



IRFU Strategic Plan 2008 - 2012

Building on Solid Foundations

Quality, Preparation and Performance at All Levels

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President's Foreword

It is my honour as President to introduce the Irish Rugby Football Union's second strategic plan, to cover the period 2008 -2012, including World Cup 2011 in New Zealand.

The cycle encompasses a period of great challenge for the governance and well being of rugby in Ireland.

Based on the level of success achieved in our inaugural plan, I have every confidence in our ability to again successfully realise many of the key objectives we have set ourselves.

The Strategic Plan 2008 - 2012 – Building on Solid Foundations – has been framed with a thoroughness and detail that epitomises the sense of conscientious guardianship within the Union for the welfare of rugby football in Ireland.

Amongst the elements of aspiration set out, I am satisfied that the wellbeing of our domestic game going forward remains at the core of our objectives.

Increase in playing numbers which are an indication of the overall growth of the game are reflected within the successful attainments of our initial plan and the ambition to drive on that momentum is critical, notwithstanding that it is the professional game which is the engine that drives all our activities.

In spite of a disappointing 2007 World Cup in France, I believe rugby in Ireland, across the board, is in a satisfying state – and in good hands – and our collective endeavour to fulfill the targets set out in the 2008 – 2012 strategic plan can serve to enhance that status.

I greatly appreciate the extent of effort that has gone into the preparation of this document. It is the product of inordinate hard work by my fellow committee members, under the Chairmanship of John Hussey and conducted in harmony with the IRFU professional staff, under the direction of our CEO Philip Browne, together with critical input from the branches and from volunteers throughout the club game.

I strongly urge a dedicated participation by everyone in attempting to achieve the aims and values set out here, so that we can all share in the satisfaction of contributing to the common objective of having in Ireland a game from which we can all take pleasure with a sense of attainment and pride.



John Lyons
IRFU President



Chairman's Address

The groundbreaking first IRFU strategic plan, *Growing the Game - Achieving Success*, published in 2004, was a watershed for Irish Rugby and effectively created the basis for *Building on Solid Foundations*, the next strategic plan for Irish Rugby.

When the planning group began the process to formulate the plan for 2008-12, the overriding belief was that while it should be a continuation of the preceding plan in terms of building on the successes of that period, the setting of new high level goals was again essential.

The previous strategic period saw both great achievements and some disappointments, something that the IRFU President John Lyons has already alluded to, but the key learning was that the game must continually challenge itself in what is a fast changing rugby environment.

This is reflected in the challenging targets for the next four years in terms of participation, facilities and success on the playing field. As part of that, the domestic game continues to be the bedrock of Irish Rugby and success in the professional game is essential for the funding of all our programmes.

The process has again been an extensive one over the last 12 months, with close co-operation between the committee volunteers, IRFU professional staff, branch staff and representatives and most importantly, grassroots stakeholders.

I would like to congratulate and thank all those who have been involved in the strategic process and its implementation over the last four years at all levels of the game in what has been a time of high growth and for the most part success for Irish Rugby.

The challenge for Irish Rugby now is to build on what has been achieved and this strategic plan clearly sets out how we aim to do that. The co-operation, energy and commitment by all our stakeholders to date has been most encouraging and bodes well for the future of Irish rugby.



John Hussey
Chairman IRFU Management Committee



Executive Summary

Building on Solid Foundations

This document 'Building on Solid Foundations', is the Irish Rugby Football Union's second strategic plan for the game of rugby in Ireland. It sets out and defines the sport's direction and goals for the four year period 2008 - 2012.

The plan builds on the achievements of the IRFU's first strategic plan, 'Growing the Game - Achieving Success', published in 2004. The significant majority of the first plan's objectives have been achieved. A summary of the performance against each goal is included in the Appendix of this document.

These achievements indicate that, while significant challenges remain to be faced, Irish Rugby is set on solid foundations. The key learning from the implementation of the first strategic plan is that in the constantly changing and highly competitive sports and leisure sector, we cannot rest on our achievements.

Irish Rugby must continue to aim higher in the delivery of a sport that provides all its stakeholders with a great sense of enjoyment and satisfaction in return for their collective support and patronage. Rugby is a people-driven sport and the IRFU is a people-driven organisation. The ability to communicate more effectively with these stakeholders was a key consideration and is an important objective across this strategic plan.

Over the next four years professional and amateur rugby will continue to exist in an interdependent relationship. Further professional success will continue to generate the funding required to support the growth and development of our sport at school, college and club level. Since the dawn of the professional game the IRFU has been able to invest over €100 million in domestic rugby.

While in addition to being the breeding ground for the professional players of the future, the amateur game is the soul of Irish Rugby where the love of the game is kindled and nurtured for a lifelong journey of friendships and enjoyment.

We must continue to set the bar higher so that, together with clubs, schools and colleges, we will maintain Irish Rugby's position as one of the leading rugby nations in the world.

The ability to continue to provide and further develop a quality, sustainable and successful game for all is the aim of 'Building on Solid Foundations'.

The key objectives of the new plan are:

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:
 - Reach the semi-final of the Rugby World Cup 2011 & 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 three referees in the top level of the international game

Commercial, Marketing and Communications

- Increase revenues by 25% 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 four years and to thank you the players, volunteers, supporters, employees and our many partners for contributing to the growth and success of our sport on so many levels.



Planning Process

The planning process for the IRFU's second four year strategic plan 'Building on Solid Foundations' commenced over 12 months ago with the critical review and measurement of the plan's key objectives.

A detailed 12 month process then followed involving each of the standing committees of the IRFU working with IRFU professional staff and branch executive officers to construct a framework to address the issues of the fundamental pillars of rugby in Ireland.

The heart of the plan remains the importance of the domestic game. From the outset the domestic game was identified by the IRFU as the foundation on which all the success and growth of the game was built upon.

On foot of this key principle the IRFU commissioned a market research study into the domestic game. This was conducted from January - June 2007.

The study was based on research findings derived from focus groups, independent submissions and interviews from a cross section of stakeholders in the domestic game including players, coaches, volunteers and administrators. The findings of the study were instrumental in shaping the strategic plan for the 2008 – 2012 period.

With the learnings from the study, the development of the new plan continued through ongoing consultation with the provincial branches through the Chief Executives and relevant branch personnel at both executive and committee level. The IRFU's second strategic plan was ratified by the IRFU Committee in July 2008.

Once again the plan sets out clear and measurable key performance indicators (KPI's) for each objective. Detailed operational plans have been devised to support implementation of the strategic plan and will be revised on an ongoing basis. This will allow 'Building on Solid Foundations' to be refined over the life of the plan. The IRFU will monitor the implementation of the plan through the Strategic Review Committee over the next four years to ensure continuity.



Objectives

The following objectives have been selected through the strategic review process and represent the primary goals and key performance indicators across the strategic areas of the game.

Domestic Game

The domestic game is the heart of Irish Rugby. The IRFU aims to grow participation and enjoyment in the domestic game through the provision of a high quality sporting experience. This will be enabled by providing the funding, structures and know-how to develop the best possible social and physical environment for players, supporters and volunteers alike.

The IRFU acknowledge that this plan can only be achieved if it is shared and embraced by our clubs and schools. We will work in partnership with our stakeholders to achieve the targets listed below for the betterment of our game at all levels.

Provide a Quality Rugby Environment for All

- 90% of clubs & schools to operate under the IRFU Long Term Player Development Programme
- Review and introduction of adult competition models at all levels
- 600 qualified referees
- Increased percentage of accredited coaches specifically at level 2
- Further development of new volunteer recruitment, retention and training drive
- Introduction of the 'Parents to Post-holders' programme
- Establishment of a 'Club Mark Programme' to recognise quality clubs
- 75% of clubs to participate in new club management training programme
- Development of 'Welcoming Clubs' programme

Greater Adult Participation

- Increase the number of adults playing rugby to 800 teams
- Increasing the number of 16-20 year olds playing rugby
- Development of floodlit rugby
- Development of leisure and social rugby programmes including Adult TAG
- Increase participation in women's rugby by 10%
- Development of third level rugby participation strategy

The Highest Standards in Age Grade Sport

- Establishment of IRFU Age Grade Committee
- Implementation of the LTPD Programme throughout age-grade rugby
- 90% of clubs & schools to comply with the programme
- Increase the number of players transitioning from 2nd/3rd level into adult rugby
- Full implementation of newly enhanced IRFU Child Welfare Policy
- Development of IRFU Quality Assurance and Award Scheme for Clubs
- Implement new IRFU primary schools' programme in conjunction with the Irish Sports Council and Northern Ireland Sports Council



Club Facility Development

- Introduction of IRFU Facilities Support and Standards Programme
- Improved rugby pitch facilities
- Facilities for women players, medical personnel and referees
- Development of IRFU quality assurance standards
- Provision of a proven list of contractors at provincial level for club capital development projects

Being in Touch

- Development of positive and informed relationship between clubs, the branches and the IRFU
- Continued development of a marketing and communications programme for domestic rugby
- Provision of professional support structure to clubs

Professional Game - “Winning Teams”

The IRFU goal is to foster a self-sustaining culture of success through winning the majority of matches played by all professional teams. The coaching and medical structures supporting the teams must be of a consistently world class standard. The IRFU’s leadership role in world rugby refereeing standards is to be further enhanced.

National Team

- Reach the semi-final of the Rugby World Cup 2011
- Win a 6 Nations Championship
- Win a Triple Crown at least once
- Finish in the top 3 every year in the 6 Nations
- Win at least one of SANZAR / Argentina game during the November Internationals
- Win at least one of SANZAR / Argentina game during the summer tours
- Win all games against tier II countries

Provincial Teams

- Deliver a synergy between national and provincial player exposure & development
- An Irish province to win the Heineken Cup
- An Irish province in the semi-final of the Heineken Cup each year
- 2 Irish provinces to qualify for the knock-out stage of the Heineken Cup each year
- An Irish province to reach knock-out stages if participating in the European Challenge Cup
- An Irish province to reach 2 semi-finals every 4 years in the European Challenge Cup
- Irish provinces to win 2 Magners Leagues
- 3 Irish provinces to finish in the top 6 of Magners League every season
- IRFU to be a strong advocate for continued development of the Magners League

Under 20s

- Win a 6 Nations Championship
- Finish in the top 3 every other year
- Finish in the top 6 in the Junior World Championships



Elite Player

- Operate the national talent squad programme
- Operate provincial academy structures to maximise indigenous professional player recruitment

Provide World Class Medical Support

- At national and provincial level

Refereeing

- Ireland to achieve and maintain three referees in the top level of the international game
- Achieve four referees at ERC level
- Achieve eight referees at Magners League level
- 15 game minimum for all domestic level referees

Finance

The IRFU will continue to provide strong financial stewardship of Irish Rugby so that it can consistently re-invest in the growth and enhancement of the sport at all levels.

- Maintenance of long-term financial forecasting model
- New Stadium to be delivered on time and on budget
- Implement 'Value for Money' ethos across the IRFU and branches
- Continued risk assessment and management of IRFU finances

Commercial, Marketing and Communications

The IRFU aims to increase commercial patronage and sponsorship of Irish Rugby through maximising value across all platforms to its stakeholders and increasing awareness and engagement with the sport at every opportunity.

Commercial programme

- Increase revenues by 25% to €69m by 2012
- Maximise revenue streams in the New Stadium
- Increase and maximise sponsorship in Irish Rugby at all levels

Marketing & Communications Programme

- Enhance profile of the game in Ireland
- Develop and implement a new communications strategy
- Integrated approach to marketing within the IRFU and the branches
- High recognition of the Irish Rugby brand
- Increased attendances at events
- More registered players and participants
- 15,000 members of the Irish Rugby Supporters Club
- 20 million page views / 3.5 million website visitors per annum



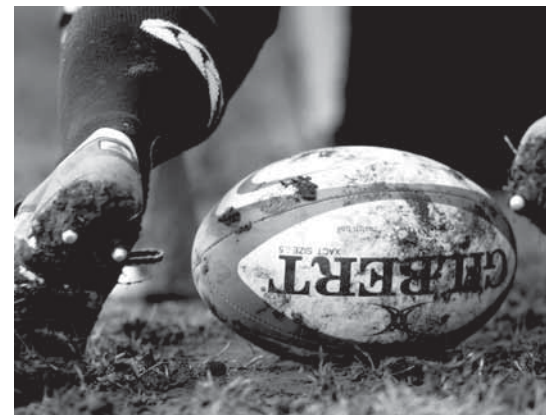
Governance and Management

- Governance audit - complete review and implement a new governance model for Irish Rugby
- Review and improve internal and external communications across Irish Rugby
- Establish a Strategic Review Committee to monitor the ongoing achievement of the strategic plan
- Production of Irish Rugby 2020
- Develop a rugby museum to celebrate the traditions of Irish Rugby since its foundation

Human Resources

The human resources strategy is designed to ensure that the IRFU and its branches continue to have the people, resources and support necessary to keep pace with the changing needs of the organisation.

- Periodic review of structure with heads of department and branch CEOs
- Monitor effectiveness of the performance development process and provide training & support as required for staff and committee involved in this process
- Benchmarking exercise to review IRFU salary scales and pay progression
- Conclude negotiations with IRUPA on all match/tour fees and win bonuses
- Review and improve internal and external communications across Irish Rugby



Appendix

Review of targets set out in the 2004 IRFU Strategic Plan and Results

Ireland in the Top 4 in the World

Target 2004	Result May 2008
Ireland in the semi-finals of the 2007 RWC	Not achieved
Winning the Heineken Cup once and 2 Magners Leagues and Celtic Cups	Achieved – 2 ERC wins and 2 Magners Leagues and 2 Celtic Cups
Irish U21s to win the 6 Nations tournament at least once and reach the semi-final of the RWC at least once	U-20s won the Grand Slam in 2007 and RWC runner up in 2004
Irish U19s to win RWC once and reach at least one semi-final	Not achieved – changes in age-grade rugby
New High Performance System established	High Performance Department established 2006
Regional academies operational	Operational
Sufficient Irish professional players recruited annually	Achieved

Finance

Target 2004	Result May 2008
Operating deficit eliminated	Deficit eliminated

Facilities

Target 2004	Result May 2008
National Stadium 75% completed	Opening in April 2010
Improved training facilities for the national team	Ongoing - Abbotstown
Plans agreed to upgrade 3 provincial grounds and training facilities	Achieved – Thomond Park opening Nov 2008, RDS, Ravenhill, Donnybrook and Sportsground upgraded



Revitalising the Game in Ireland

Target 2004	Result May 2008
100,000 players registered at foundation, club, schools and third Levels	119,840 players registered in May 2008
203 affiliated clubs	213 affiliated clubs
700 adult teams	679 adult teams
450 youth teams	580 youth teams
680 mini-rugby teams	1,395 mini-rugby teams
260 affiliated secondary schools	264 affiliated secondary schools
500 affiliated primary schools	601 affiliated primary schools
1,500 registered coaches at all levels	4,611 qualified coaches
500 qualified referees	507 referees
75% clubs participating in the Club Development Programme	Not achieved – 50% est. clubs participating, review completed
New senior competition model in place	Review completed

Commercial

Target 2004	Result May 2008
IRFU income increased from €37.35m to €46.35m	Achieved - Income increased to €55m
Integrated approach to marketing within IRFU and branches	Achieved
3m annual visits to the website	6m annual visits
High recognition of Irish Rugby brand	Irish Rugby brand highly visible and marketable
10,000 members of International Supporters Club	12,500 members
Increased attendances at events	Achieved - Over 50% increase in attendances at provincial matches
More registered players and participants	Achieved



Notes



Notes

