenhill and Connacht attendances mean their facilities are probably of an adequate size at present. The phased development at Ravenhill now underway may alleviate this problem for Ulster.

With regard to the playing resources, this has been a focus for the Performance Committee and the provinces during the season. Succession planning in each of the provincial national squads is constantly on the agenda. The need to have clear talent identification systems and an unambiguous elite player pathway has been the task of each provincial academy and the IRFU Performance Manager, Allen Clarke. This requires greater degrees of co-operation between provincial academies with schools and clubs. I am pleased to note that there has been some good progress in this area with a clearly structured plan both nationally and provincially. There is still scope for schools and the IRFU provincial performance systems to work more closely but from small steps great strides can be made. However, it is unlikely that in the short or medium term that the elite player development systems will remove the necessity to bolster our teams with overseas players. There are currently 43 overseas players under contract, including those who are eligible to play for Ireland, out of a total of 148 contracted players.

Part and parcel of player development is providing the "apprentice" professional players with appropriate game time opportunities. The increasing competitiveness of the Magners League means that opportunities are much more limited for development and academy players than was in the past. Game time for young players is provided by provincial "A" and club games. A new cross-border competition involving professional and semi-professional teams from Scotland, Wales, Ireland and England will commence next season. The provinces will enter teams equivalent to the provincial "A" teams and these fixtures along with a provincial "A" interpro series will provide sufficient game time in a professional rugby environment for development players without interfering with the AIB League.

The Magners League next season will include 2 extra weekends with Semi Final play-offs and a Final along with further improvements to ensure a better structured fixture schedule. This will bring additional value to the competition from both a commercial and rugby perspective. The Magners League as a competition has continued to successfully underpin the professional game in Ireland, Scotland and Wales. There continues to be a need for more progress on governance



THE SUCCESS OF OUR NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL TEAMS HAS BEEN FELT BY OUR CLUBS WHO HAVE WITNESSED A SURGE IN THE NUMBER OF MINI/YOUTH PLAYERS.

and commercial matters and a greater degree of alignment between all 3 Unions and their participating teams is needed to help the competition to reach its potential. Having said that, the performance of Magners League teams in European competition along with the performance of the Irish and Welsh National Teams says something about the quality of this competition. The continuing growth in the attendance numbers at matches in all 3 Unions is encouraging and nowhere more so than in Leinster and Munster. Celtic Rugby Ltd. is currently investigating the inclusion of 2 Italian teams into the competition from September 2010. This will depend on whether rugby, logistic, financial and commercial criteria make this a viable proposition or not. Potentially this would be of great significance for Italian rugby allowing the FIR to repatriate many of the Italian internationals playing the game in other countries.

At European level this has been a year of consolidation in ERC Ltd. with a strategic review process culminating in a new Strategic Plan. This has recommended amongst other things a new linkage between Heineken Cup and the European Challenge Cup to help build the profile of the latter competition. It will result in non-qualifying teams from Heineken Cup dropping down into the European Challenge Cup bringing greater interest and value to the closing stages of that competition with the winner of the European Challenge Cup gaining a place in the Heineken Cup of the following season. With 6 differently structured Unions and 4 club associations at the Board, it is difficult at times for all parties to be in agreement. However, there has been a much greater degree of unity of purpose this season and the continued recognition that the competitions run by ERC Ltd. are vital to the wellbeing of the professional game in Europe.

OTHER REPRESENTATIVE TEAMS

The programme of fixtures for other representative teams from the Ireland "A" Team down are important opportunities for emerging and developing players to benchmark their skills and abilities against their peers. It provides our High Performance personnel and in particular the National Coach, Declan Kidney, and the High Performance Manager, Allen Clarke, with opportunities to assess the progress of players with ultimately the National Team in mind.

Ireland "A" once again participated in the Barclay's Churchill Cup in June 2008 coached by Allen Clarke with John McKibbin as Manager. This proved a useful exercise with Ireland "A" beating USA and losing to England Saxons in their pool and beating Argentina "A" to come third. It highlighted some emerging talent notably Keith Earls who went on to gain his international cap in the autumn. There were 2 further fixtures scheduled during the RBS 6 Nations Championship. Unfortunately the fixture against England Saxons at Donnybrook was cancelled as the English Team felt the pitch was frozen and unplayable. The other fixture against Scotland "A" in the RDS was won by Ireland "A" convincingly, reversing the poor result the previous year. The "A" Team take part this coming June in the Churchill Cup, once again being held in USA, under the watchful eye of Declan Kidney and the National Team Management.

The Ireland U.20's participated in the Junior World Championship in Wales in June 2008 and in a non-vintage year struggled, coming ninth with only 2 wins out of 5 against Scotland and Tonga. Whilst the principal objective is player development at this level, performance in such tournaments is important against underage peer groups. The new intake of U.20 players for 2008/09 have had the benefit of a more focused high performance system supporting them and performed very well in the U.20 6 Nations beating all but Scotland including highly rated English and Welsh teams. This group, coached by Allen Clarke and managed by Philip Orr will participate in the Junior World Cup in Japan in June.

At U.18 level 2 teams were fielded, one drawn from the clubs participating in the FIRA/AER Championship and the U.18 Schools in the 6 Nations U.18 Tournament. The U.18 Club side won 2 fixtures in the FIRA/AER Championship to be placed third whilst the U.18 Schools side won 2 fixtures in Italy against Wales U.18 and Italy U.18, the third fixture cancelled as England deemed the pitch unplayable. The performances at U.18 level show an improvement on last year but the physical disparity between our players with those from the English and Welsh professional club academies is still evident. The High Performance systems that have been put in place in all provinces should start to address this issue with the co-operation of clubs and schools.

The Ireland Sevens Team under Coach, John Scurr, qualified for 2009 RWC Sevens at the Hanover qualifying tournament



and following qualification an Irish Sevens Team participated in 2009 RWC Sevens in Dubai. The size of our playing base and our commitment to the 4 professional teams makes it difficult to field a Sevens Team of first line players. Having said that the team performed with great credit following minimal preparation time, the highlight being the defeat of Australia in the pool stages. Ireland reached the Final of the "Bowl" competition, beaten by Zimbabwe by 14-17 points.

The Irish Womens Team, coached by Steven Hennessy, had an excellent 6 Nations Tournament coming third beating France, Italy and Scotland, losing narrowly to Wales and by a bigger margin to England. This performance gives the Irish Womens XV qualification for Women RWC 2010.

Finally the Irish Clubs XV coached by Brian Walsh had 2 fixtures resulting in a draw with England and a loss against Scotland. Once again this side was sponsored by AIB and our thanks for their support.

Full details of all fixtures can be accessed on the attached CD.

DOMESTIC GAME

The 2008/09 season saw the commencement of a new 4 year strategy by the Union to increase the vibrancy of the domestic game. The Domestic Game Committee, chaired by Finbarr Crowley has implemented a number of initiatives which will greatly enhance the club and school game.

Much has been said about the success of the Irish National Team. It is important to note that every effort has been made by the Union to share this success by taking the trophies to clubs, schools and local communities around the country.

The success of our national and provincial teams has been felt by our clubs who have witnessed a surge in the number of mini/youth players. The challenge for the Union is not in recruiting players, but ensuring that there is an appropriate number of club volunteers and appropriate facilities that allow a quality game environment to exist for these new participants.

The table below indicates the growth of the game over the last 12 months:-

	Ulster	Munster	Leinster	Connacht	Total 2009 ¹	Total 2008
Senior Males	6,546	5,889	9,860	2,082	24,377	23,398
Women	605	734	1,046	106	2,491	1,799
Age Grade (Secondary schools ²)	12,290	4,810	11,926	2,244	31,270	30,808
Age Grade (Club)	5,367	8,740	8,398	4,277	26,270	20,634
Mini Rugby	4,004	6,612	12,475	1,890	24,981	13,853
School Development Programme ³	15,404	13,221	13,296	7,441	49,362	37,789
Total - 2009	44,216	40,006	57,001	18,040	159,263	128,281

¹ Combined male and female adult teams

² Playing as part of a Secondary School league

³ Male and female who participate in 6 week rugby programme conducted in schools (using either Buntus, TAG, Lep Rugby or Mini Rugby)





Over the last 12 months the Domestic Game Committee has undertaken a number of operational reviews to ensure that we can tackle the challenges facing our clubs and schools and ensure that rugby continues to grow regardless of the current economic climate. In the coming seasons the Union is committed to increase the support and recognition of club and school volunteers who provide the early inspiration and encouragement to players that eventually go on to international rugby.

It is important to acknowledge the continued support of the Irish Sports Council for their financial grant to our domestic programme and a brief report on this programme follows:-

BRANCH EMPOWERMENT

We are now into the third year of the Branch Empowerment Programme. As reported last year, the domestic game in each Branch has a Provincial Domestic Game Manager who reports to the Branch CEO and Branch Domestic Game Chairman. The focus of this season has been increasing communication between the national and provincial Domestic Game Committees to ensure that national policies and initiatives are successfully implemented at local level.

As in previous seasons, George Spotswood will chair the annual review of Branch activities in the domestic game. The review process has changed this season to focus on the 'how' a Branch services the clubs and schools. A new review system is in place which allows clubs and schools to contribute to the review of the provincial domestic game. Areas identified which required greater focus by the IRFU and Branches will be incorporated into next season's Branch targets.

AGE GRADE RUGBY

A true measure of the vibrancy of the rugby in Ireland relates to the number of games of rugby played. This year the Union has paid special attention to 'playing the game' and creating opportunities for more people to play rugby. The Union has set an ambitious target of increasing the number of adult teams from 631 to 800 by 2012. Increasing the number of

adult teams is a reflection that our age grade pathways are effectively supporting the transition of our underage players to the adult game.

Rugby is very similar to other sports, in that there is a high drop out of participants in the late teens. In targeting this issue, the Domestic Game Committee established an Age Grade Committee, consisting of representatives of both the Youth and School Sub Committees. This Committee has the primary objective of implementing the strategic goal increasing the numbers of school and youth players transitioning to the adult game.

One such initiative undertaken by the Age Grade Committee was a review of competition structures and standardising the 'date of eligibility' for age grades. From the 2009/10 season, all 4 Branches for the first time will operate a common date of eligibility and regulations across age grade rugby.

An area for closer scrutiny next season by the Age Grade Committee will be mini rugby which is the entry point for the majority of participants. To ensure a life long involvement in the game there is a requirement to create an environment which encourages skill acquisition and development of the rugby ethos and values. Unfortunately, there is a minority who value winning over development with this age group. From next season, a national framework for mini rugby will be implemented and regulated by the Union and Branches which encourages development of all players, regardless of size, gender, nationality or ability. It is important that we invest in our young players, as it is the positive experiences as a juvenile which will result in lifelong commitment to the game.

CHILD WELFARE

The Union's Child Welfare Policy was updated to reflect best practice and was implemented through a series of workshops across the 4 provinces; in total 14 workshops were held, with a total of 464 volunteers undergoing training in the new policy. All clubs have appointed Club Welfare Officers to assist with best practice at all youth rugby activities. It is the Unions intention to conduct ongoing training and development of these volunteers.

TO ENSURE A LIFE LONG INVOLVEMENT IN THE GAME THERE IS A REQUIREMENT TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH ENCOURAGES SKILL ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE RUGBY ETHOS AND VALUES.

SCHOOLS

The Union again operated the Schools of Ireland Scheme, which resulted in 78 schools participating in the scheme. All these schools returned information on their respective rugby programmes. A review of the scheme is currently underway under the chairmanship of Ian McIlrath.

The Schools interprovincial games were played during October. These games were of a high standard and provided the National U.18 Schools Management with a good opportunity to assess players for the National U.18 Squad.

Schools across the provinces registered their players on the IRFU Player Registration Database. The ongoing registration of schoolboy players provides proof of the increasing popularity of rugby in schools throughout Ireland.

WOMENS RUGBY

In 2008, the Irish Womens Rugby Football Union integrated into the IRFU. The IRFU now represents both the male and female disciplines of the game. The integration process, lead by Denis Keohane, occurred a year ahead of schedule. An early sign of the benefits of integration, was the success of the Irish National Womens Team, who under leadership of Coach, Steven Hennessey, finished third in the Womens 6 Nations and automatically qualified for the 2010 Womens World Cup in England. This is the best ever result for the Womens National Team.

The Womens game continues to grow in Ireland, and with the continued support of the Irish Sports Councils 'Women in Sport Programme', it is the Union's intention to increase the resources to this emerging area of the game. The growth of the Womens game creates a number of opportunities for the Union through opening up a new population of participants, increase volunteerism and the vibrancy of our clubs.

THIRD LEVEL

For many players, third level is an extension of schools rugby and a stepping stone to the club game. The Domestic Game Committee established a Working Party, chaired by David Carrigy, which reviewed this sector. A number of key recommendations, including the creation of a Third Level Committee, will be implemented by the Union which will see this sector better supported and resourced by the Union and Branches in future seasons.

CLUB DEVELOPMENT

The Union circulated to all clubs a Club Development Guide which consists of a number of brochures outlining best practice in club development, including facilities management, refereeing, medical standards and club development. In parallel with publishing the Club Development Guide and distributing the Guide to all clubs, a Working Party under the chairmanship of Diarmuid Kelly developed an award system which will recognise clubs who follow best practice in club development. This award system will be implemented in the 2010/2011 season.

LEISURE RUGBY

In 2008 the number of Bud Light IRFU TAG teams increased to 468 across 24 venues. It is important to note that all club venues participate in a revenue sharing arrangement with the Union. The Union also operated a number of Beach Festivals and in total over 113 teams participated across 4 venues. While there could be a claim that this is a "light" form of rugby, it is important to note that the majority of participants are not members of rugby clubs with a high percentage of females participating. A survey of participants indicated that most people participated in TAG due to convenience, fitness and the social element. TAG continues to grow with more venues operating in 2009. The challenge for the clubs is in converting TAG players, into club members, through creating opportunities for them to remain active participants in the club all year round.

COACHING

The demand for coaching courses in the provinces last season was again very high with 40 mini rugby, 20 Foundation Level, and 8 Level 1 Coaching Courses delivered by our provincial development staff and tutors.

Nationally there was a Level 3 Coaching Course (10 days), a Level 2 Coaching Course (6 days) and an Assistant Level 2 Coaching Course (2 days) delivered during the summer months. The quality of tutors delivering all IRFU courses has been exceptional and very encouraging for the future.

The second IRFU Tutor Training Course was also delivered (2 days) in which 31 tutors participated which brings the total number of new tutors in training to 52. Some of these tutors also have recently successfully completed the IRB Educator Programme (16 tutors) which allows them to deliver IRB





coaching courses as part of the support scheme for Tier 2, 3 and 4 Unions in Europe.

For the Union's more experienced coaches, a Scrum Symposium (2 days) was attended by the best scrum coaches in Ireland with Didier Retiere (FFR) contributing from a French perspective – excellent recommendations for both player and coaching initiatives to improve the quality of scrummaging in Irish rugby were delivered to the IRFU for consideration.

Finally, the 6 Nations Elite Coaches Conference was held (4 days) in Rome and was attended by 6 Irish coaches (actively in the level 3 programme) as part of their continuous development initiatives.

CLUB SUPPORT SCHEME

The Club Support Scheme continued again this season and is only possible through a financial contribution from the professional game from each province. This is an important principle, as a component of the provincial professional game revenues are being invested into clubs. The scheme provides support for areas of the game that the IRFU believe require greatest attention. These include, coach development, adult/U.20/Womens Team participation, referee development, child protection and club development, etc. Branches are now administering the scheme directly, with any provincial surplus being reinvested by the Branches into local club initiatives.

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 who contributed to the development of players awarded professional contracts.

A number of projects have been undertaken to expose new participants to the game. One such project undertaken by the Munster Branch, has brought rugby to the non traditional rugby playing areas in Limerick. It evolved from the work of development officers already working in the area, but with a specific emphasis on how this area could benefit from being involved in rugby. Like other initiatives, the goal was to establish participation in the game while giving the community focus and involvement in an international sport.

Similarly the Connacht Branch has been embarking on a programme of developing rugby within the Gaeltacht region of Connemara. Connacht Rugby have appointed three Irish speaking Development Officers working in this region as well as schools around Barna. In addition, Carraroe RFC have hosted summer camps, delivered in Irish, for the past 4 years and they have been able to avail of an Udras grant to subsidize costs.

In Ulster Branch a number of Development Officers have been deployed in Donegal. Rugby development occurred in a number of primary and secondary schools (57 in total) with local blitzes and competitions being operated. As a result of the increased activity within schools, 2 clubs, Ballyshannon and Inishowen, established their own mini rugby sections. This will serve to support the future development of the clubs.



AIB CUP AND LEAGUE

In early September, the IRFU Domestic Game Committee announced a revised structure to the 1st Division of the AIB League from the start of next season (2009-10). The top 8 clubs at the end of this season's 1st Division will form a new Division 1A and the next 6 clubs along with the 2 promoted clubs will form Division 1B. There will be 2 up, 2 down between A and B each season along with the bottom 2 in B being relegated to Division 2 and replaced by 2 promoted clubs. The top 3 clubs in 1A and the top club in 1B will qualify for the right to play-off for the Divisional Championship.

This certainly seemed to concentrate the club's minds as, entering the final round of League games, only 3 points covered the top 7 clubs!

The results of the AIB League are covered on the attached CD. Congratulations to winners of Division 1 Cork Constitution, Division 2 UCC and Division 3 Galway Corinthians. The Division 2 and 3 Divisional Finals were played in Garryowen RFC on 9th May with Ballynahinch defeating UCC and Old Wesley beating Galway Corinthians in 2 excellent matches. The Division 1 Final was played in Thomond Park, Limerick later the same afternoon, with Shannon defeating Clontarf after the match had ended drawn after extra time. Shannon were declared the winners as they had scored the first try in the game, both sides having scored 2 tries.

The AIB Cup Finals were again played in Dubarry Park, Athlone in early April. Ballynahinch from Division 2 qualified for their first Cup Final and on the way beat successive 1st Division clubs, Shannon, Galwegians and Garryowen. In the Final they

turned the form book upside down by convincingly beating Cork Constitution, top of Division 1, 23-6. Tullamore reversed the result of last years AIB Junior Cup Final by beating Navan 23-13.

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 regulation changes have been agreed for next season.

MEDICAL

The Medical Department of the IRFU continues to provide support for the national and provincial medical teams in the provision of medical care of professional rugby players. In addition the Medical Department is involved in a number of important initiatives for the domestic game.

Some of the important areas of progress from the Medical Department during this season include the following:

- First Aid Emergency Kits - each of the national teams has been given a dedicated set of medical equipment to deal with all types of medical emergencies that can occur in rugby. These Kits will be present during all squad assemblies for our national teams.
- Research - the Medical Department produced a number of research studies that were presented at the Faculty of Sports Medicine meeting at Croke Park in September 2008.



- Injury Prevention – the relatively low occurrence of injuries in our National Squad players can be attributed to the introduction of an injury prevention programme. This programme has been expanded and will shortly be developed into a series of 15 rugby specific exercises for general use by all rugby players in Ireland.
- Pre-participation evaluation – a medical student worked on a project over the season relating to the outcome of the last 3 years of the pre-participation examinations. The outcome of this project has resulted in a more efficient and effective process of pre-participation evaluation.
- Cameron Steele, National Team Physiotherapist, has continued to convene an excellent programme of in-service training for our national and provincial physiotherapists which takes place 2-3 times per year.

Dr. Gary O’Driscoll has been the National Team Doctor for the last 5 years. He has been an integral part of many of the developments in the Medical Department and numerous national campaigns. Prior to this he was the team doctor for the National U.20/U.21 Teams. In June he will be a team doctor for his second Lions tour. In March of this year he accepted a position as team doctor for Arsenal FC. We wish him the very best in his new role and expect that he will continue to be a member of the Medical Advisory Committee.

Dr. Conor McCarthy represents the IRFU on a number of groups to include: IRB Medical Advisory Committee; IRB Catastrophic Injuries Working Group; IRB Scrum Project Working Group; Irish Heart Foundation – Council on Sudden Cardiac Death; Irish Institute of Sport Advisory Board.

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 was 1 positive test for a non performance enhancing drug.

2008/09 ANTI-DOPING PROGRAMME

In Competition Testing

Team	No. of Players tested
Senior XV	07
“A” Team	02
U.20	10
ERC and Magners League	12
AIB League Club XV’s	20
Women	02
7s	02

OUT OF COMPETITION TESTING

Team	No. of Players tested
Provincial Squads	30
Clubs	22

THE NEW AVIVA STADIUM AT LANSLOWNE ROAD CONTINUES TO DEVELOP AT A PACE. THE FIRST MATCH WILL BE A RUGBY FIXTURE IN AUGUST 2010 INVOLVING THE 4 PROVINCES AND PLANS ARE BEING DRAWN UP TO MAKE THIS A VERY SPECIAL OCCASION FOR IRISH RUGBY.



CHARITABLE TRUST

The IRFU Charitable Trust celebrates its 30th Anniversary in 2009. The Trust was founded primarily to assist with the financial needs of severely injured players and their families. Over the 30 years of its existence the Trust has provided a variety of assistance ranging from providing financial contributions towards the cost of house renovations to the purchase of livestock.

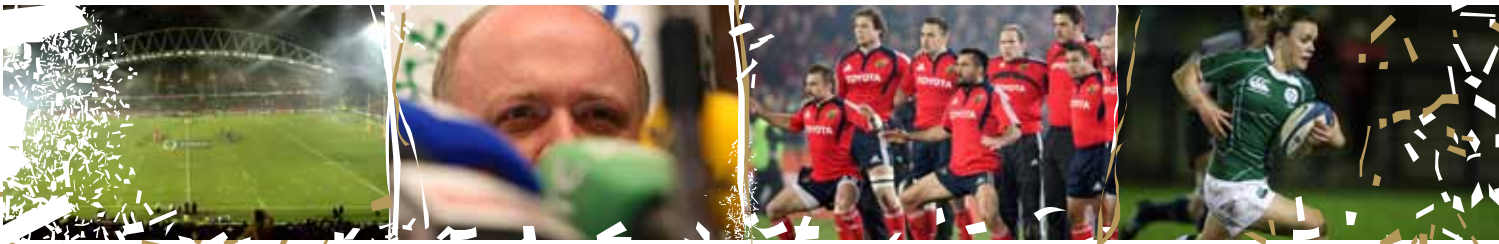
During 2008/09 the Charitable Trust Sub Committee met 6 times under the chairmanship of J.F. Smith. The efforts of the Sub Committee members inside and outside of these meetings have been unstinting and deserving of praise. It is anticipated that c. €200,000 will be paid out to the 34 players under the Trust's care over the course of the year. During the year it was decided to appoint Quintessential Limited to assist with fundraising for the Trust and this has already resulted in increased Friends' membership and the hosting of the O₂ Captain's Ball, major sports quiz and a number of other initiatives.

It would be remiss not to mention that over the 30 years of the Trust's existence one man has been on the Sub Committee throughout namely, P.F. Madigan. I would take this opportunity to pay tribute to Paddy for his efforts over this time and look forward to his continued participation in future years.

FACILITIES

The new Aviva Stadium at Lansdowne Road continues to develop at a pace. It is now a significant landmark on the Dublin skyline and is on budget, scheduled to be completed in less than 12 months time at the end of April 2010. The unique design of the stadium together with the quality of the structure has already made a significant impression on those who have visited the site. The IRFU and FAI are now making monthly financial contributions to the project costs as the Government grant monies were fully drawn down at the end of 2008. The first match will be a rugby fixture in August 2010 involving the 4 provinces and plans are being drawn up to make this a very special occasion for Irish rugby. The first rugby international will be in November 2010. As the development moves towards conclusion next year so there is a greater focus on commissioning and operation of the facility. The early appointment of an Operations Management Team under the Stadium Director, Martin Murphy, will ensure the smooth commissioning and opening of the facility. The support of the Minister of Sport, Martin Cullen TD, and that of his late predecessor, Seamus Brennan, along with the assistance of his colleagues in the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism is gratefully acknowledged as is the support of the Office of Public Works.

Thomond Park was completed on time and on budget, costing some €40m. It is a magnificent facility and congratulations to all involved, especially Pat Whelan who chaired the development company. The official opening involving the match between Munster and New Zealand was a fitting occasion and there is no doubt that Thomond Park now gives Munster a financial engine necessary to compete with the other major European rugby clubs. Again our appreciation for Government support is gratefully acknowledged.



THOMOND PARK WAS COMPLETED ON TIME AND ON BUDGET, COSTING SOME €40M. IT IS A MAGNIFICENT FACILITY AND CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL INVOLVED, ESPECIALLY PAT WHELAN WHO CHAIRED THE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY.

In Dublin Leinster's arrangement with the RDS continues to work very well. The RDS constructed a roof to the new stand giving a greater degree of spectator comfort and the family friendly atmosphere with ease of access has made Leinster matches amongst the consistently best attended in Europe.

The phase 1 development of Ravenhill has commenced with the new facilities hopefully being in place for next season which will include a new stand and hospitality facilities opposite the existing stand. Whilst there is no increase in the current capacity, there will be scope to increase the capacity of Ravenhill towards 15,000 over further phases of development. Consideration has also been given by the Ulster Branch and the IRFU to various stadium development proposals that have emerged in Ulster over the past few years. The proposed stadium development at the Maze site has now been scrapped by the authorities and proposals for development of smaller facilities of 20,000 to 25,000 capacities are being considered. Facilities of this size will need to be in the medium to long term plan for Ulster if the province is to match the revenue generating potential of Munster and Leinster.

New floodlighting became operational in the Galway Sportsground this season giving Connacht additional flexibility and options in terms of kick-off times. There are plans for further development of spectators facilities opposite the Bord na gCon stand but at this point in time they have not progressed beyond concept design.

The current economic environment has meant that the Elite Training Facility at the Abbotstown Sports Campus may take longer to complete. A Planning Application has been submitted by Sports Campus Ireland Ltd. and hopefully the funding will be made available by the Government at some point in time in the near future if the Planning Application is successful. This facility will be critical to the continuing development of the National Team and underage teams into the future and only then will the Irish National Team have comparable facilities with those in other countries.

COMMERCIAL AND MARKETING

Rugby is an expensive business which requires ongoing investment and continuously growing revenue streams to compete in the professional environment. To that end the work carried about by Pat Fitzgerald and the Commercial and Marketing Committee and the Department has been of great service to Irish rugby in a very difficult marketplace. The growth achieved represents the strength of the Irish rugby brand which we hope to develop even further in coming seasons.

The following outlines the headlines of this years activity.

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME UP-DATE

Our thanks to O₂ CEO, Danuta Grey, and Damian Devaney, Marketing Director, and all of the team at O₂, our National Team sponsor. Their commitment and support to the Union and the team are greatly appreciated. The 'Be the Difference' Campaign during the RBS 6 Nations which invited members of the public to show their support to the Team was wonderfully innovative and of huge benefit in creating that vital momentum in helping the Team to win this season.

Our thanks to Canterbury of New Zealand who have been our kit sponsors for the past 8 years and step aside at the end of the season. Over the years as a company they have kitted out our representative teams to a very high standard and have helped create and drive the market place for replica product in a manner only imagined at the advent of professionalism in the sport. We wish the company every success in the future and thank them warmly for their contribution to Irish rugby.

Going forward I would like to welcome Puma our new kit sponsor with whom we commence a new relationship next season. Puma are a global iconic brand with a proven track record in sport and we look forward to working with them for mutual benefit.

Our thanks and appreciation also to RBS as sponsors of the 6 Nations, Guinness as our official beer and Guinness Series sponsors and AIB our Community Rugby Partners and to all of our other sponsors and partners. Without the support from the Government through the Irish Sports Council and similarly from Corporate Ireland, the game cannot aspire to the level it does.



NEW SPONSORSHIPS THIS PAST SEASON INCLUDE:-

- Puma as official kit supplier
- L'Oreal For Men Expert as an official partner
- Facis as official formal wear partner
- Aviva as mini rugby festivals partner and stadium naming rights partner

SPONSORSHIPS THAT HAVE BEEN RENEWED INCLUDE:-

- Price Waterhouse Coopers as official sponsor of the U.20, U.19 and U.18 and Ireland schools teams
- DHL as official express and logistics partner

At the time of writing new sponsorships and partnerships are being negotiated and will be reported in due course. In spite of these turbulent times I am confident that we can look to the future with optimism.

The success of the Grand Slam win has also opened up additional revenue generating opportunities and an IRFU licensing programme is being rolled out which will see a whole new range of Irish rugby branded merchandise available to rugby supporters through a completely new distribution network.

AVIVA STADIUM COMMERCIAL PROGRAMME

The development of the New Stadium now the Aviva Stadium (which is reported on elsewhere) also requires considerable funding, and to that end we have created programmes to secure these vital revenues.

As mentioned above the most significant has been the securing of the Naming Rights partner Aviva in a landmark deal which will help the Stadium Company, the FAI and the IRFU provide events in a centrally located iconic venue which will benefit all sports and concert enthusiasts. I would like to welcome Hibernian Aviva CEO, Stuart Purdey, and all his team into the extended IRFU family. We look forward to a great working relationship with you both at the stadium and also with our mini rugby grassroots programme which Aviva will support.

The IRFU 10 Year Ticket Scheme was launched in August 2007. The Union has also been marketing corporate boxes at the Aviva Stadium to its commercial partners and sponsors, to date our sales targets have been achieved.

All in all we look forward to a return to the Aviva Stadium in 2010 and to many exciting matches there.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

Much of the marketing effort this past season has been concentrated on increasing participation in the game with particular emphasis on effecting better communication and stronger promotion of the sport.

The communications function of the Union has seen continued growth over the last 12 months. In line with the Strategic Plan launched in September, a new communications programme has been implemented. The new programme aims to deliver a more coherent strategy for the Union to communicate with its key stakeholders in Irish rugby.



Much work has also gone into auditing and developing our domestic game marketing and communications strategies and along with our community rugby partners, AIB, we have been working to help rejuvenate club rugby in Ireland. Going forward a new marketing programme will be rolled out to build on the work undertaken to date.

This past season has seen 2 issues of 'In Touch' the official magazine of the IRFU published which were 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 per issue.

The broadcasting viewership figures this past season were also excellent with the Grand Slam match against Wales breaking records as the most watched Irish television programme of the year peaking at over 1.3 million viewers. On BBC viewership has also held up very well in the UK delivering an avenue for all Irish rugby supports there to follow the National Team.

'Against the Head' which appears weekly on RTE, has transmitted more AIB League, Cup and Club International rugby than ever before with a new addition this season of matches being streamed live both on RTE's website and on Irish Rugby TV (more below on this). Through our partnerships with Setanta and Sky TV more coverage on the U.20 matches, provincial schools cup competitions and Magners League and of course the Heineken Cup reinforces the breath of televised rugby on offer for the public which is of great benefit for our sponsors and partners.

In terms of the fun side of the game we are entering into our second season of Bud Light Tag Rugby. It is performing beyond expectations, opening up a new market of rugby enthusiasts into the game and it has proven to be a very significant source of revenue to the clubs involved during the traditionally fallow summer months.

IRISH RUGBY SUPPORTERS CLUB

The Supporters Club has continued to deliver a value for money service to members this season. Match day events in Croke Park for the games against Argentina and France proved hugely popular, especially with post match visits from players.

The club's commitment to assisting members in following the team also saw another heavily subscribed charter flight to Wales for the final cliff-hanger of a game of the 2009 RBS 6 Nations Championship.

Combined with all the regular features – exclusive competitions, articles and images the club has continued to grow and there has been a further up surge in membership since the Grand Slam victory.

IRISHRUGBY.IE

This season has proven to be very successful for IrishRugby.ie. Visitor numbers and page views have continued to grow with the knock-on effect of an increase in advertising revenue.

The re-vamp of the site homepage offered even greater scope to fulfil the remit of the Union to promote the game at every level with the provision of enhanced club and community coverage a key feature. The AIB League section of the website is consistently one of the top 5 most visited areas of the website.

The introduction of the dedicated multimedia section IrishRugby TV saw the already excellent video coverage on the site given even more scope to attract visitors and to promote the game. This new area of the site attracted over 20,000 visitors in the first 3 days of launch. The exclusive IrishRugby TV content for the Grand Slam homecoming attracted a huge web audience with several of the videos getting over 8,000 hits in a single working day.



2008 also saw IrishRugby.ie shortlisted for a prestigious Golden Spider award in the Sports and Leisure Category.

The RBS 6 Nations period of February and March for 2009 was our most successful to date with a 50% increase in page views and 42% increase in visitors over the same period in 2008.

With a total of 5.4 million page views and over 800,000 visitors in the 8 week period the site performance and streaming was exceptional.

CORPORATE AFFAIRS

International team support and events are the main activity of the Corporate Affairs Department in addition to supporting the Committee, Standing and Sub Committees of the Union.

Staff provide logistical support for management and squads of 9 separate national teams involved in international competition each season. There were 68 international matches played in 2008/09. This season's activities also included the additional requirements of participating in the IRB Sevens RWC in Dubai.

Match and training kit was issued to each squad and management and referees for 68 matches. Referees (including TJ's and TMO's) were appointed to officiate at 27 senior internationals and 892 other matches which entailed travel arrangements. The movement of teams and referees is a considerable exercise particularly during the RBS 6 Nations, with 5 teams travelling at the same time this season including the Ireland Sevens. This is coordinated through our IRFU Team Services, Travel and Accommodation staff. We also provide support for incoming teams through our International Team Coordinator and Volunteer Liaison Officers.

Matches at Croke Park require a significant amount of time and effort. The National Team has now played there on 9 occasions including for the first time November Internationals with visits by the All Blacks and Argentina. There are 5 remaining games scheduled at Croke Park prior to the opening of the Aviva Stadium. This season saw the historic "All Ireland" (ERC) Semi Final played at Croke Park on 2nd May with key input from the Corporate Affairs team. We also held the first International in the New Thomond Park in November with the visit of Canada. Over 325,000 tickets for all matches were printed and managed by the IRFU Ticket Office during the season.

The IRFU is again grateful to Peter McKenna, Stadium Director of Croke Park, and his team for their support and assistance.

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

1. Ireland Summer Tour to Canada and USA
2. Churchill Cup in Denver
3. IRB U.20 World Championship in Japan
4. Autumn Internationals – South Africa and Australia in Croke Park and a first rugby international in RDS with the visit of Fiji.

The activity of the various IRFU Committee, Sub Committees and Working Parties is also supported by IRFU Corporate Affairs staff. Over 130 meetings were managed by the team. The new Strategic Plan for 2008–2012 was published and as outlined already a Governance Review was undertaken resulting in a new Branch to IRFU reporting structure and establishment of Professional Game Boards in each province.

We are extremely grateful to all of our IRFU staff for their dedication during the year and the constant willingness shown by them to provide an excellent service with a "can do" manner in a cost effective way!





HUMAN RESOURCES

The IRFU has a very busy HR Department which not only looks after the HR needs of the general administrative and rugby development staff but which also interacts closely with the professional game. Professional players and coach contracts fall within the brief and Maurice Dowling, HR Director, is heavily involved in contract negotiations for national and provincial players.

The current economic climate has prompted reviews of salary levels, pension arrangements, recruitment – no different to any other organisation – all with a view to ensuring a sustainable business. Consultants Hay Group were invited to conduct a benchmarking exercise in relation to salaries and benefits across all levels in the organisation in the second half of last year. Overall the Union compared favourably with market norms and was generally at the average or slightly ahead for the full range of roles assessed. The methodology employed by Hay Group and the sizing of jobs will allow the IRFU to monitor market changes more easily and to make adjustments as appropriate.

The most pressing issues in relation to compliance during this period related to Data Protection and Work Permits. Others stem from the inevitable challenges that present when employing and paying staff in 2 different jurisdictions.

Both at Branch and club level we continue to utilise professional rugby players from overseas. Our requirements are quite specific and we are without any suitable comparator here. Conscious of our role as a National Governing Body however, with responsibility for all aspects of the game at both amateur and professional level, we continue to strive for the highest standards in terms of process and qualifying criteria. We have been fortunate to enjoy strong support from the Department

of Enterprise Trade and Employment in this regard. With the Department we have completed a review of this process and the revised policy documents have been formally issued to all Branches and clubs.

Discussions with IRUPA to agree terms for a new Partnership Agreement have been successfully concluded. This agreement will provide a framework for managing the formal relationship between the Union and the Players Association and for working together in the best interests of Irish rugby. This will include an associated funding contribution to IRUPA. In line with IRB Regulations, we are also working with IRUPA and the Association of Rugby Agents in the UK to finalise an Agent Accreditation process that will best serve players and the individual Clubs and Unions who negotiate with player agents.

The Player Services Programme is now entering its second year. This programme is a joint venture between the IRFU and IRUPA and has been very well received by players to date bringing as it does a clear focus on lifestyle issues and most notably on possible careers after rugby. Work continues under the guidance of the Player Education and Welfare Group on generating options for modularised programmes for individuals interested in pursuing third level education or vocational training while they are still playing. The programme is a good example of the benefits of adopting a partnership approach to the pursuit of what is best for all involved in professional rugby.



COMMITTEE

Each year the Annual Report highlights the scope and extent of the work of the IRFU Committee and its Sub Committees and this past year has been no different. In many ways this work is mirrored in the 4 Branches and once again I must express appreciation on behalf of all involved in our game for the commitment of time and expertise by the many voluntary administrators at Union, Branch and club level. The game cannot function without this input and contribution and our wonderful professional staff at IRFU and Branch level are the “oil” that helps our voluntary structures work to best effect.

Special mention must be made of John Hussey who steps down after 2 terms as Chairman of the IRFU Management Committee. John made a significant contribution in both his club, St. Mary’s College, and the Leinster Branch before his appointment to the IRFU Committee in 1996. His own business expertise lent itself to the IRFU’s initial strategic review process which he led which culminated in the IRFU’s first Strategic Plan in 2003. He was appointed Chairman of the inaugural IRFU Management Committee and he has led that group with distinction for the last 6 years in what can only be described as tumultuous times for rugby. In addition he has been Chairman of Celtic Rugby Ltd. which runs the Magners League and has, often in difficult political circumstances, overseen the growth of that competition as the vital foundation of the professional game in the Celtic Unions. His expertise as a Director of the Board has also been available to the Lansdowne Road Stadium Development Company which is responsible for the development of the Aviva Stadium. This will give some idea of the commitment John Hussey has made to Irish rugby not to mention his role in the IRFU Charitable Trust of which he is a past Chairman. Sincere thanks to John and his wife, Patricia, on behalf of the IRFU and also the professional staff at Lansdowne Road who have worked closely with him over

the past 6 years. Finbarr Crowley is the IRFU Committee’s nomination for Chairman of the Management Committee for next season and our best wishes to him in the formidable task that lies ahead.

Der Healy finishes his term of office as Immediate Past President and our thanks to him for his many contributions to the IRFU since 1999, particularly as the first Chairman of the Domestic Game Committee and more recently as Chairman of the Performance Committee. His contributions to the IRFU have been matched by his commitment to his club, Highfield RFC and to his work in the Munster Branch. Best wishes to Der and his wife, Nuala.

OBITUARIES

Dr. Jack Molony

UCD, Bective Rangers, 1 Cap (1950)

Michael Carroll

President IRFU (1984-85)

J.F. Dooley

Galwegians, 3 Caps (1959)

J.H. Buckley

Sunday’s Well, 2 Caps (1973)

Shane Geoghegan

Garryowen FC

Dr. Karl Mullen

Old Belvedere RFC, 25 Caps (1947-50), Captain of the British and Lions in 1950, President Leinster Branch (1963-64)





OFFICE BEARERS AND COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT

J.P. Lyons

VICE PRESIDENTS

J.R. Callaghan C.C. Powell

HON. TREASURER

T. Grace

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

D.V. Healy

CHAIRMAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

J.D. Hussey

COMMITTEE

P. Fitzgerald	C. Fitzgerald
W.B. Glynn	L. Galvin
F. Crowley	T.H.N. Jackson
L.P. Magee	S.R. Hilditch
M.J. McLoughlin	G. Drennan
G. Quaid	I. McIlrath
M.J. O'Sullivan	F. MacLoughlin
D. Keohane	

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD

P.J. Boyle P. Whelan

SIX NATIONS COMMITTEE

P.J. Boyle P. Whelan

EUROPEAN RUGBY CUP

P.J. Boyle P. Browne

CELTIC LEAGUE

J.D. Hussey P. Browne

TRUSTEES

A.R. Dawson	T.J. Kiernan
W.S.H. Lavery	Dr. S. Millar

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

P. Browne

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS

K. Potts

DIRECTOR OF RUGBY

E. Wigglesworth

DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

M. Dowling

DIRECTOR OF COMMERCIAL & MARKETING

P. Power

FINANCIAL CONTROLLER

C. O'Brien

DOMESTIC GAME MANAGER

S. Walker

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Dr. C. McCarthy

NATIONAL COACH

D. Kidney

STANDING COMMITTEES 2008/09

MANAGEMENT

J.D. Hussey, T. Grace, P.J. Boyle, P. Whelan, T.H.N. Jackson, J.P. Lyons, P. Fitzgerald, F. Crowley, J.R. Callaghan, P. Browne, (E. Wigglesworth and K. Potts).

REPRESENTATIVE GAME

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

DOMESTIC GAME

F. Crowley, I. McIlrath, S.R. Hilditch, G.C. Quaid, D. Keohane, C.C. Powell, L.P. Magee, L. Galvin, G. Drennan, M.J. McLoughlin, (S. Walker, K. Potts and G. Black).

FINANCE

T. Grace, J.P. Lyons, J.R. Callaghan, S.R. Hilditch, C. Fitzgerald, L. Galvin, F. Crowley, L. Quinn (co-opted), (P. Browne, C. O'Brien and K. Potts).

COMMERCIAL AND MARKETING

P. Fitzgerald, T. Grace, G. Drennan, C. Fitzgerald, D. Keohane, J. Redmond, P. Piggott (co-opted), (P. Browne, P. Power, and K. Richardson).



SUB COMMITTEES 2008/09

PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

D.V. Healy, T.H.N. Jackson, J.D. Hussey, T. Grace, P. Whelan, (P. Browne and E. Wigglesworth).

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, F. MacLoughlin and (É. Sayers).

REGULATIONS

F. Crowley, P. O'Connor, G.C. Spotswood (co-opted) and G. Black.

AGE GRADE

L.P. Magee, G. Drennan, D. Keohane, D.V. Healy, C.C. Powell, Nominee from Schools, Nominee from Youth, G. Spotswood, (S. Walker and A. Clarke).

SCHOOLS

G. Drennan, C.C. Powell, S.R. Hilditch, I. McIlrath, Fr. J. Gough, K. Patton, L. Balfe, P. Cafferkey, C. Cullinane and (J. Murphy).

YOUTH

D. Keohane, G.C. Quaid, S.R. Hilditch, M.J. McLoughlin, W. Gribben, B. Mescal, H. Woodhouse, T. McCoy, R. Steward and (H. Kruger).

WOMEN'S

D. Keohane, S. Carty, D. Lynch, M. Andrews, C. O'Donoghue, C. Kenny, S. Cosgrave and Dr. J. G. Neary.

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, B. Stirling, B. Smith, D. Templeton, O.E. Doyle and S.R. Hilditch (in his capacity as I.R.B. Referee Selector).

COACHING

S.R. Hilditch and L.P. Magee.

REMUNERATION

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

AIB LEAGUE

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

CELTIC LEAGUE

J.D. Hussey and P. Browne.

CHARITABLE TRUST

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

REPRESENTATIVES

STADIUM COMPANY DIRECTORS

J.D. Hussey, N.A. Murphy, P. Browne, J. Delaney, D. Blood and M. Cody.

CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

P. O'Connor.

CHILD WELFARE OFFICER

H. Kruger.

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

J.D. Hussey and É. Sayers.

F.I.R.A. REPRESENTATIVE

S.R. Hilditch.

THE IRFU WISHES TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS OF IRISH RUGBY.



Sponsor of the Ireland Senior Squad and Ireland 'A'
Official Mobile Telecommunications Partner to the IRFU



Official Soft Drink of the IRFU



Match Sponsor of the Guinness Series
Official Beer Supplier to the IRFU



AVIVA STADIUM

Stadium and Insurance Partner to the IRFU



Sponsor of the RBS 6 Nations Championship



Official Betting Partner of the IRFU



Strategic Partner of the Community Rugby Programme,
AIB League, AIB Cup, AIB Junior Cup, AIB Club International



Official Supplier of Match Balls



Official Kit Supplier to the IRFU



Official Sports Drink of the IRFU



Supporting Irish Rugby



Official Partner to the IRFU



Official Sponsor of Irish College Rugby



Sponsor of Tag Rugby



Official Sponsor of the Cryotherapy Programme



Official Sponsor of the U20, U19 & U18 and Ireland Schoolboy Teams



Official Snack of the IRFU



Official Formal Wear Supplier to the IRFU



Official Express and Logistics Partner to the IRFU



Official Outfitters of the IRFU



Official Spirit of the IRFU



Official Wine Supplier to the IRFU



Official Partner of the IRFU



Retail Partner to the IRFU



Official Print Partner of the IRFU



Official Car Supplier to the IRFU



Sponsors of the HSBC Rugby Festivals

ACCOUNTS



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INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

		2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
		€	€	€
Income:	Schedule			
Representative matches	1	49,648,864	42,082,957	48,741,571
Share of profit after tax of joint ventures	(Note 7)	(16,297)	17,330	-
Other income	2	7,321,200	7,641,571	6,758,886
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		56,953,767	49,741,858	55,500,457
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Expenditure:				
Professional game costs	3	31,813,262	27,977,032	27,374,513
Elite player development	4	3,324,060	2,614,313	2,896,585
Games support costs	5	695,459	660,228	691,528
Domestic and community rugby	6	10,560,626	10,348,535	10,713,727
Marketing	7	1,146,115	1,167,100	1,121,108
Grounds	8	612,332	509,952	1,631,957
Administration and overheads	9	5,680,234	5,241,183	4,615,410
Depreciation	(Note 3)	1,186,103	1,321,598	1,281,272
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		55,018,191	49,839,941	50,326,100
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Surplus (deficit) for year		1,935,576	(98,083)	5,174,357

T. Grace
Honorary Treasurer

P.R. Browne
Chief Executive

STATEMENT OF TOTAL RECOGNISED GAINS AND LOSSES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€	€
Surplus (deficit) for the financial period attributable to the Union	1,935,576	(98,083)	5,174,357
Difference between expected and actual return on pension scheme assets	(1,574,000)	(1,060,000)	140,000
Experience gains on pension scheme liabilities	61,000	209,000	100,000
Effect of changes in actuarial assumptions	416,000	653,000	(321,000)
Total surplus (deficit) relating to the period	838,576	(296,083)	5,093,357
Total surplus (deficit) recognised since the last annual report	838,576	(296,083)	5,093,357

RECONCILIATION OF MOVEMENT IN UNION FUNDS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€	€
Balance at 1 May	21,229,424	21,525,507	16,432,150
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
	23,768,900	24,064,983	18,971,626
Total recognised surplus (deficit) relating to the period	838,576	(296,083)	5,093,357
Balance at 30 April	24,607,476	23,768,900	24,064,983

BALANCE SHEET**AS AT 30 APRIL 2009**

	Note	30/04/09 €	30/04/08 €
Tangible fixed assets			
Tangible assets	3	39,738,781	35,567,520
Stadium redevelopment in progress	4	31,180,907	4,483,090
		70,919,688	40,050,610
Financial fixed assets			
Loans to clubs	5	1,560,929	1,784,271
Financial investments	6	14,261,778	11,547,130
Joint ventures:	7		
- Share of gross assets		27,082,490	8,335,895
- Share of gross liabilities		(27,081,451)	(8,318,563)
		15,823,746	13,348,733
Current assets			
Debtors and prepayments	8	8,932,064	11,052,677
Cash at bank and in hand		38,305,611	52,462,451
		47,237,675	63,515,128
Current liabilities			
Creditors and accrued expenses	9	12,133,825	10,369,176
Net current assets			
		35,103,850	53,145,952
Total assets less current liabilities			
		121,847,284	106,545,295
Pension liability	10	(1,050,000)	(6,000)
Deferred ticket fund	11	(96,189,808)	(82,770,395)
		24,607,476	23,768,900
Financed by:			
Union funds		24,607,476	23,768,900

T. Grace
Honorary Treasurer

P.R. Browne
Chief Executive

CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

	Note	2008/09 €	2007/08 €
Net cash inflow (outflow) from operating activities	12	208,334	(5,371,068)
Returns on investments and servicing of finance			
Interest received on bank deposits and provincial loan balances		2,402,558	879,761
Interest received on loans to clubs		10,969	14,440
		2,413,527	894,201
Capital expenditure and financial investment			
Payments to acquire tangible fixed assets		(5,357,364)	(8,421,906)
Net expenditure on stadium redevelopment		(26,697,817)	(3,876,622)
Realised on term investments		-	8,156,696
Investment in joint ventures		(4)	(1)
Net repayment from (advances to) clubs		223,342	(235,578)
Advance to Munster Branch		(2,714,648)	(11,547,130)
		(34,546,491)	(15,924,541)
Net cash outflow before management of liquid resources		(31,924,630)	(20,401,408)
Management of liquid resources			
Decrease (increase) in short term deposits		9,881,403	(25,595,638)
Financing			
Receipt of deposits on tickets and boxes		17,767,790	51,088,072
(Decrease) increase in cash	13	(4,275,437)	5,091,026

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

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 on the going concern basis 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. Liquid resources

In the cash flow statement, liquid resources comprise cash on deposit at banks with more than 24 hours notice.

c. Fixed tangible assets

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

d. 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 and equipment	33.33%, 25% and 12.5%
Computer equipment	20% and 33.33%
Grounds purchased and leased to clubs	Nil

e. Stadium redevelopment in progress

The Union has contracted to redevelop the Aviva Stadium 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 has been 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.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

1. Accounting policies (cont'd.)

f. Joint ventures

The Union's 50% interest in New Stadium Limited trading as Aviva Stadium (formerly 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, or from management accounts where audited accounts are not available, of the joint venture companies.

g. 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.

h. 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.

i. 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.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

1. Accounting policies (cont'd.)

j. 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.

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.

k. 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 11.

2. Income and expenditure recognition

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

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

3. Tangible assets

	Cost at 30/4/08	Additions	Cost at 30/4/09
	€	€	€
Premises and grounds	44,302,139	5,156,618	49,458,757
Fixtures, fittings and equipment	7,173,238	200,746	7,373,984
Grounds purchased and leased to clubs	368,713	-	368,713
	51,844,090	5,357,364	57,201,454
	Accumulated depreciation at 30/4/08	Charge for year	Accumulated depreciation at 30/4/09
	€	€	€
Premises and grounds	10,014,240	715,942	10,730,182
Fixtures, fittings and equipment	6,262,330	470,161	6,732,491
Grounds purchased and leased to clubs	-	-	-
	16,276,570	1,186,103	17,462,673
Net book value	35,567,520		39,738,781

- (i) As more fully explained in Note 16 the Aviva Stadium 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 Aviva 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 have granted 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.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

3. Tangible assets (cont'd.)

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.

4. Stadium redevelopment in progress

	30/4/09	30/4/08
	€	€
Balance at 1 May	4,483,090	606,468
Expenditure in year	150,002,530	60,184,410
Grants	(107,069,916)	(53,780,288)
Funding received from FAI	(16,234,797)	(2,527,500)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance 30 April	31,180,907	4,483,090
	<hr/>	<hr/>

5. Loans to clubs

Interest on loans to clubs is generally charged at a rate of 1%. Terms of repayment are generally over 10 years.

The recoverability of these loans is considered and where doubts exist these are provided against, if applicable.

6. Financial investments

	30/4/09	30/4/08
	€	€
Loan to Munster Branch Irish Rugby Football Union		
Amount due within one year	5,517,778	-
Amount due after one year but within five years	5,630,000	5,806,130
Amount due after five years	3,114,000	5,741,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	14,261,778	11,547,130
	<hr/>	<hr/>

The Union advanced funds to the Munster Branch in order to assist with the development of Thomond Park. The amounts advanced are 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

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

6. Financial investments (cont'd.)

Under the terms of the loan agreement it is to be repaid on a phased basis over the next number of years and amounts outstanding are not to exceed the following:

30 April 2009	€12,100,000	30 April 2013	€5,741,000
30 April 2010	€8,744,000	30 April 2014	€3,114,000
30 April 2011	€7,753,000	30 April 2015	€1,997,000
30 April 2012	€6,767,000	30 April 2016	€880,000

The loan is to be fully repaid by 30 April 2017.

The repayment terms under the agreement have not been met due to a delay in the anticipated receipt of Government grants.

7. Joint ventures

The union holds 50% of the ordinary share capital of New Stadium Limited trading as Aviva Stadium (formerly Lansdowne Road Stadium Development Company Limited) and 50% of the ordinary share capital of Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited (companies formed to develop the Aviva Stadium and Thomond Park respectively).

Additional disclosures in respect of New Stadium Limited trading as Aviva Stadium, required under 'Financial Reporting Standard 9 Associates and Joint Ventures' are as follows:

	31/12/08	31/12/07
	€	€
Share of fixed assets	2,578,805	24,992
Share of current assets	9,708,254	5,294,462
Share of gross assets	12,287,059	5,319,454
Share of current liabilities	12,287,058	5,319,453
Share of net assets	1	1

The turnover, profit before and after tax of New Stadium Limited trading as Aviva Stadium for the year ended 31 December 2008 and for the period to December 2007 were nil in all cases.

Audited accounts in respect of this company for the year ended 31 December 2008 are not yet available and the amounts included above are based on management accounts. The amounts included in respect of the period ended 31 December 2007 are based on audited accounts.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

7. Joint ventures (cont'd.)

Additional disclosures in respect of Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited, based on the company's audited financial statements for the period ended 30 June 2007 and year ended 30 June 2008, required under 'Financial Reporting Standard 9 Associates and Joint Ventures' are as follows:

	30/06/08	30/06/07
	€	€
Share of turnover	92,809	-
Share of operating (loss) profit	(16,297)	26,131
Share of tax	-	(8,801)
Share of (loss) profit after tax	(16,297)	17,330
Share of fixed assets	14,100,249	1,493,136
Share of current assets	695,182	1,523,305
Share of gross assets	14,795,431	3,016,441
Share of current liabilities	(2,123,795)	(397,342)
Share of non current liabilities	(12,670,598)	(2,601,768)
Share of gross liabilities	(14,794,393)	(2,999,110)
Share of net assets	1,038	17,331

During the year the Union were allotted 4 "A" ordinary shares of €1 each which were issued for cash at par value.

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.

Company	Term of lease	Annual rent
New Stadium Limited	99 years from Dec 2005	€750,000 p.a.
Thomond Park Stadium Company Limited	55 years from Oct 2006	€9,600 p.a.

The rents due became payable during the year in the case of the Thomond Park lease, and only become due from the commencement of commercial operations in the case of the Aviva Stadium.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

8. Debtors and prepayments

	30/4/09	30/4/08
	€	€
Provincial branch balances receivable	1,793,509	1,669,127
Sponsorship debtors	1,313,526	3,806,547
Ticket debtors	911,088	971,280
Other debtors	109,871	15,554
Prepayments and accrued income	4,676,646	4,185,438
Stock of sportswear and equipment	127,424	404,731
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	8,932,064	11,052,677

Trade debtors and short term receivables above are stated net of provision where applicable. Provisions against debtors at the year end amounted to €2,054,070 (30/4/08: €478,972).

The creation of these provisions has reduced income by €1,575,088 in the current year (2007/2008: €478,972).

9. Creditors

	30/4/09	30/4/08
	€	€
Accruals and deferred income	12,083,855	10,295,347
PAYE/PRSI	32,261	30,669
VAT	17,709	43,160
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	12,133,825	10,369,176

10. 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 08. The principal assumptions made by the actuary were that the rate of return on investment would exceed the increase in pensionable salaries by 5%. The assets of the fund, which amounted to €3,241,000, 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 64% 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 2009. The valuations have been completed using the projected unit method.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

10. Pension commitments (cont'd.)

	30/4/09	30/4/08	30/4/07
	%	%	%
Main assumptions:			
Rate of increase in salaries	3.50	4.50	4.00
Rate of increase in pensions payment	5.00	5.00	4.50
Discount rate	2.00	6.00	5.00
Inflation assumption	5.00	3.00	2.50
Rate of return on plan assets	5.76	6.37	6.38

Assumptions regarding pre and post retirement mortality rates remained unchanged.

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

	30/4/09		30/4/08		30/4/07	
	Long-term rate of return expected	Value	Long-term rate of return expected	Value	Long-term rate of return expected	Value
	%	€	%	€	%	€
Equities	7.0	2,262,000	7.0	3,521,000	7.0	3,968,000
Bonds	4.2	1,037,000	4.7	650,000	4.4	615,000
Properties	6.0	120,000	6.0	236,000	6.0	246,000
Others	2.0	326,000	3.0	306,000	2.5	297,000
<hr/>						
Total market value of assets		3,745,000		4,713,000		5,126,000
Present value of scheme liabilities		(4,795,000)		(4,719,000)		(5,003,000)
<hr/>						
Pension (liability) asset		(1,050,000)		(6,000)		123,000

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

10. Pension commitments (cont'd.)

Analysis of the amount charged to income and expenditure account:

	2008/09	2007/08
	€	€
Current service cost	227,000	289,000

Analysis of the amount credited to other income:

	2008/09	2007/08
	€	€
Expected return on assets in the scheme	(310,000)	(337,000)
Interest costs	299,000	258,000
Net return	(11,000)	(79,000)

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

	2008/09	2007/08
	€	€
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	(1,574,000)	(1,060,000)
Experience gains arising on scheme liabilities	61,000	209,000
Effect of changes in assumptions underlying the present value of scheme liabilities	416,000	653,000

Actuarial losses recognised in the statement of total recognised gains and losses

(1,097,000)	(198,000)
-------------	-----------

Movements in deficit during the period:

	30/4/09	30/4/08
	€	€
At 1 May	(6,000)	123,000
Total operating charge	(227,000)	(289,000)
Total other finance income	11,000	79,000
Actuarial losses recognised in the statement of total recognised gains and losses	(1,097,000)	(198,000)
Employer contributions	269,000	279,000
At 30 April	(1,050,000)	(6,000)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

10. Pension commitments (cont'd.)

History of experience gains and losses:

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
Difference between the expected and actual return on scheme assets:			
amount (€)	(1,574,000)	(1,060,000)	140,000
percentage of scheme assets	(42.03)	(22.49)	2.73
Experience gains (losses) on scheme liabilities:			
amount (€)	61,000	209,000	100,000
percentage of the present value of scheme liabilities	1.63	4.43	2.0
Total amount recognised in statement of total recognised gains and losses:			
amount (€)	(1,097,000)	(198,000)	(81,000)
percentage of the present value of scheme liabilities	(29.29)	(4.20)	(1.62)

Reconciliation of net assets and reserves under FRS 17

	30/4/09	30/4/08
	€	€
Net assets and reserves		
Net assets and reserves as stated in balance sheet	24,607,476	23,768,900
FRS 17 defined benefit liability	1,050,000	6,000
<hr/>		
Net assets excluding defined benefit liability	25,657,476	23,774,900

11. Deferred ticket fund

	30/4/09	30/4/08
	€	€
At 1 May	31,682,323	34,642,925
Transfer to revenue account	(4,348,377)	(2,960,602)
<hr/>		
Closing balance	27,333,946	31,682,323
Deposits received on new Aviva Stadium tickets and boxes carried forward	51,088,072	-
Further amounts received during the year	17,767,790	51,088,072
<hr/>		
At 30 April	68,855,862	51,088,072
<hr/>		
	96,189,808	82,770,395

The deposits received on new tickets may become repayable in certain circumstances.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

12. Reconciliation of operating surplus to net cash inflow (outflow) from operating activities

	2008/09	2007/08
	€	€
Operating surplus (deficit)	1,935,576	(98,083)
Interest receivable	(2,413,527)	(894,201)
Depreciation	1,186,103	1,321,598
Movement in debtors	2,120,613	(1,378,288)
Movement in creditors	1,764,649	1,802,582
Current service costs less return on investment on pension	216,000	210,000
Pension fund contributions	(269,000)	(279,000)
Transfer to revenue – five and ten year tickets	(4,348,377)	(2,960,602)
Share of loss (profit) of joint venture	16,297	(17,330)
Profit on disposal of short term investment	-	(3,077,744)
Net cash inflow (outflow) from operating activities	208,334	(5,371,068)

13. Analysis of changes in net debt during the year

	30/4/08	Cash flow	Non cash	30/4/09
	€	€	release	€
			€	
Cash	5,517,285	(4,275,437)	-	1,241,848
Liquid resources				
Short term deposits	46,945,166	(9,881,403)	-	37,063,763
	52,462,451	(14,156,840)	-	38,305,611
Deferred ticket fund	(82,770,395)	(17,767,790)	4,348,377	(96,189,808)
Net Debt	(30,307,944)	(31,924,630)	4,348,377	(57,884,197)

14. Reconciliation of net cash flow to movement in net debt

	2008/09	2007/08
	€	€
(Decrease) increase in cash	(4,275,437)	5,091,026
Cash flow from liquid resources	(9,881,403)	25,595,638
Receipt of deposits on tickets and boxes	(17,767,790)	(51,088,072)
Non cash release of deferred ticket income	4,348,377	2,960,602
Movement in net debt	(27,576,253)	(17,440,806)
Net debt at beginning of year	(30,307,944)	(12,867,138)
Net debt at end of year	(57,884,197)	(30,307,944)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

15. Revenue grants

The following grants were received and used for the stated purpose in the year ended 30 April 2009

	30/4/09	30/4/08
Irish Sports Council		
- game development and participation	€4,079,750	€3,533,000
International Rugby Board		
- game development and participation and elite player development	STG£400,000	STG£400,000

16. Commitments and contingencies

Capital commitments

Under the terms of agreements to develop the Aviva Stadium the Union have a capital commitment of approximately €77,500,000 over the next one to two years.

At 30 April 2009, the Union had contracted to purchase other fixed assets of which € Nil (2008: €6,350,000) remains outstanding.

Commitments under operating leases

On 12 November 2007 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 €475,000. During the year the Union incurred operating lease rentals on motor vehicles amounting to €232,605. The commitment in respect of existing lease agreements on vehicles all of which expire within twelve months amount to €226,423.

Contingencies

In terms of agreements between the Union, the FAI, New Stadium Limited and the Government for the provision of grants amounting to €191 million for the redevelopment of the Aviva Stadium, 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 in relation to the Aviva Stadium amount to €183,440,443.

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 €5,700,000.

The Union issued a joint and several letter of undertaking in conjunction with the Football Association of Ireland to secure a bank guarantee issued by New Stadium Limited, trading as Aviva Stadium, in favour of Iarnrod Eireann in the amount of €2,250,000.

17. 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.

18. Approval of accounts

The accounts of the Union were approved by the Committee on 21 May 2009 and signed on its behalf by the Honorary Treasurer and the Chief Executive.

STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The Committee is responsible for preparing 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 2009

We have audited the financial statements on pages 35 to 51 which comprise the income and expenditure account, the statement of recognised gains and losses, the balance sheet and the cash flow statement with the related notes. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and the accounting policies set out on pages 39 to 41.

Respective responsibilities of the Committee and the auditors

As described on page 52, the Committee is responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and the accounting standards issued by the Accounting Standards Board and published by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland).

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

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

Our responsibilities do not extend to any other information.

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 2009 and of the surplus of income over expenditure of the Union for the year then ended.

Grant Thornton
Registered Auditors
Chartered Accountants

24-26 City Quay
Dublin 2

21 May 2009

INCOME

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009

Schedule 1: Representative matches

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€	€
International rugby income	32,516,016	25,945,267	29,780,411
Commercial income	7,229,550	7,790,011	7,898,965
Deferred ticket income	4,348,376	2,960,602	4,465,745
ERC and provincial income	5,554,922	5,387,077	6,596,450
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	49,648,864	42,082,957	48,741,571

Schedule 2: Other income

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€	€
Other rugby income	680,373	993,966	784,431
Percentage of admissions	-	-	1,043,869
Government Grants	4,079,750	3,533,000	3,606,200
Other income	2,561,077	3,114,605	1,324,386
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	7,321,200	7,641,571	6,758,886

EXPENDITURE**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009****Schedule 3: Professional game costs**

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€	€
National tours, camps and squads	853,478	627,570	989,105
National match costs	4,424,520	3,047,851	3,637,466
Player and management costs	26,535,264	24,301,611	22,747,942
	31,813,262	27,977,032	27,374,513

Schedule 4: Elite player development

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€	€
Irish "A" team	464,590	243,294	382,290
Under 20's	459,223	431,766	533,967
Sevens	294,909	27,987	-
Academies	1,117,528	1,179,173	1,080,175
High performance unit	358,112	392,094	513,519
Fitness programme	629,698	339,999	386,634
	3,324,060	2,614,313	2,896,585

Schedule 5: Games support costs

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€	€
Referee costs	315,313	294,451	353,010
Medical costs	380,146	365,777	338,518
	695,459	660,228	691,528

EXPENDITURE**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009****Schedule 6: Domestic and community rugby**

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€	€
Under 19s	87,991	189,270	859,973
Irish schoolboy team	201,230	217,696	189,153
Irish youth team	193,392	194,678	230,451
Women's team	220,011	166,889	127,722
Club Ireland	49,757	52,464	82,669
Domestic competitions	433,071	426,820	820,614
General development salaries	549,410	1,106,012	1,393,898
General development expenses	119,714	148,480	266,289
Development resources	34,432	16,538	137,075
Coaching courses	242,369	285,188	224,597
Youth and schools	345,771	458,071	477,447
YDO and provincial staff	2,412,664	1,842,414	977,473
Clubs and schools support	2,147,446	2,208,404	1,777,885
Referee development	474,492	365,637	350,433
Leisure and community rugby	789,305	759,953	375,108
Other development and operational grants	1,417,556	973,380	1,017,735
Other community rugby funding	842,015	936,641	1,405,205
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	10,560,626	10,348,535	10,713,727

EXPENDITURE**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL 2009****Schedule 7: Marketing**

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€	€
Marketing	663,200	773,014	779,480
PR and communications	149,503	153,631	110,961
Website	333,412	240,455	230,667
	1,146,115	1,167,100	1,121,108

Schedule 8: Grounds

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€	€
Rates and insurance	360,934	215,260	648,297
Repairs and renewals	113,555	82,027	207,181
Wages, cleaning and pitch	-	28,212	351,682
Gas, electricity and water	-	3,742	140,371
Provincial grounds	137,843	180,711	284,426
	612,332	509,952	1,631,957

Schedule 9: Administration and overheads

	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
	€	€	€
Governance costs	595,715	525,361	568,937
Salaries and pension	2,419,124	2,200,959	1,907,647
Printing, postage and stationary	218,175	198,787	190,271
Rates, rent, insurance and telephone	905,642	835,885	619,209
Office maintenance	337,363	258,594	244,450
Professional fees	858,905	877,469	704,445
Miscellaneous administration costs	345,310	344,128	380,451
	5,680,234	5,241,183	4,615,410

NOTES



DESIGN WWW.DCOY.IE

THE GOLDEN SUPPORT

IRELAND'S SIXTEENTH MAN ON THE FIELD



THE GOLDEN RECORD

A NEW WORLD RECORD CLUB RUGBY UNION ATTENDANCE OF 82,208 AT CROKE PARK ON THE 2ND OF MAY 2009 IN DUBLIN.



Attendance
82,208

THE GOLDEN REUNION

IRELAND 1948 GRAND SLAM REUNION PICTURED AT RAVENHILL WHERE THEY BEAT WALES TO WIN THE GRAND SLAM. PICTURED (L-R) ARE MICHAEL O'FLANAGAN, PADDY REID, JACK KYLE, KARL MULLEN, JIM MCCARTHY, BERTIE O'HANLON AND JIMMY NELSON.





IRISH RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION
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