

Irish Rugby Football Union
Accounts & Statistics 2004/2005





Office Bearers and Committee

President

B.T. Keogh

Senior Vice President

D.A. Crawford

Junior Vice President

P.J. Boyle

Hon. Treasurer

J.P. Lyons

Chairman of Management Committee

J.D. Hussey

Immediate Past President

J.K. Quilligan

Committee

J.R. Callaghan

P. Fitzgerald

D.V. Healy

T.H.N. Jackson

R.P. McConkey

C.C. Powell

P. Whelan (co-opted)

Branch Representative Members

F. Crowley

C. Fitzgerald

W.B. Glynn

S.R. Hilditch

L.P. Magee

F. MacLoughlin

G. Quaid

J.F. Smith

C. Watson

International Rugby Board Representatives

N.A. Murphy

P.J. Boyle

Trustees

A.R. Dawson

W.S.H. Lavery

T.J. Kiernan

Dr. S. Millar

Chief Executive

P.R. Browne

Director of Corporate Services

M.P. Murphy

Director of Rugby

E. Wigglesworth

Financial Controller

C. O'Brien

Director of Commercial and Marketing

P. Power

Director of Human Resources

M. Dowling

Rugby Administrator

G. Spotswood

National Coach

E. O'Sullivan

National Manager

B. O'Brien

Assistant Coach

N. O'Donovan

Communications and Media Manager

K. Richardson





Director of Medical Services

Dr. C. McCarthy

National Fitness Director

Dr. L. Hennessy

Fitness Programme Manager

I. Sherwin

Facilities Manager

D. O'Brien

Match Manager

G. Carmody

Office Manager

L. Hart

Ticket Office Manager

S. Hickey

National Squad Administrator

J. Breslin

Director of Referee Development

O.E. Doyle

National Coach Development Manager

S.J. Aboud

National Coach Development Officer

C. Moran

National Youth Development Manager

H. Kruger

National Schools Development Manager

J.F. Murphy

Provincial Development Managers

A. Brown (U)

P. Lawlor (L)

T. Conneely (C)

U. O'Callaghan (M)

Provincial Directors of Coaching

M. Bradley (C)

D. Kidney (L)

A. Gaffney (M)

M. McCall (U)

Provincial Academy Managers

H. Adams (M)

M. Fields (U)

N. Carolan (C)

C. McEntee (L)

Rugby Development Officers

M. Black

M. Hickey

D. Callaghan

J. Lacey

C. Carroll

D. Maybury

E. Collins

R. Murphy

J. Duffy

D. Suffern

D. Fassbender

Referee Development Officers

D. Keane

D. McHugh



Standing Committees and Sub Committees 2004/2005

Management

J.D. Hussey, B.T. Keogh, J.P. Lyons, N.A. Murphy, T.H.N. Jackson, D.V. Healy, P.J. Boyle, P. Fitzgerald, P.R. Browne and D.A. Crawford (co-opted).

Representative Game

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

Domestic Game

D.V. Healy, J.R. Callaghan, G.C. Quaid, C.C. Powell, F. Crowley, J.F. Smith, L.P. Magee, C. Fitzgerald, G.C. Spotswood and E. Wigglesworth.

Finance

J.P. Lyons, D.A. Crawford, S.R. Hilditch, R.P. McConkey, P.J. Boyle, W.B. Glynn, F. Crowley, P. Whelan, P.R. Browne, M. Murphy, C. O'Brien and L. Quinn.

Commercial and Marketing

P. Fitzgerald, J.P. Lyons, C. Fitzgerald, J.F. Smith, J.R. Callaghan, P.R. Browne, M. Murphy, P. Power, K. Richardson and J. Redmond.

Academy

P. Whelan, E. Wigglesworth, E. O'Sullivan and M. McDermott.

Charitable Trust

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

Discipline

P.J. Boyle and G.C. Spotswood.

Exiles

D.A. Crawford and F. MacLoughlin.

Medical

W.B. Glynn, G.C. Spotswood, Dr. L. Hennessy, Dr. M. Molloy, Dr. W. Rainey, Dr. B. O'Driscoll, Dr. H. Beauchamp, Dr. C. McCarthy and Dr. W. O'Flynn.





Referees

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

Representative Team Appointments

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

Schools

C.C. Powell, P. Fitzgerald, G. Quaid, J.F. Smith, L. Magee, B. Derrane, M. Foley, Fr. J. Gough, D. Harty, S. Huey, B. McGonigle, F. Mulligan, J. Murphy, K. Patton and P. Rossiter.

Youth

J.R. Callaghan, J.F. Smith, G.C. Quaid, P. Fitzgerald, L. Magee, H. Kruger, D. Eakin, W. Gribben, B. Mescal, H. Woodhouse, W. Doran and J. Best.

Player Advisory Group

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

AIB League

F. Crowley, O. Allen, L. Galvin, Dr. W.A. Mulcahy, D. Workman and G.C. Spotswood.

All Ireland League Working Party

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

Six Nations Representatives

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

E.R.C. Representatives

P. Whelan and P.J. Boyle.

Celtic League Representatives

J.D. Hussey and P.R. Browne.



President's Report

The expectation of Irish rugby at all levels has now reached new heights. A season where we won six out of ten internationals defeating South Africa and England, two teams Leinster and Munster qualifying for the European Cup quarter final and Connacht reaching the semi final of the European Challenge Cup would in years gone past be considered a wonderful season. The expectation of Irish rugby has rightly set new targets and it is important that we strive to not only achieve but to exceed them.

The National team were unlucky with injury to key players which made final selection difficult. That being said, it was a wonderful season for Eddie O'Sullivan, his management and players. The input of Brian O'Brien who has given so much to Irish rugby as a player, a selector and manager can not be overstated over the past years. He has made a major contribution and we would all like to thank him and wish him every success.

Munster, deprived of a home draw by Harlequins, put the heart back into Irish rugby by their performance against Biarritz. The selection of Brian O'Driscoll as Captain of the Lions is a special honour not only to Brian but also to Irish rugby, with the well deserved selection of a record number of his team mates a massive boast to Irish rugby. To Eddie as coach, Mike Ford, Dr. Gary O'Driscoll and David McHugh we wish them a successful tour. As President I would like to thank Eddie, Brian O'Driscoll and Brian O'Brien for including me so much - it was very special and one of the highlights for me in the year as President.

The work of the Committee and the work of the Management Committee under the chairmanship of John Hussey and the various chairmen is enormous. No one will realise the time and commitment of these elected people that, combined with a loyal and committed professional

work force who also give so much of their time freely, is what makes Irish rugby so successful. In my year of Presidency I tried to put the word enjoyment back into tasks we have to deal with, and if at times this may have been difficult I hope everybody enjoyed it.

The work of the provinces in the advancement of the game is immense at all levels and I would like to thank the Presidents and their Committees for their continual support of Irish rugby. As a visitor they made me so welcome and part of their year - it was easy to travel and meet with them. To Paddy, Niall, Matt and Harry very many thanks. Irish rugby is indeed lucky to have so many committed people at all levels. As I said during the year, the commitment of the volunteers together with the commitment of the professional people makes Irish rugby very special - long may it continue.



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B.T. Keogh



The continual growth and exposure of the game in addition to the awareness that ordinary people now have towards rugby's decent image has meant that many parents are steering their children towards a game that values respect, discipline and sportsmanship. We must continue to foster this spirit within our game. There is still a great amount of work to be done but I am confident we have the structures and people in place to consolidate what we have achieved and to move forward in the future.

In my year of office the help and guidance given to me by the Chief Executive, Philip Browne, together with his staff has been invaluable and made the year as President very easy for me. To my own Officers and Committee it has been very special for me to have been President of a wonderful rugby union and to know that I had so many friends around me. I really enjoyed it. Thanks.



Honorary Treasurer's Report

Once again it is my privilege to present to you the Union's annual accounts for the season 2004/05. As can be seen the Union has once again suffered a significant deficit but it is important to examine the circumstances underlying that deficit and to consider the outlook for future years.

The Union's Strategic Plan identified a number of key investment areas and resources have been applied to these areas in a cost effective way with a number of key appointments having been made. Credit must be given to the volunteers and professional staff for keeping the Union's costs at the level reported in the accounts whilst managing to increase the revenues generated. Season 2005/06 will see a significant increase in television and commercial revenues which will go some way towards alleviating the Union's deficit whilst the possibility of new and enhanced competitions for our provinces may also result an improved financial position for the Union. The provinces

continued to enjoy healthy match attendances due in no small part to the efforts of all involved in the Branches and professional team set-ups.

You will notice that the format of the Union's accounts has changed in order to more clearly attribute the various strands of income and expenditure in line with the key areas set out in the Strategic Plan. This revised format makes it easier to see the dividend being generated by the professional game for the benefit of the grassroots game. It is very important that the Union get the balance right between investment in the professional game and investment in the domestic game and one should be cognisant that whilst a reduction in investment in the professional game may produce a short term increase in the professional dividend this benefit may well be eliminated as the revenue-earning potential of the professional game diminishes due to lack of resources. The domestic game is of critical importance for the future of the Union and the

accounts show how money has been spent in this area. In addition to the direct and indirect funding of the grassroots game already taking place, the Union is currently exploring new initiatives to assist clubs and schools and I would like to take this opportunity to thank D.C. Glass and those on his working party for their considerable efforts in this area.

Progress towards the construction of a national stadium is to be welcomed not least because of the greater certainty it provides in respect of future financial planning. The Strategic Plan also identified the need to up-grade the facilities at provincial grounds and this will require significant financial investment by both Union and provinces. This planning process is being assessed and monitored by the Facilities Working Party and I would take this opportunity to thank them for their hard work over the last twelve months.



Credit must be given to the volunteers and professional staff for keeping the Union's costs at the level reported in the accounts whilst managing to increase the revenues generated.

J.P. Lyons



The Union's cash position at over €17m together with the substantial properties and long term investments held by the Union contribute to a healthy balance sheet. However, I would draw your attention to the Ten Year Ticket fund in the accounts. This effectively represents a future claim on the financial assets of the Union and as such the Union must be careful not to spend more of the funds raised through Ten Year Ticket sales on non-capital items than is amortised each year. Because of the deficits suffered in recent years the Union has spent more than this annual amortisation and this may put a constraint on spending in future years if surpluses are not generated.

I would also draw your attention to the club loans in the balance sheet. This loan scheme has been in operation since the early 1990s and has assisted many clubs with a variety of capital projects. Because it is a loan scheme the fund is constantly regenerated

and will thus remain a fundamental part of the Union's assistance to clubs.

The high creditor balance in the accounts reflects amongst other things the early receipt of the annual grant from the Irish Sports Council and it is important that all are aware of the generous financial support provided by the Council which this year amounted to some €3.5m. Also included in creditors are significant deposits received in respect of the latest Ten Year Ticket renewal which at time of printing I am pleased to report is going very well.

As I mentioned earlier, the Union can look forward with some confidence to increased revenues next year. However, as other Unions and clubs will also benefit from many of these increases, part of the Union's gain may be lost through the increased costs caused by this financial strengthening of our competitors in the market. The financial benefits from the national stadium are still some way into the

future and the Union is also required to make a very substantial financial investment in this project. Thus it may be that the Union will not be able to afford to fund deficits up to this time and if this is the case there will be some very difficult financial decisions ahead for the Union which may not be to the liking of all constituents. Having said that it is to be hoped that the Union will not have to compromise on the key aspects of the Strategic Plan which has already delivered so much success on and off the field.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my fellow Committee members for their invaluable support during the year, and in particular, I would take this opportunity to thank the Trustees of the I.R.F.U. for their considered advice and assistance over this last and indeed previous years. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the considerable efforts of volunteers in all areas of the game and I look forward to working together with you in the future.





Chief Executive's Report

The 2004/05 season has been marked by significant challenges both on and off the pitch. The National team performed well with an excellent permanent tsb autumn series in which both South Africa and Argentina were beaten. However, this success was tinged with disappointment that the Grand Slam and Championship eluded us once again. The provincial teams held their own with Leinster and Munster reaching the Heineken Cup quarter finals and Connacht reaching the semi final in the European Challenge Cup. However, the challenge on the pitch for Irish rugby is now very clear to see. The French clubs, with substantial resources in many of their top clubs, have now taken the Heineken Cup to heart and we must ensure that both the French and English clubs do not open up a gap in performance beyond the Irish provincial teams. Any widening gap could inevitably be reflected in international team performances. The limiting resources of finance and players within Irish rugby will

make it difficult for us to compete at this level unless we are clever in our use of these limited resources. The need to ensure the continued development of quality Irish players at Heineken Cup and international level is now a priority and the imminent appointment of a High Performance Manager to co-ordinate this activity is essential. Without an efficient and effective high performance programme to identify talent and to deliver both skills and conditioning programmes, we stand to fall behind the competitive standards being set elsewhere in Europe and in the southern hemisphere.

On the domestic game front the Union has placed a significant emphasis on addressing the issues that face the club game. These revolve around player recruitment and retention policies and club development including finance, facilities, administration and volunteerism. The first phase of the implementation of the Strategic Plan has been

to engage with Branches and clubs to draw on a wider body of expertise and resources. The needs of the club game and the initiatives required to address these needs have been collectively identified across all four Branches and the I.R.F.U. must now move forward in delivering these initiatives to support the club and schools game. An organisational review of the I.R.F.U. professional staff structures has resulted in some reorganisation to ensure that this focus on the club game is maintained. The appointment of a Domestic Game Manager with the responsibility of managing the Rugby Department resources in terms of the club game and game development in general is significant as is the appointment of a Club Development Manager in each province with their focus on supporting and developing the club structures.

Finance continues to be a challenge and the Hon. Treasurer's report outlines the issues in some detail. Financing the sport at amateur



The balance between investment in the professional game and the surplus generated by it needs to be carefully maintained as this is the premise on which our financial model depends.



and professional level from a position of an on-going annual deficit is not sustainable and the only reason why we can embark on this course is the prospect of a new stadium with sufficient revenue generating potential being completed at Lansdowne Road as soon as possible. The professional game is seen by some as a drain on the financial resources of Irish rugby – the reality is that the professional game provides the operating surplus that funds I.R.F.U. investment in the club and schools game. The balance between investment in the professional game and the surplus generated by it needs to be carefully maintained as this is the premise on which our financial model depends. It will be necessary for the four professional teams at provincial level to be financially and commercially viable if this delicate financial balance is to be maintained, bearing in mind that the I.R.F.U. will continue to hold and fund the player contracts. This must be achieved without impacting the finances of the Branch administration of the club and

schools game and the aim would be to ensure that there is a clear dividend delivered by the professional team in each province to its Branch administration for this purpose.

As outlined above the redevelopment of Lansdowne Road is an integral part of our financial and strategic planning. In the last twelve months there has been significant work behind the scenes in relation to the redevelopment project for Lansdowne Road. A joint venture company has been established with the F.A.I. which will be responsible for firstly the development of the new stadium and secondly the operation of that stadium. This company has been staffed up appropriately, led by an experienced Project Director, and is based in offices near to Lansdowne Road. Noel Murphy and Philip Browne are directors of the limited liability company along with two directors appointed by the F.A.I., the company being chaired by Philip Browne.

A formal agreement between the I.R.F.U., the F.A.I. and the Government was concluded in respect of the €191m grant aid to be provided by Government to this project. The Government's interests in the project are looked after by a Steering Committee chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and which consists of members from the I.R.F.U., F.A.I., Office of Public Works, Department of Finance and Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism.

The appointment of a project management team and a design team were made in accordance with the E.U. procurement regulations. The appointment in April of a design consortium led by HOK Sport and Scott Tallon Walker along with a project management consortium led by Project Management Ltd. provides the Stadium Development Company with a world class team to deliver a new stadium at Lansdowne





Road. The intention is to target a planning application by year end 2005 and hopefully commencement of construction in 2007. A consultation forum with an independent chairman has been set up with local residents, which will provide local residents with a forum to air their concerns and to work with the design team in addressing those concerns. The I.R.F.U. is working with both Lansdowne F.C. and Wanderers F.C. to ensure that both clubs are catered for in the arrangements that will pertain in the new development.

The implementation of the Strategic Plan has prompted a review of our organisational structure and this has involved some changes in roles and responsibilities. Five main areas of activity are headed up as follows:-

Rugby

Director of Rugby (E. Wigglesworth)

Corporate Services

Director of Corporate Services (M. Murphy)

Finance

Financial Controller (C. O'Brien)

Human Resources

Director of Human Resources (M. Dowling)

Commercial and Marketing

Director of Commercial and Marketing (P. Power)

All five heads of each area report directly to the Chief Executive. This new structure was approved by the I.R.F.U. Committee in February 2005 and is now in operation.

The Union's governance was changed two years ago and saw the introduction of a Management Committee and four executive sub committees dealing with representative rugby, domestic rugby, finance and commercial/marketing. The structure is working well providing a blend

between experience and input from the voluntary elected representatives and that of the professional staff. The Management Committee and the sub committees have had a challenging workload in dealing with the Strategic Plan and the ever changing international rugby environment. The operation of this new structure will be reviewed from time to time to ensure it works to best effect.

National Team

A sixty percent win ratio for the National team in season 2004/05, including wins over South Africa, England and Argentina compares well with any of Ireland's performances in past years. Despite this, there was a sense of disappointment that in the Six Nations Championship the team perhaps did not perform to its capability albeit the injuries incurred by key players impacted and limited the team significantly.

Following disappointment in the Summer Tour to South Africa where, despite an excellent performance in the second test, the Irish team failed in its ambition to beat the Springboks in South Africa, the wins against South Africa and Argentina in the autumn at Lansdowne Road were hard fought but deserved and boded well for the RBS Six Nations Championship. Inevitably, the public expectations for the RBS Six Nations Championship grew wildly, and there is no doubt that on form the Irish team were well placed to do well in the Championship. The initial win over Italy was blighted by the injuries to B. O'Driscoll and G. D'Arcy, the latter playing no further part in the Championship. A good result was recorded against Scotland despite the absence of B. O'Driscoll who returned from injury in time to feature in the England match at Lansdowne Road. An excellent result was recorded against England with a committed

performance shown by the team. However, once again, a positive result was marred by injury, on this occasion to S. Horgan, who was ruled out for the remainder of the Championship. In a tight enough game with France, the injuries made their impact. A more limited game plan was followed and France won the game putting paid to Ireland's Grand Slam aspirations. Despite the disappointing result against France, there was still a lot to play for in Wales in the form of the Triple Crown and the Championship. However, a poor start to the game provided Wales with momentum and with the nation behind them in Cardiff, Wales went on to close the match out despite a last quarter rally by Ireland. The results of all these matches are recorded in the appendices to this report.

Despite the disappointment of the last two international matches of the season, it is positive to record that eleven Irish players were chosen for the Lions Tour to New Zealand. Also involved in the Lions Tour are Eddie O'Sullivan as Assistant Coach, Mike Ford as an Assistant Defence Coach, the Irish Team Doctor, Dr. Gary O'Driscoll and David McHugh as a Specialist Advisor.

The challenge going forwards for Eddie O'Sullivan and his management is to focus on building a team to represent Ireland at Rugby World Cup 2007. The first step in that process will be the tour to Japan which will obviously take place without the eleven players selected for the Lions tour to New Zealand. This will give an opportunity to some of the younger players and fringe players to stake their claim to places on the international team in the near future. This tour will be led by Niall O'Donovan as Coach with Michael Bradley and Mark McCall as Assistant Coaches. Joey Miles will be the Tour Manager.



This season marks the retirement of Brian O'Brien as Manager to the Irish team. Brian has played an integral role in the success of the Irish team over the last four years and he has been a tremendous servant to Irish rugby as a player, coach, selector and administrator. His contribution to all these facets of the game has been greatly appreciated.

I would also like to formally acknowledge the support of permanent tsb, our National team sponsor. We are indebted to you for your contribution to Irish rugby.

Some two and half years ago the I.R.F.U. assisted the professional players in setting up its representative body, the Irish Rugby Union Players Association (I.R.U.P.A.). It was recognised that a representative body was needed for the players to address various welfare issues and to look after the interests of professional players. The I.R.F.U. agreed to provide seed funding to I.R.U.P.A. for its initial three years. There is a need for the I.R.F.U. and I.R.U.P.A. to work together to ensure that the professional game in Ireland is sustainable from the point of view of a game as a whole and also from the point of view of the players themselves. Whilst there will inevitably be differences of opinion between the I.R.F.U. and I.R.U.P.A., it is nevertheless important that both organisations focus on the long term wellbeing of players and the game as a whole.

Other Representative Teams

Having dropped Ireland 'A' matches last season, it was felt that a limited programme of 'A' matches would be beneficial. A single match was played against France 'A' which Ireland 'A' won narrowly, coached by Michael Bradley and Allen Clarke. Next season at least two 'A' fixtures are scheduled. This will provide the National Coach with opportunities to view fringe and emerging players and will

give those players valuable experience.

The Irish Sevens team, coached by Ryan Constable competed at a number of events prior to the R.W.C. Sevens which were held in Hong Kong. The results are outlined in the appendices and despite some concerns about the relatively inexperienced Irish Sevens team playing against professional Sevens squads, the Irish team performed with some credit. The young players involved will undoubtedly have gained from the experience. The I.R.F.U. must now make a decision on where it stands in relation to Sevens rugby, as without the availability of players or adequate financing and without any real link between the Sevens programme and the elite development programme, the Irish Sevens team will continue to underperform at international level.

The Ireland U.21 team reached the final of the I.R.B. U.21 World Championship in Scotland in June 2004. Both the players and the Coach, Mark McDermott, deserve great credit for that performance. Jamie Heaslip went on to receive a nomination as Young Player of the Year at the Annual I.R.B. Awards. As is the nature of age-grade rugby, the squad make-up changes from year to year. Results this season have been poor to date compared to last season, with only one win out of five matches in the U.21 Six Nations Championship. The squad now undergoes preparation for the U.21 World Championships in Argentina in June.

The Irish Schools tour to Australia in summer 2004 under coach Peter Melia was successful with six wins out of seven matches played. The tour party were great ambassadors for Irish rugby. This spring the Irish Schools were unbeaten in their three games against England, Wales and France.

The Irish U.19 team coached by Pat Murray travelled to the U.19 World Championships in South Africa, finishing in ninth place. The standards in this annual tournament are increasing year on year. The skills and strength shown by the top teams in this competition clearly demonstrate the challenges that we face in Irish rugby.

The Irish Youth U.18 team beat Scotland and lost to Italy whilst the Ireland U.18 team which played in the Four Nations U.18 Tournament performed well with one win, one loss and one draw against Scotland, England and Wales, respectively.

From next season at national level, Ireland will run an U.18 Schools team on a January 1st basis. This team will play in the Four Nations Tournament at Easter. There will also be an U.18 youth side (drawn from the club sector) on January 1st basis which hope to play in the F.I.R.A. U.18 competition also held at Easter.



It is ever more important that the I.R.F.U. elite programme has a close interface and supports the work done at schools level if we are to address the skills deficit and the strength and conditioning deficit that is self-evident in our emerging professional playing base.

The U.19 team will continue to play in the I.R.B. U.19 World Championship. Players in both clubs and schools will only play in their appropriate age group and in this fashion, the past difficulties of primacy of selection will be resolved. This new policy will be supported by an interprovincial structure operating on a similar basis. It is hoped that this will ensure that the strongest possible teams represent Ireland in the appropriate age groups.

The autumn of 2004 included three preparation matches for the Irish Womens team against Japan, English Academy and the Combined Provinces. Each of these matches resulted in a win for the Irish squad including a comprehensive 55 - 0 win over Japan. Despite its disappointing loss against Spain in the Six Nations, there were some notable achievements including a very strong performance against Scotland in Murrayfield and well fought

matches against England and France. The highlight of the Six Nations Campaign was undoubtedly beating Wales for the first time in Irish Womens rugby history and thereby achieving automatic qualification for the Womens Rugby World Cup to be held in Canada in autumn 2006.

Details of the teams, team managements and results for each of the Irish representative teams are listed in the appendices.

Provincial Teams

It was a mixed season for the provincial teams with some notable successes on the pitch yet equally some disappointing performances, all of which are recorded in the appendices. Leinster and Munster reached the quarter finals of the Heineken Cup, Leinster being unbeaten in the pool stages. Leinster once again failed to fire on all cylinders in front of a full house in Lansdowne Road in their quarter

final against Leicester and were well beaten. Munster travelled to France to play Biarritz in their quarter final and turned in an impressive performance in the second half of the match and were narrowly beaten. In the European Shield competition, Connacht performed well to reach the semi finals but were ultimately beaten by Sale.

In the Celtic League, Munster were placed second and Leinster third thereby gaining qualification to the knock-out stages of the Celtic Cup. The Celtic Cup final, the last match of the season at Lansdowne Road, afforded the perfect stage for Munster's farewell to coach, Alan Gaffney, prior to his return to Australia. Munster added the Celtic Cup to their 2003 Celtic League victory by overcoming Llanelli by 27 - 16 in an exciting encounter. The Celtic League forms the backbone of the professional game in Ireland, Scotland and Wales and its importance is referred to later in the report.





It has been evident for some time that we face difficulties in staffing four professional squads given our small base of players and limited financial resources. This has manifested itself in the continuing need to bring in players from abroad and an increase in competition between provinces in relation to player recruitment. The need to reorganise elite player development structures and support personnel has been recognised and this year four provincial academies were created which are closely linked to the professional teams, each with an Academy Manager. The I.R.F.U. has also recognised that whilst many of the elements of a high performance system are in place, these elements require co-ordination and management and accordingly the post of High Performance Manager has been advertised and will be filled with a suitably qualified person.

Identifying talented players and providing them with development opportunities is

also being addressed. There has been some positive dialogue with representatives of schools and youth rugby to resolve issues of prioritisation of Irish age-grade teams and to bring our age eligibility regulations into line with those of the international rugby community, i.e., 1st January cut-off date. These initiatives will hopefully ensure that the best talent takes the field for Ireland at age-grade level whilst ensuring that the existing schools rugby structures at provincial level are not compromised. It is ever more important that the I.R.F.U. elite programme has a close interface and supports the work done at schools level if we are to address the skills deficit and the strength and conditioning deficit that is self-evident in our emerging professional playing base.

Another critical issue is the need to provide our development players with game time in the professional game. The balance between performance and development is a difficult

one to achieve for any coach. We do need to keep an eye to the future and ensure that the players are given playing opportunities, otherwise their rate of development will be slow. This can only hinder performance in the long term and increase the pressure to retain ageing players and recruit foreign players – neither of which are in the best interest of Irish rugby. Conservative selection and lack of game time for development players will ultimately have a negative long term impact on the professional game as well as provincial and national team performances.

Other opportunities for skills development and playing experience need to be provided and increased participation in the I.R.B. World Sevens Series and a return to an international 'A' fixture programme are options. These and other opportunities are being explored and considered by the professional coaching and player development staff through the Representative Game Committee.





Critical to our professional playing structure is a fixture list and the continuing uncertainty over the format of the Celtic League is worrying. The rationalisation of the professional game in Wales has been difficult not only for the Welsh but also for the Scottish and Irish teams as the Celtic League as a competition has continuously changed shape from year to year. The different priorities of the Welsh clubs compared to the National team priority of Ireland and Scotland has also introduced tensions. The I.R.F.U. and its provinces made a significant move to ease these tensions by agreeing to provide Heineken Cup qualification through Celtic League ranking, the aim being to provide more meaning to the competition. However, recent moves by the Welsh teams to participate in the English Powergen Cup have once again introduced another layer of uncertainty to the Celtic League and the final format for the competition in future seasons has yet to be resolved at the time of writing.

Irish rugby requires a vibrant professional competition outside of the Heineken Cup. The Heineken Cup is a fantastic competition but simply does not offer sufficient fixtures for professional teams. England and France have sufficiently large populations to have an internal professional competition, but it will continue to be necessary for those Unions with a smaller playing base to join forces in cross-border competition. In this regard we are committed to the Celtic League with our partners in Wales and Scotland.

In terms of the administration of the professional game, discussions have taken place with each province to ensure that there is greater transparency and accountability in respect of the management and financial control of the professional game. Greater clarity in the lines of management and financial control between the administration of the amateur game and professional game at Branch level will help planning in respect of both the Branch

administration of the club and schools game and also the professional teams. The key to this is to ensure that the dividend for the amateur club and schools game that is provided by the professional game is clear to all.

Ultimately we must move each professional team into a situation where, outside of the player contract costs, the teams are financially independent of the I.R.F.U. This requires each professional team and the Branch to have a proper business plan in place to ensure that revenues are maximised and an appropriate dividend made available to the Branch administration of the amateur game. Facilities are important in this regard and it is important that these are upgraded. Plans are being developed for Thomond Park, Musgrave Park, Donnybrook and Ravenhill. Planning permission has already been received in respect of the redevelopment of Donnybrook and this summer an investment of €500,000 is being made in pitch upgrades at Donnybrook.

Domestic Game

This year the I.R.F.U. spent some €8m on the domestic club and schools game in the form of direct funding and the provision of development programmes operated by the Rugby Department. €3.5m of this funding was derived from the Irish Sports Council grant and this is gratefully acknowledged as it forms a critical part of our funding of youth and under-age development programmes. With such funding comes accountability and for these reasons the administration and auditing of programmes assumes a greater significance at club, Branch and Union levels.

The Domestic Game Committee has spent much time on co-ordinating the implementation of its aspects of the I.R.F.U. Strategic Plan. In particular, it has devolved much of the policy formulation down to the Branches which in turn have involved the wider rugby community in discussion on key topics, such as, participation

and retention, participation within universities and colleges, financial and structural funding, facility development and the Clubs of Ireland Scheme. Recommendations emerging from this process will form the basic work plan and agenda for the Branches over the next three years once approved. The Branches have also had the opportunity of helping shape the domestic game budget. This whole process has had the added benefit of widening the level of representation by clubs in to Branch deliberations and policy formulation which has introduced a new level of energy and knowledge to the game. Hopefully some of those who have been involved in this process will continue to contribute to the administration of the game at Branch level.

An important element of the Strategic Plan was to place a greater emphasis on the club and schools game. In this regard the I.R.F.U. has put in place the resources to ensure the club focus is achieved. Kevin Potts, former Ireland 'A' player, has been recruited as Domestic Game Manager with responsibility for the implementation of the strategies for the club and schools game. Gordon Black has also been appointed as Rugby Administration Manager. In each province, the I.R.F.U. is providing funding for the appointment of a Club Development Manager, David Ross and David Boyd, having already been appointed in Leinster and Ulster, respectively. They will be responsible for providing the development support required by clubs. This structure will ensure that the club agenda is to the fore at Branch and Union level.

The Rugby Department Operational Plan this year saw significant levels of activity and in this regard some highlights are outlined below:-

- There were high levels of provincial engagement in the Foundation/Level 1 coaching courses. Course attendance and accreditation is now becoming more important in an increasingly litigious



sporting environment.

- Sixty-five participants completed the first year of a two year club/coach conditioning qualification sponsored by Powerade. The aim of this course is to provide club and schools personnel with specific training in relation to the physical conditioning of players for the game of rugby. A similar number of entrants is anticipated for the 2005 to 2007 cycle.
- Approximately one thousand coaches, parents, and volunteers will have completed the Associate Referee Scheme by September 2005. This will ensure that all people involved in refereeing at age-grade level and schools rugby will have basic referee qualifications and will be accredited.
- The Coca-Cola Schools TAG rugby programme continues to provide primary school children with access to rugby. Twenty thousand children are involved.
- The mini rugby and the youth club rugby along with schools rugby continues to be vibrant, driven by thousands of volunteers and assisted by eighty-three Youth Development Officers sponsored by Frosties, twelve Regional Development Officers, four Provincial Development Managers and four National Managers.

The key difficulty being faced within the club game is player retention in the post sixteen to eighteen year age group. This is not unique to rugby and is a challenge for all sports. Critical for rugby is the need to attract sufficient numbers of adult players to sustain and grow the game. The importance of being pro-active in the schools and youth sector cannot be over-emphasised and this will obviously be a key part of the rugby development plan going forward. Lateral and inventive thinking will be required by all in the game to come up with competition structures and timings that will make rugby a more attractive sporting choice in the years ahead.

Universities and Colleges rugby is identified in the Strategic Plan as an area that needs to be supported and exploited. Irish colleges rugby continues to grow as a consequence of very high levels of enthusiastic support by many volunteers in this sector. It is an area of potential high growth and is also a fruitful recruitment zone for clubs. The new interprovincial and international representative structure is providing a great focus and incentive for the many participants at this level. In a similar fashion, the Irish Universities Rugby Union is endeavouring to grow the participation levels in the University sector. The performance of the University teams in the AIB League augurs well for the future of University rugby. However, the need to ensure that the junior sides continue to flourish and grow in these institutions with their significant numbers of rugby players will be the challenge going forward.

Irish Exiles players continue to be a strong feature of Irish age-grade sides. The work of John Hunter, the Exiles Development Manager and the Exiles Committee chaired by Feidlim MacLoughlin is greatly appreciated in this regard. Irish eligible U.K. based players will continue to be extremely important in the context of the professional game in this country. A very significant diaspora exists whose inclinations and dreams are to play for Ireland. The Exiles Committee and structure provides the facility in many cases for these aspirations to become a reality.

Irish Womens rugby continues to grow with more clubs and players joining on an annual basis. The I.R.F.U. and the I.W.R.F.U. are continuing to work closely to drive significant increases in this area over the coming years and a Strategic Plan has been produced by the I.W.R.F.U.

The Adult Tag Rugby programme is playing a significant role in introducing women into clubs and into the game in general. The

level of participation in Adult Tag Rugby across both genders is now eleven thousand members. Rugby Department personnel are now targeting girls schools in the major urban centres as part of this expansion programme.

AIB League

The results of the AIB League are covered in the attached appendices. Congratulations to winners of Division I - Shannon, Division II – UL Bohemians and Division III - Greystones. All the divisional finals were played at Lansdowne Road on 7th May providing an excellent day for Irish club rugby.

The AIB League Working Party met on four occasions during the year. This group is made up of representatives from the three divisions, the Branches and the I.R.F.U. It is responsible for determining the regulations and structures of the AIB League. The emergence of the new divisional associations ensures that club views are well debated prior to coming to the AIB League Working Party and this is to be welcomed. Following a request from the clubs, it was agreed that the new structure for season 2005/06 will be three divisions of sixteen teams played on a home or away basis, with semi final and final at the end of the season. A new All Ireland Cup will also be introduced to add to what will be a vibrant national league structure. To provide an international outlet for the top amateur players in the country, it has also been agreed to stage an annual fixture with Scotland involving an Irish team drawn from the AIB League. The I.R.F.U. looks forward to a constructive relationship with the divisional associations in the context of the AIB League.

Our thanks to AIB for their continuing support for the AIB League and club rugby.



Referees

The Referee Development Department has been dealing with important issues in both the professional and amateur game during the season. As mentioned earlier the Associate Referee programme has ensured some one thousand two hundred non-affiliated referees have been accredited. Coaching workshops have been extended to ensure all official referees receive access to coaching. The Schoolboy Referee programme has been delivered in Belfast, Cork, Dublin and Limerick and continues to be successful. A pilot programme has been developed for the I.W.R.F.U. to encourage refereeing within the womens game. The only disappointment has been the poor response from clubs to referee recruitment and this may need to be reflected in future Clubs of Ireland Scheme criteria.

The quality of our top referees is acknowledged and is reflected in the

referee appointments internationally. The talent identification system and coaching ensures that the programme and age profile of referees in AIB Division I and II is very positive for the future.

Medical/Anti-doping

The appointment of Dr. Conor McCarthy as I.R.F.U. Medical Director marks a significant initiative in the professionalisation of our medical support service which heretofore relied on the goodwill and commitment of our voluntary medical personnel. With approximately one hundred and fifty players on some form of contract and numerous representative teams playing in competitions around the world it is important that our medical services are co-ordinated and delivered in a professional fashion. Conor McCarthy's role extends beyond the professional game in terms of co-ordinating and delivering policy set down by the

Medical Advisory Sub Committee in respect of club and schools rugby.

The I.R.F.U. once again commissioned anti-doping testing through the Irish Sports Council (I.S.C.), supplementing the I.S.C. National Anti-doping programme. Details of tests performed are outlined below. Regrettably a club player failed an "in-competition" drug test and this case is currently before the I.S.C. Anti-doping Tribunal.

2004/05 Anti-doping Programme

In Competition Testing

Team	No. of Players tested
Senior XV	10
U.21 XV	10
Celtic League	10
AIB League Club XV's	20
Sevens	11
Schools	02





Out of Competition Testing

Team	No. of Players tested
Senior	22
Provincial Squads	32
Sevens	16

Charitable Trust

The Charitable Trust was set up in 1978 by the Union to provide a fund to assist seriously injured rugby players in their every day lives. The fund now stands at over €2m and payments are made by the Trust towards specialised home improvements, wheelchairs, adapted vehicles and other equipment and expenses necessary to meet the needs of our injured players. Distributions annually amount some €220,000.

There are thirty injured players and the need for the Trust has been never more important. The Trust continually needs to raise funds

and has embarked on several major fundraising projects including the Friends of the Charitable Trust scheme, now numbers four hundred and fifty members, golf outings and a fundraising walk will coincide with the Lions Tour to New Zealand.

Commercial and Marketing

It has been a very successful year in the commercial and marketing area through the efforts of the Commercial Committee under the chairmanship of Pat Fitzgerald and the departmental staff under Pdraig Power. The department has grown as part of the recently launched Strategic Plan with the addition of Karl Richardson as Communications and Media Manager. His remit has been to fill the role of Media Liaison Officer for the National and under-age teams as well as managing the P.R. and communications activity including editing the website for the Union.

In terms of meeting the key performance indicators as set out in the Strategic Plan a number of key marketing initiatives have been put in place in addition to which substantial revenue generating programmes and sponsorship deals have been concluded this past year. I would like to thank all of the sponsors of Irish rugby for their support and contribution to the game.

On the marketing front, the aim has been to leverage the high profile of Irish rugby and this has resulted in unprecedented marketing activity at all levels of the game. Of significant note this season has been the AIB Media and Marketing workshops held in all four provinces in five venues. These meetings have been very fruitful in helping to begin to re-position the club game and to effect a more positive and closer working relationship between the clubs and the Union. The challenge is to build on this momentum and to work together towards a more secure future for the club game in Ireland.





'Against the Head' the weekly magazine programme on R.T.E. has transmitted more AIB League highlights than ever before and there has been a very positive increase in viewership figures over the past season for the programme. The emergence of Setanta now broadcasting the Celtic League and Schools rugby, the RBS Six Nations coverage on R.T.E. and B.B.C. and the Heineken Cup on R.T.E. and Sky are all giving Irish rugby fans a greater choice and variety of rugby on television.

www.irishrugby.ie, the Union's website, continues to show further growth this season with over 1.1 million visitor sessions in February/March, an increase of 672,000 (446,000 for same period last year) and over 374,000 unique visitors in February/March, an increase of 244,000 (130,000 for same period last year). This past season has also seen the successful launch of the on-line shop in association with Elvery's Sports which has resulted in another revenue stream for the Union.

New Marketing initiatives launched this season include:-

- The Irish Rugby Supporters Club was launched to get closer to fans and to create a new revenue stream.
- AIB Media and Marketing workshops.
- VHI Fit for Fun Programme in Munster.
- Ulster Bank Summer Camps kick off this summer in forty-nine venues across the four provinces.
- Powerade Conditioning Programme aimed at certifying club coaches in modern conditioning techniques.

On the commercial front the renewal of the kit sponsorship with Canterbury has been one of several highlights that also include the following:

Contracts Renewed/Extended:-

- Canterbury of New Zealand as official kit supplier.
- O₂ as official mobile communications

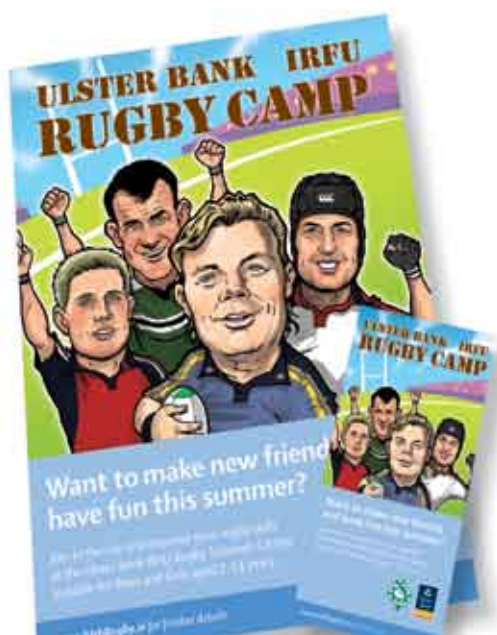
partner to the I.R.F.U.

- Coca-Cola as official soft drink to the I.R.F.U.
- Powerade as official sports drink to the I.R.F.U.
- Kellogg's as official snack food to the I.R.F.U.
- Kellogg's Frosties as official sponsors of the Youth Development Programme.

New Sponsorships:-

- O₂ as sponsors of the West Stand Lansdowne Road.
- Ulster Bank as sponsors of the new Summer Camp Rugby programme.
- Elvery's Sports as retail partner to the I.R.F.U.
- Powerade as sponsors of the Conditioning programme.
- HP as technology partners to the I.R.F.U.
- Canterbury as sponsors of the Irish Rugby Supporters Club.
- Volvic as sponsors of Adult Tag Rugby





Corporate Services

Lansdowne Road staff once again provided the support required to ensure that the increasing range of I.R.F.U. activity operates effectively. Irish teams were involved in forty-three fixtures this season with ten senior international matches. Three hundred thousand tickets were printed and distributed and it is interesting to record that tickets to the value of €500,000 were purchased from the I.R.F.U. website. The storage and handling of kit has become a more significant exercise over the past number of years and this year some twenty thousand items of kit were handled and distributed.

In terms of senior international matches, some thirteen thousand accreditations were issued for media, stewards and catering staff. In all, across all events at Lansdowne Road, some eight hundred and fifty thousand patrons attended rugby, soccer and concert events.

I point these facts and figures out to show the level of activity required to support what the I.R.F.U. does. This level of activity requires staffing and management and the I.R.F.U. is fortunate on having a good team of people in place to deliver the services required. As indicated in the introduction to this report there has been some reorganisation of roles and responsibilities to ensure the smooth operation of the I.R.F.U. A decision will need to be made over the next twelve months in relation to office accommodation as the current set-up with three different offices is far from ideal.

With a staff, including players and coaches, of approximately three hundred people, the Union's investment in a Human Resources function has been very necessary. Much of the activity in the Human Resources Department over the past twelve months has been on delivery against the targets set out in the Strategic Plan launched last

summer. While the HR function permeates all aspects of the Plan it is the professional game strategies and the leadership and management strategies that have been the primary focus in the programmes, policies and procedures that have been developed during the year. We have made significant progress in this regard but there is much that remains to be done.

Changes in Employment Legislation have necessitated ongoing review in the area of Employment Contracts and while there is a need for ongoing vigilance many of the inconsistencies that prevailed in this area have now been addressed. Changes in legislation, anti-doping regulations and perhaps most notably, intellectual property and image rights have all been factors in prompting a fundamental review of professional player contracts. The I.R.F.U. has been well served by the original document drafted when the game turned



The continuing evolution of the I.R.F.U. as an organisation will hopefully assist in maintaining the healthy interface between the elected representatives and the full time professional staff.

professional. The revised document will endeavour to reflect these changes and the increasingly complex commercial realities of professional sport. The revised contract is currently being finalised and will be the subject of discussions with all relevant stakeholders over the coming months.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention the retirement of George Spotswood at the end of this season. George has been a familiar face at 62 Lansdowne Road since he joined the I.R.F.U. in 1979 as its first Development Officer. His love of the game, his knowledge of the game and his commonsense approach to the various challenges that arise from time to time are obvious to all who know him. His contribution to Irish rugby originally in a voluntary capacity and later as a member of the professional staff has been considerable and he is respected internationally for his knowledge of the game. We wish George and his wife, Maeve, many happy years of

retirement and it is safe to say, George will continue to be found pitch-side for many years to come.

Committee

The impact of the new Strategic Plan continues to be felt by the members of the I.R.F.U. Committee in the form of a significant workload required to ensure implementation of the Plan is delivered at Branch and club level. In addition, the ever increasing complexity of sports administration and management requires a significant commitment from the voluntary elected representatives. The continuing evolution of the I.R.F.U. as an organisation will hopefully assist in maintaining the healthy interface between the elected representatives and the full time professional staff.

John Quilligan retires from the I.R.F.U. Committee following his year as immediate

Past President. John has made a significant contribution since being elected to the I.R.F.U. Committee in 1994, culminating in his appointment as President in 2003/04. Best wishes to John and his wife, Ann, on his retirement from the I.R.F.U.

Bob McConkey also steps down from the I.R.F.U. Committee. Since joining the I.R.F.U. in 1998 he has made valuable contribution to both the development of the club game drawing from his experience of his own club, Shannon R.F.C., and also to the professional game given his experience as Chairman of the Munster Provincial Team Management Committee. Again best wishes to Bob and Cathy.





Obituaries

M.G. (Mick) Doyle

Lions 1968, Irish International 1965–68
(20 caps), National Coach 1984-87
Leinster Coach 1979-83.

J.W.S (Sinclair) Irwin

President I.R.F.U. 1969-70, Irish International
1938-39.

W.J. (Bill) Bishop OBE

President R.F.U. 1995-96.

J. (Jimmy) Montgomery M.C.

President I.R.F.U. 1979–80.

T. Machii

President J.R.F.U. 2001, Treasurer and
Director J.R.F.U. 1987, Chairman of the
Referee Committee 1987.

The I.R.F.U. wishes to acknowledge the following sponsors of Irish rugby



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Sponsor of Coca-Cola Tag Rugby



Official Mobile Telecommunications
Partner to the I.R.F.U.
Sponsors of the Irish Schools Team
Sponsors of the O₂ West Stand



Official Car Supplier to the I.R.F.U.

Supporting Clubs. Supporting Communities.



Sponsor of AIB League



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Sponsor of the Powerade Conditioning Programme



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Sponsor of IRFU Supporters Club



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Brand Partner of IrishRugby.ie



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Official Gym supplier to the I.R.F.U.



Official Deodorant of the Irish Rugby Team



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