



Adroddiad Blynyddol

2023
Annual Report





Dewrder | Hiwmor | Cywirdeb | Rhagoriaeth | Teulu | Llwyddiant
Courage | Humour | Integrity | Excellence | Family | Success





Community Report

This season we have restructured the department and appointed Heads of each of our strategic pillars. This has presented us with the opportunity to gather more insight and data into the way in which our game performs and also given us the ability to horizon scan what is coming next.

This report will highlight the impact and importance of each of those pillars.

I hope you enjoy reading. It's certainly been interesting collating the information and given us all a chance to reflect on a busy, pro-active season.

We are grateful to all of our teams in Wales, to the players, coaches, referees and all volunteers who have navigated the return to rugby in exceptional circumstances. All of this hard work has not gone unnoticed.

We completed our women's and men's leagues and cup programmes and celebrated our cup finals with teams and supporters at Principality Stadium.

Our Road to Principality programme was a resounding success again this year and we were able to extend a warm welcome to the district final at the Stadium. Our apprentices and whole team delivered a brilliant event and planning is already underway for next year.

“...to inspire youngsters and reward clubs... with the chance to enjoy a unique day out at the home of Welsh rugby”



ROAD TO PRINCIPALITY 2023

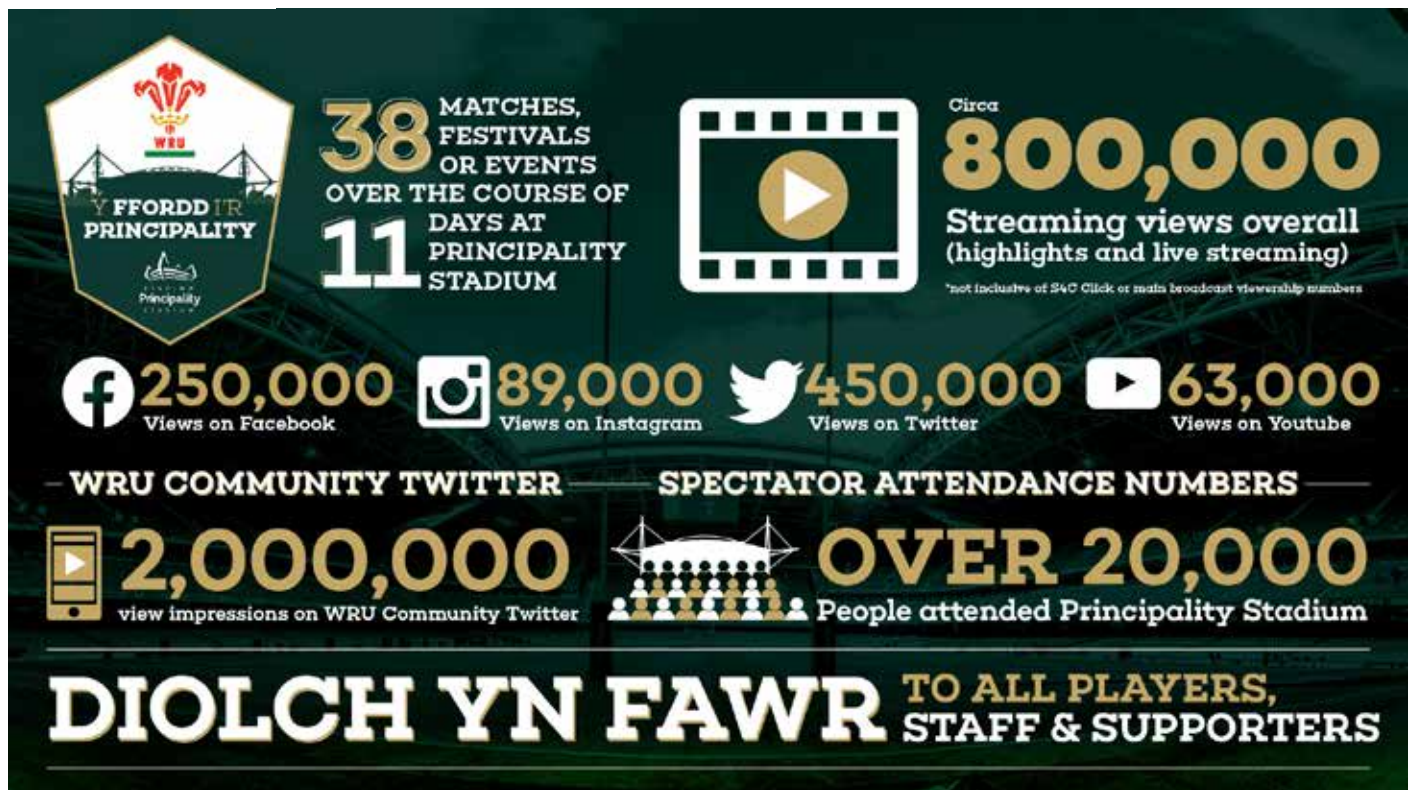
There were 29 cup finals played across 10 days of amazing action at Principality Stadium in April 2023.

Six finals - three in the WRU National Schools & Colleges League in November and December and three for the Welsh Schools U18 titles – had been played before the April extravaganza.

The whole essence of this annual gathering at Principality Stadium is to inspire youngsters and reward those clubs up and down our National League structures with the chance to enjoy a unique day out at the home of Welsh rugby.

The number of senior men’s cup finals rose from six to seven and there were three for the women. Sandwiched in the middle of all the community action was the return of Judgement Day to the Principality Stadium on 22 April, when Cardiff took on the Ospreys and Dragons met Scarlets.

The final two-days of the event saw inclusion days, with a mixed ability clash between Cardiff Chiefs and Llanelli Wanderers, as well as a round-robin competition involving three international gay rugby teams Swansea Vikings, Conwy Dragons and Wrexham Rhinos. There was also walking rugby on the hallowed turf for the first time



ROAD TO PRINCIPALITY 2023 – FIXTURES

Wednesday, 7 December - WRU NATIONAL SCHOOLS & COLLEGES FINALS

Cup Final: Coleg Sir Gâr
30 – 35 Cardiff & Vale College
(Parc Y Scarlets)

Plate Final: Coleg y Cymoedd
12 – 24 Ysgol Glantaf
(Ystrad Mynach)

Bowl Final: Coleg Gwent
31 – 40 Llandovery College
(Ystrad Mynach)

Thursday, 2 March – WELSH SCHOOLS U18 CUP FINALS

Cup: Ysgol y Strade 20 – 17
Ysgol Ystalyfera

Vase: Gwyr 46 – 12 Calon Cymru

Plate: Dyffryn Taf 15 – 14
Merthyr College

Saturday, 1 April – NATIONAL WOMEN'S CUP FINALS

WRU Women's National Bowl Final Merchedd Clwb Rygbi Cymry
Caerdydd 17 – 20 Haverfordwest Ladies

WRU Women's National Plate Final Burry Port Ladies 34 – 38
Whitland Ladies

WRU Women's National Cup Final Llandaff North 7 – 20
Pontyclun Falcons

Sunday, 2 April – NATIONAL GIRLS' U16 CUP FINALS

WRU Girls U16 National Plate Final Gwylliaid Meirionnydd
29 – 46 Cardiff Quins Girls

WRU Girls U16 National Cup Final Ravens 0 – 51 Nelson Belles

Friday, 7 April – NATIONAL YOUTH 18 MALE FINALS

WRU National Youth U18 Bowl Final Caerphilly 32 – 15 Llangwm

WRU National Youth U18 Plate Final Ammanford
24 – 41 Burry Port

WRU National Youth U18 Cup Final Carmarthen Quins
14 – 20 Tondu

Saturday, 8 April – NATIONAL MEN'S CUP FINALS (PART 1)

WRU National Division 5 Cup Final Crumlin 38 – 24 Ferndale

WRU National Division 4 Cup Final Bryncethin 19 – 15 Nantyglo

WRU National Division 3 Cup Final Abertillery BG 34 – 27 Vardre

WRU National Division 2 Cup Final Aberdare 12 – 17 Morriston

**Sunday, 23 April –
NATIONAL MEN'S CUP
FINALS (PART 2)**

**WRU National Division 1 Cup
Final** Newbridge 29 – 13 Nant
Conwy

**WRU National Championship
Cup Final** Ystrad Rhondda 16 – 28
Pontypool

**WRU National Premiership Cup
Final** Cardiff 13 – 10 Newport

**Monday, 24 April – WSRU
JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE
CUP FINALS**

**U11 Junior Group 10-a-side
John Rees Cup Final** Pontyclun
Primary School beat Model Church
in Wales (10 tries to nil)

**U14 Intermediate Group Year 8
Cup Final** Ysgol Bro Morgannwg
7 – 24 Y Pant School

**U16 Intermediate Group Year
9 Cup Final** Porthcawl CS 21 – 10
Ysgol Dyffryn Aman

**Tuesday, 25 April – GIRL'S
NATIONAL FINALS DAY
& MEN'S DISTRICTS CUP
FINAL**

**Girl's National Schools U12 Cup
Final** Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro
Dur 10 – 51 Ysgol Bro Pedr

**Girl's National Schools U14 Cup
Final** Bryn Celynnog 12 – 28
Bro Dinefwr

**Girl's National Schools U16 Cup
Final** Idris Davies School 34 – 24
Ysgol Bro Teifi

**Girl's National Schools &
Colleges U18 Cup Final** Gwent
College 17 – 0 Llandovery College

Welsh Districts Male Cup Final
West Wales 33 – 17 Mid District

**Wednesday, 26 April – WSRU
JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE
GROUP FINALS**

U11 DC Thomas Bowl Final
Neath Schools 20 – 15
Pembrokeshire Schools

U11 DC Thomas Plate Final
Cardiff Schools 5-25 Bridgend
Schools

U11 DC Thomas Cup Final
Pontypridd Schools 30-20 Islwyn
Schools

**U15 Lawrence Miller
Bowl** Islwyn Schools 10 – 8
Pembrokeshire Schools

U15 Morgan Griffiths Plate
Carmarthen Schools 24 – 34
Swansea Valley Schools



U15 Dewar Shield Final
Pontypridd Schools 22 – 24
Swansea Schools

**Thursday, 27 April –
INCLUSION DAY 1**

Mixed Ability Game Cardiff
Chiefs 26 – 32 Llanelli Warriors

**Friday, 28 April – INCLUSION
DAY 2**

Inclusion Festival
(Ummul Girl's Academy)

Schools Festival

SEN Group

Walking Rugby Festival

**International gay rugby
fixtures:** Vikings, Dragons,
Rhinos (round robin)





STRATEGY

We: We have been working to an internal community strategy to ensure that all our teams are aligned with key performance indicators driving all of our decision making processes.

People: Rugby is a collective effort. People are our game. We will invest our time and resources into improving the experience of the people who make up Welsh rugby.

How: The Community Department will provide annual training opportunities for all paid and voluntary roles with specific training and tools that will enable people and clubs to deliver purposeful, enjoyable, safe, and inclusive environments for all, so that everyone in Welsh Rugby can be the best they can be.

Places: Clubs and facilities are the bedrock of Welsh rugby. Whilst the definition of a club may evolve, investing in the environments where rugby is played is crucial to the future success of the sport. The club is the hub of the community.

How: The Community Department will develop club development plans to ensure that clubs are resilient, inclusive, fit for the future and are successful on and off the field. The Department will ensure that off field volunteers have opportunities to participate in rugby. The Department will increase investment opportunities and will signpost clubs if appropriate to WRU funding and other investment opportunities.

Promote: Rugby must compete for participants. Promotion of rugby must be wide ranging, from the impact rugby has on Welsh life to the benefits to any individual of getting involved. "Your life will be better with rugby in it".

How: The Community Department will create an annual Marketing and Communication Strategy that demonstrates that rugby is a game for everyone and that there is a game for all.

Playing: The game must be enjoyable, fun, safe and accessible. People have choices about their leisure time. For rugby to thrive, it must be fun and safe.

How: The Community Department will develop and implement a revised, progressive world leading integrated playing pathway in Wales that services Participation, Retention, Talent potential, Competitions, Motivations and Experiences.

Partners: There is strength in partnership, from increased engagement in local schools to commercial partners and sponsorship opportunities.

How: The Community Department will engage, support, and liaise with key strategic partners to ensure growth in all of our strategic priorities, ensuring that there are increased opportunities for rugby in Wales.

MIXED & WOMEN AND GIRLS GAME

Another key strategic pillar for the WRU is developing women's and girls' rugby in Wales. This includes identifying and developing a sustainable and growth focused women's and girls pathway.

As a result, two comprehensive and consultative review processes have taken place over the past three years in response to various factors including without limitation:

- the 2023 decision to lower the permitted age for playing mixed rugby to U11 (the Mixed Rugby Decision), including:
- health and safety concerns;
- address drop-off numbers in girls continuing to play rugby once entering secondary education age
- differing maturity levels of girls and boys and puberty implications
- to align our strategy to grow the female game and improve the opportunities for, and retention of, girls playing rugby by investing in our pathway programme from an earlier age.

The new WRU strategic and operational plan for women's and female rugby in Wales will continue to work in relation to resourcing to allow the WRU to implement an equitable approach to Female Pathway, including:

- developing a fit for purpose and vibrant playing pathway for young aspiring females in Wales
- offering skill development centres across Wales for the Female Pathway
- providing young females with curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to engage in rugby via the WRU Hub Education Programme within schools, colleges and Universities throughout Wales
- promoting more playing opportunities via female-centric fixtures and competitions
- geographically and strategically placed female Hubs network throughout Wales to attempt to assist in accelerating the growth of the female pathway.



MALE GAME

Support for the male game is an integral part of our strategy in Wales, in terms of both maintaining and developing participation levels in order for rugby to thrive in Wales.

- **Risk register** – 58 clubs were identified as needing extra support from January to May following weekly game data and all highlighted clubs contacted via regional community staff. A further 37 of the 58 clubs were additionally contacted in June to support their return to 23/24 season.
- **Male Competitions feedback** – Over 100 clubs were consulted via face-to-face discussions, online form submissions and telephone conversations on adult male competitions. Feedback resulted in changes in regulations, playing calendar on international weekends, national cup format and future shaping of national leagues.
- **Emerging player programme** – U15 skill centres and U16 Dewar shield competition introduced in new emerging player program (14yrs–16yrs).
Key stakeholders met nationally via district forums, regional academy meetings and staff information shares

- **WRU National Schools and Colleges and Senior Schools' Rugby** – Introduction of a revamped NSCL offering (now WRU Schools and Colleges competition) following an extensive review of the previous programme. Introduction of an updated licence criteria and additional establishments have committed to joining the programme. Process of a reformed 3rd tier for Senior Schools' rugby was undertaken with educational establishments and additional stakeholders and finalised in July.
- **U18 Season Calendar** – U18 Season Calendar – U18 Male calendar built across all areas of the game including national education competitions, junior club competitions, youth club competitions, Regional Age Grade programmes and senior schools' programmes.
- **Male Rugby Officer Job Description** – Restructure of the Rugby Officer job description to compliment and drive the operational plan and national strategic priorities.



PLACES

Our 'club development' team has been renamed the 'Places Team' and additional responsibilities have been added to this team as part of a restructure. The Head of Places joined the WRU in August 2022 and the department now has responsibility for involvement with all community rugby clubs, artificial grass pitch strategy, facilities strategy, inward investment for the community game and responsibility for off field volunteers operating in a club and governance role. The team work pan-Wales with two Club Development Managers and four Club Developers.

It has been a whirlwind year for this team with a particular focus on the impact of volunteers in the community game. This season saw the launch of

the Diolch Awards recognising volunteers in the community and this culminated in the inaugural WRU Community Volunteer Awards, an evening which will become an annual celebration in our community calendar. With a continued focus on volunteers, the department will launch a new volunteer recognition, reward, recruitment and retention policy at the start of season 23/24.

INCLUSION

This year we have engaged with a far wider reach than ever before, by working with groups that are under-represented in rugby to provide a positive experience within communities across Wales as an introduction to rugby. Key program delivery includes:

- Ummul Girls School (Muslim Independent School)
- Cardiff Muslim Primary School
- South Riverside Project
- BME Swansea
- Foundation 4 Sport
- Ramadan Midnight Sports Provision

We have also sponsored and attended the below events:

- Nation of Sanctuary Awards 2023
- TedX Bute Street
- Be.Excellence quarterly magazine (Black and Asian Magazine distribution pan Wales) which will see us have significant communication streams to our wider society within Wales.



DISABILITY RUGBY

The Wheelchair Rugby European Championship 2023 took place at the Principality Stadium leading to a program of delivery where over 7,000 people across the country took part in wheelchair rugby sessions, with delivery supported by the Regional Foundations, Cardiff, Ospreys, Dragons and Scarlets. We also signed an official partnership with GBWR and Disability Sport Wales which will see the continued growth of the sport in schools and clubs linked to the regional teams with the following activities.

- Mixed Ability Rugby – 9 Teams
- 7 Inclusive Community Clubs
- Visually Impaired Rugby – 2 teams (Cardiff & Ospreys)
- 8 x Disability 6 Nations Events
- 2 x Urdd Disability Festivals
- 2 x Disability Sport Wales Insport Events

LGBTQ+

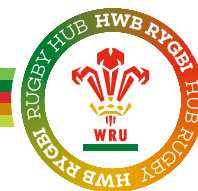
The 4 IGR teams supported by WRU Staff; Swansea Vikings, Cardiff Lions, Wrexham Rhinos, Conwy Dragons, with inclusion this year at Road to Principality.



WE Soda/WRU Fit Fed Fun

We have continued to grow our support for areas of high deprivation in Wales through our Holiday Hunger Program. This financial year has seen 151 one day rugby camp provisions with 5,216 children engaged in rugby and healthy eating over the Summer and Easter Periods.

Next year will see us partnering with the Welsh Local Government Agency Food & Fun program within schools over the Summer, in addition to the one day free rugby camp provision delivered in partnership with the Regional Foundations.



Hub Programme Summary 2022/23

Vision

Enable Welsh Rugby to Thrive

Aim

To connect and collaborate with key establishments to develop an inclusive and diverse pathway. In order to create ambitious, enterprising, ethical and healthy young people in line with the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales.

Objectives

Individual establishments will be target with agreed objectives across the 5 Ps of the WRU Rugby Strategy.

WRU Rugby Officers, and Coach Development Officers manage individual officers and establishments through a specific operational plan.

Headline targets to achieve its aims and objectives are as follows (Based on provision of 100 establishments by August 2022);

- At least 10 ALN / SEN lead establishments / officers nationally
- At least 10 Low Socio-economic communities targeted for The Open University research

- At least 10 in areas where rugby is targeted at supporting broad community development (More than Rugby)
- 100% of female hubs supported by the Hub Officers
- Every Local Authority supported by at least 2 Hub Establishments
- Every Dewar Shield District underpinned by at least 2 Hub Establishments
- Targeted establishments link to areas of growth (latent demand) and maintenance of WRU clubs

Hub Programme: Coaching & Refereeing

- Following the collation of WRU Hub Programme reports in Academic Term 2 and conclusion of 2022/23 season, a total transition of 2019 boys and 695 girls to a community rugby club and/or Hub has taken place.
- The above represents 47% of all total new registrations for boys and 67% of all new active registrations for girls aged U8s – U18s in WRU clubs and female hubs supported by the WRU.

Hub Programme.

- Alongside delivering across People, Playing and Promote, the above key headlines demonstrate the direct impact the Hub programme has to our game. The full infographic is shown below.

We remain committed to enabling curious Coaches and Referees by providing Positive Learning Environments, through the 'Coach and Referee Framework' to ensure successful Recruitment, Retention and Development.

We have also developed a Coaches Code of Practice to support Coaches and are committed to providing safe environments that encourage learning and development through autonomy, a sense of belonging and capability.

Community Insights

This season we have seen the highest player registrations since digital registrations began:

REGION	REGISTRATION
Cardiff	925 (28.0%)*
Dragons	589 (17.8%)
Ospreys	809 (24.5%)
RGC	441 (13.3%)
Scarlets	544 (16.4%)
National	3,308 TOTAL*

*Previous season was the highest recorded and the first season to introduce the new age banding..

KPI UPDATE AUGUST 2022 TO JUNE 2023

PLACES

- 1750 FEMALE HUB ENGAGEMENTS
- 5526 CLUB ENGAGEMENTS
- 267 COACHING DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS
- 2520 PLAYER PIPELINE ENGAGEMENTS
- EVIDENCE THE **IMPACT** OF THE **HUB PROGRAMME**
- DIRECT BENEFIT TO WRU IS **£1,348,000*** THIS YEAR TO DATE
- *THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE AND SOCIAL RETURN OF INVESTMENT

PARTNERS

- 27 OSPREYS
- 17 CARDIFF
- 20 RGC
- 20 SCARLETS
- 16 DRAGONS
- PROMOTE **£490,000**
- PLAYING **£632,200**
- PLACES **£136,000**
- PEOPLE **£81,000**

PLAYING

- 30% CAPTIVE AUDIENCE ENGAGED OUTSIDE OF CURRICULUM
- 6802 GIRLS
- 11707 BOYS & GIRLS ENGAGED IN ESTABLISHMENTS
- 13288 PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN ENGAGED
- 2005 BOYS & 823 GIRLS NEW TRANSFERS

PEOPLE

- 345 BOYS & 109 GIRLS DELIVERING ON 4625 OCCASIONS
- 88
- 133 BOYS & 36 GIRLS REFEREEING 861 GAMES
- 123 BOYS & 41 GIRLS VOLUNTEERING 676 TIMES

PROMOTE

- 204 *Fit, fed, fun!* CAMPS
- 6076 ALN SESSIONS
- SUPPORTED BY HUB OFFICERS
- EVERY ATTENDANCE AT AN INCLUSION EVENT FROM A HUB OFFICER PROVIDES 6 STUDENTS TO SUPPORT DELIVERY

Policy & Integrity

The Policy and Integrity Team have responsibility for safeguarding, player welfare, discipline and anti-doping. This is delivered through a strategy focused upon the three pillars of Engagement, Education and Enforcement.

Discipline and Misconduct

- Recruitment of independent panel members - Skillset of new panel members and ability to deal with complex matters
- Appointment of additional staff - Senior and age grade discipline co-ordinators
- Values and behaviours working group and action plan (initiatives to tackle poor behaviour)
- Misconduct matters - Senior game total 66 cases; Age Grade total 109
- Increasing complexity of misconduct cases.

Apprenticeships: Promotion & Partnerships

We have written a new Level 4 Foundation in Sport Management and Development with Cardiff Metropolitan University for the new WRU Apprenticeship Programme cohort 2023/24.

The new qualification is support funded by Welsh Government. It is unique to Wales and the UK as an apprenticeship model. It will create a seamless pathway for apprentices into University and a modernised sector sport qualification that reflects their apprenticeship journey.

- The WRU Apprenticeship Programme during the past 12 months continues to be an essential support for national projects and events, support partner activity deliverers alongside creating well rounded, enriched and motivated young people.

Regional Foundations

We have agreed a new 2-year service level agreement with the community departments of each of the professional Regions that will see us align our delivery against the strategic plans of both the WRU and the community departments. It will see the Regional community departments funded to deliver::

- Mixed Ability
- Walking and Touch Rugby
- Wheelchair Rugby
- Visually impaired Rugby
- Inclusive Community Clubs, an environment for children 6-16yrs with a range of disabilities.
- Ethnically Diverse Participants
- LGBTQ+
- WRU Fit Fed Fun Camps
- Option to deliver the WRU Digital Classroom programme.

Welsh Local Government Agency

We are in partnership with 187 schools, with 11,100 children attending across Wales, who have signed up for the WLGA Food & Fun Summer Provision. This initiative saw Hub Officers deliver rugby provision within the national Schools Holiday Hunger program throughout the summer

StreetGames Wales

We have identified StreetGames as a key partner to support in their work in tackling inequalities.

More specifically focusing on work that supports more ethnically diverse young people living in low-income, under-served communities to access rugby opportunities. With StreetGames Wales we have a joint plan split into 2 parts:

Part 1: Rugby World Cup Activation July 2023 – November 2023

Part 2: Volunteer Leadership Development Programme (October 2023 – September 2024).

Urdd

Promotional activities with the Urdd have included delivery of the WeSoda/WRU Fit Fed Fun Camps during Whitsun 2023 with 11 camps delivered and attended by 185 children. We have also supported the Urdd trip to Kenya where they are coaching children in rugby by providing 250 pairs of boots from our Boots for Grassroots allocation.

CONCLUSION

We have made some great progress within the department but we recognise that there are areas we need to improve. Across the department, we will continue to do our best.

- Next season, we will be more front facing and visible in our communities, meeting clubs and providing guidance and support. We will have an active presence to broaden the fanbase and supporter growth across all our game.
- Our communication is constantly improving and will continue to do so.
- We will embed support consistently through the player pathway in the 14-18yrs age group .
- We can support our Regions with the development of age grade coaches and also with continuing personal development opportunities and mentorship.
- We will continue to work closely with the Regions and their Academies , which are supporting dual pathway relationships in partnership with Higher Education and Further Education.
- We will continue to develop high value relationships consistently through WRU Hub Programme in Education via foundation partnerships and we will ensure that we are aligned to the foundations to support key elements of the community strategy in Wales (primary schools, inclusion, walking rugby etc).
- The Places Team will liaise more closely with regional business teams to highlight opportunities for support and growth within facilities.
- We will continue to attract high quality referees to support regional and community club games.

- We will continue to support regional events as a community department.
- We will continue to provide clubs, hubs and regions with the best support possible to ensure that all are resilient, safe, inclusive and welcoming hubs of the community, and we will be conducting a series of Club Safeguarding Officer Roadshows across Wales in the summer months to develop best practice.
- We will co-ordinate our efforts across all public facing events moving forward to achieve the maximum promotion for rugby in collaboration with all Regions.
- We will continue to provide high quality and engaging continuing personal development sessions for all coaches and referees

A relationship with Welsh Rugby works both ways and we rely on ongoing support from stakeholders and partners. Openness and transparency on all parts and alignment against our strategic goals will maintain and grow our community game for all coaches, referees, players and volunteers.

There are still big decisions to be made and whilst we know that these can be difficult, and that not everyone will agree, we will consider when making the decisions:

- Our ability to grow the game in all formats into our wider communities. We will always look to try and increase the number of players and volunteers.
- Making sure the game is safe and enjoyable for all.
- The game supports all – players, coaches, referees, supporters and all volunteers.
- Retention and recruitment of people and players.



- Making sure that clubs, hubs and regions are safe, inclusive and welcoming environments and that facilities are fit for the future.

WRU in Education:

It is important that we recognise the impact of rugby off the field and in the classroom to inspire and develop future generations by diversifying our offering and reach to all communities in Wales by working closely with Welsh Government, education consortiums and directly with schools.

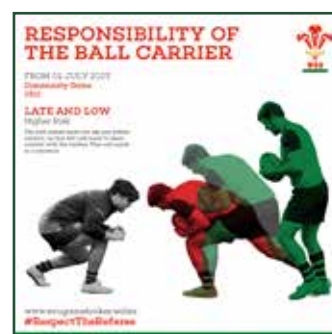
- WRU curriculum modules ensure that year on year 27,000 year 10 and 11 pupils will engage directly with WRU content via the WJEC Skills Challenge (formally, Welsh BaccaLaureate).
- Partnering with Welsh Government and Minecraft to create inclusive and engaging virtual content based on the new curriculum with the theme of rugby throughout.
- A bespoke digital platform (WRU Digital Classroom) designed specifically for teachers to deliver content based on the new curriculum in schools for pupils of all ages to engage with learning through the medium of rugby.
- Working with ALN schools to produce WRU content based on the new curriculum to be delivered nationwide ensuring inclusivity of the off the field WRU education provision.

Our immediate decisions include:

- **Tackle Height** – World Rugby's announcement on May 11th to recommend that unions participate in the trials of a lower tackle height in the community game to below the base of the sternum. We have already engaged with a widespread representation of our game in Wales. The aim of the trial is to improve player safety by reducing the risk of

head-on-head contact, and to reduce concussions and to improve the continuity of the game.

We will continue to work through the following:



- **Digital Team Sheets** – In September 2023, we will launch digital team sheets into U18 youth male and U18 girls rugby, adult male and adult women's rugby. This technological enhancement will enable us to collect game participation data, provide insight, to both our organisation and clubs and will allow everyone to make decisions more efficiently and effectively regarding our game. We will also undertake testing across Pathway and age grade clubs with a view to launching to all in season 24/25.
- **Pathway** – we must make sure we have the right pathway to grow and increase numbers and keep players in the community game while at the same time develop our players, coaches, referees and volunteers to support the performance side of the programme. All our programmes - performance and community - must be aligned.



- **Investment** - We will continue to invest in our game and support all clubs and partners. We must ensure our finances support our growth to provide a return on the investment. We will prioritise investment into women and girls facilities and create a facilities strategy to ensure that facilities achieve an acceptable standard. We will be undertaking a study into the Social Return on Investment in the community game.
- **League Structures** – This is a hot topic of conversation. We all know the value of promotion and relegation but throughout the season many have shared their views and thoughts have been put forward:
 - Leagues of 10 not 12 – This will allow the leagues to be completed leaving time to play local district cup games and some of our historical competitions. It will also allow any rearranged games to be played on a Saturday which will allow supporters to attend and provide better gate revenues for all.
 - Knockout Cup – some liked the pool format while others would prefer to go back to the knockout games.
 - Autumn Internationals – on numerous occasions we have heard club's feedback to play through international windows. We must listen to this feedback and consider this to ensure that the season is not extended due to the Winter weather we have in Wales forcing cancellations between December and January.

- Women's League – We need to consider when should they play. We are working through how we align the women's league with the new Celtic Challenge competition, which many of the community players participate in.

Over the next few years there are more big decisions to be made. We know from discussions with other unions around the world we need to adapt and that we are all facing the same challenges.

We need to consider our offerings to grow the game in Wales. For example, the consideration of how many games do people want to play and in what format.

When providing a game for all, we also need to take account of the social mobility of the population of Wales.

The key for us all is that we are open and transparent as we travel through the decision making process.

We look forward to an exciting season ahead.



Performance Rugby

Wales Women's Senior squad made very real strides on and off the field and captured the imagination of the Welsh rugby public under the stewardship of head coach Ioan Cunningham.

Wales achieved their highest world ranking of six after they finished third in the Six Nations and qualified for World Rugby's new Global Tier 1 tournament, WXV1, in New Zealand, where they face the Black Ferns, Australia and Canada in October.



Nigel Walker

Off the field, captain Hannah Jones and her side had a record crowd for their 31-5 victory over Ireland and then sold-out the Arms Park for the visit of England to the Welsh capital. Rising star Sisilia Tuipulotu emerged as a Six Nations Player of the Tournament nominee for a team becoming widely recognised by the Welsh public.

A squad boasting 24 full-time contracts for the Six Nations was then boosted by seven more full-time contracts for the WXV1 in the Land of the Long White Cloud. It proved that real investment, quality coaching and professional backroom staff can provide the environment for hungry and ambitious players to thrive. Wales certainly did that and arguably it was the performances in the two defeats to England and away to France that proved how much the team had improved. For 30-

odd minutes they matched the Red Roses, widely recognised as the best team in the world, and gave the soon-to-be Grand Slam champions a real wake-up call.

France away was the opposite with a slow start but a second half performance full of steel and resilience demonstrated that a corner has been turned on the field.

The announcement of three Player Development Centres (PDC) in Cardiff Met, Swansea Uni and RGC to discover and hone the next generation of players was another key development for the Women's game in Wales. Legendary fly-half, Elinor Snowsill, announced her retirement from rugby after 14 years and will be the lead coach at the Cardiff Met PDC. For someone who had given so much to Welsh rugby to be involved in finding the next

generation of the talent can only mean the future is in safe hands.

And the future played its part out in Canada, with Head Coach Liz Burgess and former skipper Siwan Lillcrap guiding Wales Women's U20s to an emphatic 39-12 victory over Canada in Ottawa. The manner of the win underlined that Wales always produces players and coaches and that investment and a strategy is the foundation of success. Wales U18s Sevens side won the Rugby Europe Sevens Trophy in Poland and qualified for the top tier tournament for next season. Wales played a key role in Gloucester lifting the Prem15 title across the border in England, with fly-half Lleucu George and wing Lisa Neumann getting on the scoreboard.

Wales will be underdogs in the WXV, but it will be a good gauge of how far Cunningham's team have come and how much further they have to go before the Welsh public has a chance to see them back on home soil.

Scotland, and France are the visitors to the Arms Park in 2024 and sell-out crowds would underline the team's status as the hottest ticket in town.



Wales broke crowd records during the 2023 TikTok Women's Six Nations, with a record sell-out crowd of 8,862 for their meeting with England, nearly doubling the previous record crowd of 4,962 against Ireland in the opening game of the tournament that same year.

For their third and final home clash of the 2024 six nations, Wales will run out at Principality Stadium. Scheduling the match at Principality Stadium clearly demonstrates the growth of the Women's game and is the next step to achieving the ambition of filling the home of Welsh rugby for a women's international by the time Wales face England at home again the following year. While Wales still have a way to close the gap on England, the long-term goal is still on the horizon and that is probably the biggest and most high-profile Women's Rugby World Cup in England in 2025. Being one of the teams to watch for World rugby's showpiece event must be the goal.

The long-term goal is still on the horizon and that is probably the biggest and most high-profile Women's rugby World Cup in England in 2025. Being one of the teams to watch for World rugby's showpiece event must be the goal.



WALES SENIOR MEN

The Wales senior men's team played 12 internationals between July 2022 and March 2023, winning three and losing nine. Within the victories was an historic first win over the Springboks on South African soil at Toyota Stadium, Bloemfontein on 9 July 2022.

The three-match Test series against the world champions followed a disappointing Guinness Six Nations campaign that saw Wayne Pivac's team fall to four defeats in their five games only a year after winning the title. The win came over Scotland, while there was a first home defeat to Italy in the last round.

Dan Biggar led the squad to South Africa and was disappointed to see the home side win the opening Test at Loftus Versfeld, in Pretoria, thanks to a last-gasp penalty from Damian Willemse to make it 32-29 in the end. Louis Rees-Zammit scored two tries and Biggar kicked 14 points.

Wales led from the fifth minute, when Rees-Zammit scored his opening try, right up to the 74th when the Springboks finally edged ahead with a penalty try that made it 29-24. Even then, Wales weren't finished. Dewi Lake went over to level the scores and Biggar had the chance to put his side back in front from a wide angle in the 77th minute. His kick went wide and that allowed Willemse to steal the glory at the death against a Welsh side down to 13 men with two in the sin-bin.



HISTORY MADE – WALES' FIRST WIN OVER THE SPRINGBOKS IN SOUTH AFRICA

**SOUTH AFRICA 12 –
13 WALES – TOYOTA
STADIUM, BLOEMFONTEIN,
9 JULY 2023**

South Africa: Warrick Gelant; Kurt-Lee Arendse, Jesse Kriel, Andre Esterhuizen, Aphelele Fassi; Handre Pollard, Jaden Hendrikse; Thomas du Toit, Joseph Dweba, Trevor Nyakane, Eben Etzebeth, Marvin Orie, Marcell Coetzee, Pieter-Steph du Toit, Evan Roos

Reps: Malcolm Marx, Ntuthuko Mchunu. Vincent Koch, Ruan Nortje, Rynhardt Elstadt, Deon Fourie, Grant Williams, Damian Willemse. Scorer: Pollard (4)

Wales: Liam Williams; Louis Rees-Zammit, George North, Nick Tompkins, Alex Cuthbert; Dan Biggar (captain), Kieran Hardy; Gareth Thomas, Ryan Elias, Dillon Lewis, Will Rowlands, Adam Beard, Dan Lydiate, Tommy Reffell, Taulupe Faletau

Reps: Dewi Lake, Wyn Jones, Sam Wainwright, Alun Wyn Jones, Josh Navidi, Tomos Williams, Gareth Anscombe, Josh Adams. Scorers: Try: Adams; Con: G Anscombe; Pens: D Biggar, G Anscombe

Referee: Angus Gardner (Australia)

The Autumn Nations Series saw Wales host New Zealand, Argentina, Georgia and Australia. The All Blacks made it 33 wins in a row over Wales with a 55-23 triumph at Principality Stadium.

Rio Dyer and Sam Costelow made their international debuts, while New Zealand scrum half

Aaron Smith surpassed Dan Carter as the most-capped back in All Blacks history on his 113th appearance. Referee Wayne Barnes became the second referee to officiate in 100 Tests to equal Welshman Nigel Owens' record for the most international matches. For the All Blacks, their 55 points equalled their record points total against Wales set in 2003 and it was the most they had scored on Welsh soil.

Next up were Argentina, who were beaten 20-13 a week after they had triumphed over England at Twickenham. Tries from Taulupe Faletau and Tomos Williams did the trick for Wales, with Gareth Anscombe kicking 10 points.

Georgia arrived in Cardiff buoyed by their first win over a Six Nations side a few months earlier, when they upset Italy 28-19 in Batumi. Despite trailing 12-3 at the break in Welsh capital, they held their hosts pointless in the second half before kicking a 78th minute penalty to win 13-12.

The Autumn Nations Series ended with a 39-34 defeat to 2023 World Cup rivals Australia, surrendering a record breaking 21-point lead to lose by five tries to four. It was a win that allowed the Wallabies to reclaim the James Bevan Trophy for the first time since 2017.

Taulupe Faletau reached 100 Test caps in the game (95 for Wales and 5 for the British & Irish Lions), while Joe Hawkins made his Wales debut. The defeat meant Wales had managed only two wins in 2022 and lost nine times.

There is no doubt the four yellow cards conceded in the game took their toll, but the heartbreak of losing out on a slice of Welsh rugby history didn't last long. A week later in Bloemfontein, Wales won 13-12 thanks to another herculean effort. Handre Pollard kicked four penalties for the Springboks to give them a 12-3 lead after Biggar had opened the scoring in the first minute with a penalty of his own.

Gareth Anscombe came on to replace Biggar in the 50th minute and ended up being the hero. He kicked a penalty to make it 12-6 with 14 minutes left to play and took centre stage in the 78th minute when he converted a try in the left corner by Josh Adams to edge Wales in front by a single point.

This time they held on and at the 12th time of asking since they first met at King's Park, in Durban, in May 1964, Wales came out on top of the Springboks in their own backyard.

Those statistics meant that in December the WRU announced Wayne Pivac, Stephen Jones and Gethin Jenkins would be leaving their posts in the national coaching set-up. Back came Warren Gatland as head coach on a long-term deal through to the 2027 World Cup. He added Alex King (attack), Jonathan Thomas (breakdown) and Mike Forshaw (defence) to his backroom staff ahead of the 2023 Guinness Six Nations.

The tournament kicked-off with a 34-10 home defeat to Ireland, the visitors' first championship win in Cardiff in a decade, and then Wales suffered defeat to the Scots in Edinburgh. The 35-7 triumph was Scotland's biggest win over Wales, surpassing the 25-point winning margin set in 1924 and meant Gregor Townsend's side won back-to-back matches in the opening rounds of the Six Nations for the first time. It was the first time Wales had lost their opening two Six Nations games since 2007.

Ospreys forward Rhys Davies made his debut at Murrayfield and Cardiff Rugby three-quarter Mason Grady followed suit in Round 3 against England in the Welsh capital. The visitors won in Cardiff for the first time in six years, while Wales fell to 10th in the World Rugby Rankings. The score on the day, of course, doesn't tell the whole story as the game itself had been thrown into doubt during the preceding week. Players had asked for three specific requests to be met within the new Professional Rugby Agreement, a six-year deal governing the future of the pro-game which had been signed up to by the Professional Rugby Board (PRB).

Only once their requests were met did preparations for the match ahead resume.

The PRB moved quickly to hear requests and accepted that the Welsh Rugby Players Association would now be included in its regular meetings, agreed a reduction to the 60-cap rule which governs international selection and revised the fixed-and-variable contract offer being made to players as part of the proposed new Professional Rugby Agreement (PRA). The number of international caps a player will be expected to have won before being free to play outside Wales – and still be available for selection by Wales – was reduced to 25.

A sixth loss in a row was averted by a 29-17 win over Italy in Rome, with tries from Rio Dyer, Liam Williams and Taulupe Faletau, before the tournament ended at Stade de France in Paris. Taulupe Faletau became the eighth player to win 100 caps for Wales and his Cardiff Rugby teammate Dillon Lewis reached 50.

France's points tally exceeded their previous high at home against Wales of 38 in 2020 and their five tries meant Wales had conceded 19 tries in the championship for the first time.

Ospreys centre George North surpassed Shane Williams's record of 22 Six Nations tries to become Wales' top try scorer in the championship.

After reflecting on a challenging Six Nations on his return as head coach, Warren Gatland selected a 54-player Rugby World Cup training squad on 1 May 2023. Following the initial announcement, Alun Wyn Jones, Justin Tipuric and Rhys Webb all retired from international rugby. Cory Hill also withdrew from the squad and Rhys Carre was released.

A 47-man squad was then selected to go to training camps in Switzerland and Turkey ahead of the three Vodafone Summer series matches against England (home and away) and South Africa.

Post RWC 2023 the primary focus for the Men's senior team will be to develop a squad capable of competing in the Semi-Finals and Final of RWC27.



The basis of this process will be a deliberate, concerted emphasis on providing more opportunities for players who will be in contention for selection for RWC27.

The purpose of this approach is to develop a squad with a core group of players with between 30 - 50 international caps on average – by way of comparison average caps at previous tournaments were as follows: Wales RWC19 (30), RWC23 (38), for Winners NZ 2011 (39), 2015 (45), SA 2019 (32). We also plan to ensure an average of 75-plus regional appearances, at RWC23 the average regional appearances was 98.

This approach will be combined with specific annual performance outcomes that will be more ambitious each year, as the team evolves.

There will also be a continued focus on ensuring our age grade teams and programmes are successful and even more effective in producing players capable of representing Wales at senior levels. This has included, the development of a new Elite Domestic Competition (EDC) at senior level, the creation and implementation of an academy licence, a revamp of the Schools

and Colleges licence and league, and the introduction of a 22-month emerging players programme at 14 – 16 years of age which forms the foundation of the initial stage of our performance pathway.

PATHWAYS – WALES U20S (MEN)

For the second consecutive year, Wales Under 20s turned a disappointing Six Nations campaign on its head with a string of stirring displays in the World Rugby U20 championship staged in South Africa.

The young squad saw their head coach Byron Hayward step down just two months before the first match against New Zealand in Paarl but ex-Wales international winger Mark Jones stepped in and immediately made his presence felt.

Wales played perennial favourites New Zealand in their opening game and nearly caused a huge upset after leading 19-5 at the break having played some breath-taking rugby.

For a team that failed to win a game in the Six Nations a few months earlier, Wales stepped up

and back into the ring and had the Baby Blacks reeling at the end of a wind assisted first half. Wales scored three tries and led 19-5 up to that point and looked in complete control.

The young New Zealanders looked as though they were on the ropes, yet that was when they became even more dangerous. They came out swinging in the second half and stopped Wales from adding to their tally until a minute to go.

By then they had plundered three tries to edge into a 27-19 lead before Wales, full of character and fight, struck at the death from another driving line-out. The try went to Sam Scarfe, who moments earlier had had a similar score ruled out by the TMO, and Dan Edwards' touchline conversion cut the gap to a single point.

There was just enough time for the kick-off, but not enough time for Wales to conjure up another attack. In the end, they had to settle for two bonus points ahead of their games against France and Japan.

Despite the defeat, Wales earned rave reviews for their gutsy display and earned their first win of the campaign with an impressive 41-19 victory over Japan at a rain-soaked Danie Craven Stadium in Stellenbosch.

The conditions turned the ball into a bar of soap and there were numerous handling errors on both sides. Japan proved stubborn opponents and led 19-15 at the break.



22 which, after being upgraded to a red, gave Wales a numerical advantage for the final 32 minutes.

They made the most of it as they played territory, preyed on mistakes and eventually ran in three tries in the closing five minutes to ensure they not only won the game, but also picked up a precious bonus point.

Wales, led admirably by Dragons back row Ryan Woodman, missed out on a top four spot after losing to eventual champions France 43-19 in their final pool game. The loss meant they dropped to third in their pool. Despite the French

However they bounced back in perfect style by hitting Georgia for six tries with 40-21 win over Georgia in the 5th-8th play-off finals.

The Georgians had impressed everyone by beating Argentina and Italy, as well as pushing host nation South Africa all the way, in their pool matches. It meant they were guaranteed their highest ever finish at the tournament even before they met Wales for a place in the fifth place final.

They hung in during a tight first half which Wales edged 7-6. Then there was no stopping the Welsh youngsters as they plundered five

poor pass from Harri Houston to Llien Morgan denied the Wales wing a hat-trick.

There was no lack of energy, urgency or attacking intent, but there were too many missed tackles and missed opportunities to make life difficult for the Wallabies.

It was a measure of the side that the entire squad were disappointed to finish sixth – they had left their National Centre of Excellence centre five weeks earlier determined to finish in the top four, despite having come last in the Six Nations.



playing for 66 minutes with 14 men, and the final six minutes with 13, they were too strong in the end.

If it was a vast improvement on the last time the two teams met in the last round of the U20 Six Nations in March – France won 67-17 and ran in 11 tries – it wasn't enough to keep Wales on course for their main goal.

more tries to earn themselves a clash with Australia in the fifth place final.

But Wales missed out on fifth place as they were beaten by a clinical Australia in a game of 14 tries and 90 points in Cape Town.

Bidding for their highest finish since ending as runners-up to England in 2013, Ryan Woodman's side battled long and hard but couldn't match the precision of the Aussies. Twice Welsh forwards got over the line, only to be denied the try and a



But under Mark Jones tutelage, they pulled together and played an attractive style of rugby to impress fans and opposition teams alike. With a large number of players returning for next season, the signs are Wales are back on track at this level.

In back rows Morgan Morse and Ryan Woodman they have natural leaders while harlequins second row Jonny Green grew in stature with every game while young Harri Wilde impressed at fly half in his first campaign.



WALES U18S (MEN)

France finished the Men's Under-18s Six Nations Festival unbeaten while Wales completed their campaign with a 35-29 after earlier defeats to Italy and Ireland in Dublin.

Wales set the tone for a pulsating day's play on the final day of action with a dramatic win over the Scots before France cruised past Italy to secure their third win in as many matches.

Wales set the tone for a pulsating day's play with a dramatic win over Scotland.

The lead changed hands throughout an absorbing nine-try contest which ended with Wales celebrating their first win of the competition.

Richie Pugh's young side had earlier lost 8-29 to Italy and 17-48 to Ireland. Pugh then named a 30-man squad for a summer camp held in Cardiff during August which culminated in a festival of rugby at Cardiff Arms Park with Ireland, Scotland and Italy.

The summer camp was the first identification for the U18s group for next season and began in earnest when all teams gathered at Cardiff University where they were based for the week before playing each other on the last day of the get together.

It was purely a development week for all teams concerned and Pugh was happy with the way all teams trained together, bounced ideas around as coaches and players before finishing the camp off with competitive games at the home of Cardiff Rugby.

THE REGIONS

The BKT United Rugby Championship title was won by Munster, who beat the Stormers 19-14 at the DHL Stadium in Cape Town in front of a crowd of 56,344. Cardiff Rugby beat both finalists at the Arms Park in the regular season and also notched a famous 35-0 victory over the Sharks in Durban in November 2022 to become the first Welsh region to win a game on South African soil in the URC. That win was also their first outside of Wales since March 2021.

The Dragons also beat Munster at Rodney Parade, while Ospreys drew 16-16 with the Stormers at home and Scarlets triumphed over the Bulls and Sharks at Parc Y Scarlets.

However, for the fifth season in a row a Welsh region missed out on the play-offs for the title. Cardiff ended up as the top Welsh region, securing the Welsh Shield in the final game of the campaign against the Ospreys as Judgement Day returned to Principality Stadium. There was a crowd of 41,139 at the home of Welsh rugby to see Dragons beat Scarlets 31-14 and the Cardiff overcome Ospreys 38-21 to ensure they claimed a spot in the Heineken Champions Cup in the 2023-24 campaign. Ospreys had been the winners of the Welsh Shield the previous season.

BKT URC Welsh Shield

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	TF	TA	TBP	LBP	Pts
Cardiff	18	9	0	9	425	470	-45	52	64	6	2	44
Ospreys	18	5	2	11	400	514	-114	52	70	6	5	35
Scarlets	18	6	1	11	435	506	-71	55	65	5	3	34
Dragons	18	4	0	14	391	534	-143	46	70	5	3	24

On the European front, Ospreys were the sole Welsh representatives in the Heineken Champions Cup and reached the Round of 16. They were beaten 23-17 at home by English champions Leicester Tigers in their opening pool match, but in the return leg at Welford Road emerged triumphant, 27-26. They also completed the double over French champions Montpellier – 21-10 in France and 35-29 in Swansea. They were then knocked-out by Saracens in the Round of 16, going down 35-20 at StoneX Stadium..

2022–23 European Rugby Champions Cup

POOL B	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	TF	TA	TB	LB	Pts
La Rochelle	4	4	0	0	120	57	63	15	7	2	0	18
Toulouse	4	4	0	0	110	53	57	12	7	1	0	17
Stormers	4	3	0	1	106	68	38	13	7	3	0	15
Leicester Tigers	4	3	0	1	116	89	27	11	10	1	1	14
Ospreys	4	3	0	1	100	88	12	12	10	1	1	14
Munster	4	2	0	2	73	67	6	8	5	0	2	10
Montpellier	4	1	1	2	92	104	-12	13	13	2	1	9
Ulster	4	1	0	3	54	93	-39	7	11	1	2	7
Clermont	4	1	0	3	85	111	-26	8	12	1	1	6
Sale Sharks	4	1	0	3	74	94	-20	11	12	1	0	5
London Irish	4	0	1	3	76	115	-39	10	15	0	1	3
Northampton Saints	4	0	0	4	54	121	-67	5	16	0	1	1

In the EPCR Challenge Cup, Dragons reached the Round of 16, Cardiff Rugby were quarter-finalists, while the Scarlets went all the way to the semi-finals. In the Pool stages, Dragons drew 31-31 with the Lions in Johannesburg and triumphed over Top 14 side Pau in France, while Cardiff beat Newcastle Falcons twice and Top 14 side Brive at home, but not away. Scarlets topped their Pool with home and away wins over Bayonne and the Cheetahs.

In the knock-out stages, Dragons lost 73-33 in Glasgow, while Cardiff pipped Sale Sharks, who went on to reach the English Premiership final, 28-27 at the Arms Park. They were then beaten 27-23 by Benetton Rugby in Italy in the quarter-final.

The Scarlets, meanwhile, maintained their winning run with home wins over Brive (19-7) and ASM Clermont Auvergne (30-28) in the Round of 16 and quarter-final. That set-up a home clash with Glasgow Warriors in the last four, when their luck ran out and they were beaten 35-17.

2022–23 EPCR Challenge Cup

POOL A	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	TF	TA	TB	LB	Pts
Toulon	4	4	0	0	102	56	+46	14	8	3	0	19
Glasgow Warriors	4	3	1	0	107	82	+25	16	10	2	0	16
Cardiff	4	3	0	1	154	57	+97	23	7	3	0	15
Bristol Bears	4	4	0	0	121	54	+67	19	8	3	0	14*
Connacht	4	3	0	1	135	72	+63	19	10	2	0	14
Brive	4	1	0	3	66	157	-91	9	23	1	1	6
Newcastle Falcons	4	1	0	3	63	132	-69	8	19	1	0	5
Bath	4	0	1	3	68	105	-37	8	14	0	1	3
Perpignan	4	0	0	4	68	118	-50	10	18	1	0	1
Zebre Parma	4	0	0	4	56	107	-51	8	17	0	1	1

* Bristol Bears were deducted 5 match points for selecting an ineligible player

POOL B	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	TF	TA	TB	LB	Pts
Scarlets	4	4	0	0	124	57	+67	16	8	2	0	18
Benetton	4	3	0	1	120	70	+50	16	10	3	0	15
Lions	4	2	1	1	98	85	+13	11	11	2	0	12
Stade Français	4	2	0	2	85	86	-1	11	10	1	1	10
Dragons	4	1	1	2	98	103	-5	12	11	2	2	10
Cheetahs	4	2	0	2	73	87	-14	8	9	1	1	10
Pau	4	1	0	3	64	72	-8	6	6	0	3	7
Bayonne	4	0	0	4	28	130	-102	4	19	0	0	0

2022–23 United Rugby Championship

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	TF	TA	TBP	LBP	Pts
Leinster	18	16	1	1	580	363	+217	82	42	13	0	79
Ulster	18	13	0	5	554	378	+176	79	45	12	4	68
Stormers	18	12	2	4	531	391	+140	69	48	13	3	68
Glasgow Warriors	18	13	0	5	498	403	+95	72	53	11	0	63
Munster	18	10	1	7	470	357	+113	61	43	9	4	55
Africa Bulls	18	10	0	8	613	448	+165	78	52	11	2	53
Connacht	18	10	0	8	456	426	+30	64	58	7	3	50
Sharks	18	9	1	8	486	480	+6	63	61	8	2	48
Lions	18	9	0	9	454	538	-84	55	75	7	2	45
Cardiff	18	9	0	9	425	470	-45	52	64	6	2	44
Benetton	18	8	0	10	440	533	-93	56	74	8	1	41
Edinburgh	18	6	0	12	466	467	-1	70	62	8	6	38
Ospreys	18	5	2	11	400	514	-114	52	70	6	5	35
Scarlets	18	6	1	11	435	506	-71	55	65	5	3	34
Dragons	18	4	0	14	391	534	-143	46	70	5	3	24
Zebre Parma	18	0	0	18	343	734	-391	50	105	6	5	11



PRINCIPALITY STADIUM

Principality Stadium continues to grow its third party events business, attracting major artists and events to Wales with its chameleon-like venue and unique city-centre positioning.

Summer 2022 achieved a stadium record in terms of fan attendance (350,000 music fans through the Summer) on a par with a pre-pandemic concert season with sold-out Ed Sheeran, Stereophonics & Sir Tom Jones and Rammstein on the bill. 2022 was the first time many tours had been rescheduled due to the pandemic, and the return to full crowds demonstrated a clear and encouraging consumer confidence in live experiences.

Major artists such as Stereophonics and Sir Tom Jones played to over 110,000 fans across two unforgettable nights at the Stadium with the 'We'll Keep A Welcome' landmark show broadcast on BBC One Wales and BBC Two as part of their live summer music series

Principality Stadium has invested in the latest pitch technology to extend our third-party event window. Traditionally the window runs from May – August, but by investing in a state-of-the-art hybrid roll & play surface

we can host major events into October, whilst still guaranteeing the optimum playing surface required for elite international rugby matches within a matter of weeks.

Extending the window enables us to work even closer with our partners Welsh Government and Cardiff Council to attract major events to Wales such as Clash at the Castle, WWE's first major UK stadium event in 30 years on 3rd September and the Supercross World Championships 8th October. History was made in September 2022 when the first major UK WWE stadium event in 30 years 'Clash at the Castle' was held at Principality Stadium, delivering a massive £21.8 million back in to the Welsh economy.

History was made in September 2022 when the first major UK WWE stadium event in 30 years 'Clash at the Castle' was held at Principality Stadium, delivering a massive £21.8 million back in to the Welsh economy.

Over 60,000 fans descended into the Stadium with 75.3% of the audience attending from outside of Wales. Clash at the Castle was the number one international PPV in WWE history, the highest rated UK PPV in WWE history, and the best-selling non-WrestleMania event in WWE history.

Cardiff University also held three days of celebrations in the Principality Stadium for the graduating year groups of 2020, 2021 (who had missed out on the ceremony during pandemic years) and 2022.

The Stadium welcomed three global superstars in 2023, Coldplay, Beyoncé and Harry Styles with well over a quarter of a million music fans flocking to the Principality Stadium across the series of concerts.

Global megastar, Beyoncé, kicked-off the '23 concert season having performed at Principality Stadium twice before, chose Cardiff as the first stop on the UK leg of her huge global tour.

Coldplay completed two nights of sold out shows in Cardiff as part of their Music of the Spheres World Tour. The shows which have garnered spectacular reviews due to their high energy and immersive, fan-centric light shows saw 120,000 fans descend into the city from across the UK and Europe, and brings the total number of fans to 175,000 across the three shows.

The events team here at the stadium have worked exceptionally hard over 20 years to build Principality Stadium's reputation as a must-play destination.



To close the concert season, 'Harry mania' landed in Cardiff as Harry Styles returned to the capital for the first time as a solo artist with his Love on Tour, tour. He delighted Welsh fans with two back-to-back sold out shows which closed the UK leg on his epic two-year world tour leaving a trail of feathers and glitter in his wake.

The events team here at the Stadium have worked exceptionally hard over 20 years to build Principality Stadium's reputation as a must-play destination. The versatility of the venue with its retractable roof enables us to respond to any production brief and the sizable capacity allows us to cater to those big names artists who want to deliver extraordinary shows.

Major solo artist Taylor Swift, is set to bring her 'The Eras Tour' to Principality Stadium on 18th June 2024 and American rock band, Foo Fighters are set to return on 25th of June for their Everything or Nothing At All UK tour with more exciting artists and events still to be announced.



COMMERCIAL PERFORMANCE

We are hugely grateful for the support we have received from our commercial partners throughout the year.

In September 2022 we signed a landmark multi-year deal with tech giant Vodafone, who became the Founding Principal Partner of Women and girls' rugby in Wales as well as a Digital Transformation Partner of Principality Stadium.

Through delivering ground-breaking research around reproductive health and developing change-making tech solutions for our elite female athletes, Vodafone in partnership with WRU launched PLAYER. Connect, in April '23, an innovative menstrual tracking programme which aggregates data from athlete's wearable devices in real-time which informing the impact on performance, wellbeing and recovery.

In June '23 we extended the deal with Vodafone to incorporate the Men's senior rugby side and Pathway teams in a major multi-year deal including front-of-shirt and back-of-shorts sponsorship.

Vodafone is now Principal Partner of men's, women's and pathway (U20s and U18s) rugby in Wales, uniting all teams within one partnership, committed to growing rugby at all levels in Wales.



Throughout the year we have welcomed new supplier partnerships with Glamorgan Brewing, an award-winning family run Welsh brewery supplying fine ales and beers as the Official Ale Supplier to Principality Stadium. Leading drinks company Britvic also extended its Official Supplier partnership for an additional four years until 2027.

Official WRU Partner WeSoda has continued to support the delivery of our 'Fit, Fed, Fun' camps supporting children and families across Wales during the summer holidays. The camps which are free to attend aim to engage children through fun rugby activities and on some occasions the camps are an opportunity to introduce children to the sport but the main aim of each camp is to ensure children are fed throughout the holidays as each child gets a healthy breakfast and lunch as part of the activation. Through the support of WeSoda and the help of the regional rugby foundations we were able to reach over 14,000 children this summer.

WRU Principal Partners

Vodafone, Go.Compare (July '23), Macron, Cazoo, Principality Building Society and Admiral.

WRU Official Partners

Dove Men+Care, Heineken, Guinness, Celtic Collection, Indigo Group, Papa Johns, WE Soda, Gullivers Sports Travel.

WRU Official Suppliers

Sinclair Mercedes, Gilbert, Rhino, Princes Gate, Events International, Britvic, Seat Unique, Amber, Total Energies, Ticketmaster, Opro, NOCCO, Castell Howell, WUKA, Isuzu, Glamorgan Brewing, Lanx, Hawes & Curtis, PAS.

We also thank our long-term broadcast partners BBC and ITV for their Six Nations coverage. We are in the midst of new four-year deal with our long-established broadcast partners set to run to the end of the 2025 tournament, continuing to share coverage of the men's and women's tournaments. We thank Amazon Prime Video for their coverage of the Autumn Nations



Series competition. Our official broadcast partners are BBC Wales and S4C and we thank both for their commitment to supporting Wales' men's and women's rugby with both senior teams heading into major competitions during the latter part of 2023..

S4C have also shown support for the Indigo Group Premiership including their excellent Indigo Prem Wednesday night show. Welsh rugby continues to partner with and attracts the interest of many brands, both within and beyond Wales, including significant global brands.

We cannot underestimate the profile of Welsh rugby around the world and we embrace the challenge and the opportunities in ahead of us. The steadfast support of our commercial and broadcast partners showcases the place rugby has throughout Wales, within Welsh culture and exemplifies what it means to Welsh people.

We will continue to drive change for the better, maximising the potential of Welsh rugby in all quarters and we are grateful to all of our partners for all they do to help us achieve these ambitions.



Obituaries

The Welsh rugby family lost ten members of it's family in the past year.

GLANMOR GRIFFITHS (1939 – 2023)

Glanmor Griffiths died at the age of 83 after passing away peacefully in Cardiff in September, 2023.

During his time as treasurer, chair and president of the Welsh Rugby Union he became a towering and sometimes controversial figure who became known throughout Wales simply as 'Glan mor'.

It was his drive and steely determination to deliver the Millennium Stadium project, as it was originally known, on time and within budget that enabled Wales to host the 1999 Rugby World Cup.

Over time it has become the most iconic building in Wales that has delivered a near £3 billion financial return to the Welsh economy. It has been the bedrock of record financial returns for the WRU in recent years, and it cost a mere £130m compared to the near £1 billion it cost to rebuild Wembley Stadium.

His shrewd negotiating skills enabled Wales to host games at both the 2007 and 2015 World Cups under a reciprocity agreement, and his securing of a fixed price contract for design, build and delivery of the Stadium proved a masterstroke.

Glanmor followed in the footsteps of Vernon Pugh as WRU chair, a post he held between 1996-2003, and was also chair of Millennium Stadium plc up to 2003. He also represented the WRU on the International Rugby Board, Five Nations and Four Home Unions committees and was a board member of Rugby World Cup Ltd.

He was a trustee of the Rugby Charitable Trust between 1985 and 2003. He became the 48th WRU president between May-October 2007 in the wake of the death of Keith Rowlands.

Born on 21 December 1939 in Bridgend as the third of seven children, he initially lived in Blackmill. He went to Ogmere Grammar School but left at 16 to join the Midland Bank. His career at the bank took him to Paddock Wood, Tonypany, Llandough, Bridgend and then to Ascot, while he was working in London. Having met his future wife, Mair, at a dance in Porthcawl, they married in 1964 and had four children.

When Mair developed breast cancer in the early eighties the family returned to south Wales, where Glanmor became a bank manager in Cardiff and then Midland Bank Corporate Director (Wales). He took early retirement at the age of 50 and in 1985 turned all his energies into Welsh rugby when he became treasurer of the WRU in succession to Ken Harris.

Glanmor is survived by his wife, four children (Stephen, Kathryn, Susan and Judith), 11 grandchildren and one great grandchild.

DAVID WATKINS (1942 – 2023) **Cap No 681 - 21 caps**

Born in Blaina, he played outside half for Cwmcelyn and Wales Youth, played for Blaina, Abertillery, Ebbw Vale and Pontypool, before joining Newport at the start of his first season in senior rugby.

The Black & Ambers obviously recognised his talent as he made 39 appearances in the 1961-62 season as he helped Newport to win the Welsh Championship.

Watkins went on to play 202 games over seven seasons at Rodney Parade, making his final appearance against Abertillery on 18 October 1967. He was the outside half when the All Blacks were famously beaten 3-0 in 1963 and also played in the drawn game with the touring Australians in 1966.

He appeared in the first and second Welsh trials in his first season, played in the 8-0 win by Wales U23 over Canada in Cardiff on 1 December 1962 and was paired with Clive Rowlands at half-back in the final Welsh trial in the 1962-63 season. Although they ended up on the losing side, they were both picked to play against England in the opening game of the 1963 Five Nations Championship.

Rowlands was given the captaincy on his debut, while Watkins was still only 20. Many thought he was promoted too early, but he came of age in the 1963-64 season with his mature and tactically superb performance in the Newport win over New Zealand.

On the sevens front, he was in the victorious and glorious Newport sides that won the Snelling Sevens in 1962, 63, 65 and 67, earning him the title of one of the greatest players of all-time in the small-sided game.

He was picked for the 1966 British & Irish Lions tour to Australia, New Zealand and Canada and stood tall on a trip that kicked off in Perth on 7 May and ended in Toronto on 17 September. Watkins played in 21 (W14 L6 D1) of the 35 games, including all six Tests, and scored 43 points (3T 1C 1P 9DG).

When tour captain Mike Campbell-Lamerton dropped himself in New Zealand, Watkins led the Lions in the second and fourth Tests.

Watkins started the 1967-68 season as Newport captain once again, but after winning 21 Welsh caps he decided to turn professional with Salford at the age of 25 for a then whopping fee of £15,000 – £10,000 down and £1,000 at the start of each of the succeeding five seasons.

The signing ceremony took place at the Royal Hop Pole Hotel in Tewksbury on 19 October 1967. He had been offered £5,000 to join St Helens when he was only 18.

If Wales lost one of its most talented players of the sixties, rugby league gained one of the greats of the seventies. He went on to play 466 games as a Rugby League player, including more than 400 for Salford, 22 for Wales and 13 for Great Britain, scoring more than 3,000 points.

He remains Salford's record points-scorer (2,907) and record goal scorer (1,241). He also kicked a world record 221 goals in the 1972-73 season and is the club's highest points scorer in a season with 493 in 1972–73. He also holds the rugby league record for scoring in 92 consecutive matches for the Red Devils and in 1972-73.

He was captain at Wembley in the 1969 Challenge Cup final, which they lost 11-6 to Castleford in front of a crowd of 97,939.

He played in all six games for Wales at the 1975 World Cup, captaining the side to wins over New Zealand, France and England. He then went on to coach the side in three games between 1977-84.

He has been included on the Welsh Sports Hall of Fame's 'Roll of Honour', been inducted into the Salford, Rugby League and Wales Rugby League Halls of Fame and was made MBE in the 1986 New Year Honours list for his services to rugby league.

David Watkins: Wales 21 caps / Cap No: #681; B&I Lions: 6 Tests / Lions No: #455; B: 5 March, 1942 in Blaina; D: 3 September, 2023

CLIVE ROWLANDS (1938 - 2023) Cap No 679 – 14 caps

One of the most towering figures in the history of Welsh rugby he captained, coached and managed Wales, was manager of the British & Irish Lions and became President of the WRU after serving on the General Committee for many years.

Born in Upper Cwmtwrch on 14 May 1938, he was admitted to the Craig y Nos TB hospital in Breconshire at the age of eight but battled back to full fitness to become an international scrum half.

He played for Cardiff Training College, Pontypool, Llanelli and Swansea and captained the student side, as well as Pontypool in 1962-63, and Swansea in 1967-68. Known universally by his nickname 'Top Cat' he became a totemic figure in Welsh rugby throughout the sixties and seventies.

On the international front, he was part of the Welsh Schools team that became the first representative team from Wales to tour in the southern hemisphere when they went to South Africa.

His Wales debut came against England on 19 January 1963 at the Arms Park, when he partnered David Watkins at half-back. Both players made their debuts in a 13-6 defeat on an icy pitch, with Rowlands being given the honour of leading the side.

In fact, he captained Wales in every one of his 14 international appearances between 1963-65.

Wales went unbeaten through the 1964 Five Nations championship, notching two wins and two draws, to share the title with Scotland and then picked up the Triple Crown in 1965 with a 14-8 home win over Ireland.

A great motivator and astute tactician, his kicking style from the base of the scrum often courted controversy, no more so than in the trip to Murrayfield in 1963.

Wales won the try-less game 6-0 with Rowlands justifying his tactics in saying: "It was not an attractive match and I felt sorry for the backs. But we were out to win and played to win. The pack did a great job."

He finally retired as a player at the age of 29 and seven weeks later found himself elevated to the Welsh Rugby Union General Committee after being elected as one of five National Representatives, knocking out the former President Nathan Rocyn-Jones.

His strong views on coaching, which he had included in a letter to all member clubs, obviously struck a chord and the next phase of his rugby life quickly developed. He was named as assistant manager, coach in all but name, for the Wales tour to Argentina in 1968 and became the National Coach in succession to David Nash.

The Welsh team flourished under his tutelage, with regular training sessions at Aberavon developing a style that earned a Triple Crown in 1969 and a first Grand Slam in 19 years in 1971. In the end, his record as a Wales coach read: P 29 W 18 D 4 L 7

He went on to manage the Wales team at the inaugural World Cup in 1987, still Wales' most successful tournament having finished third, and managed the British & Irish Loins on their series winning tour to Australia in 1989.

He became President of the Welsh Rugby Union in 1989 and was added to the Welsh Sports Hall of Fame 'Roll of Honour' in 2013. A schoolteacher in his early life, he battled against bowel cancer in the nineties.

Daniel Clive Thomas Rowlands: Cap No 679, 14 caps. B: 14 May, 1938 in Upper Cwmtwrch; D: 29 July, 2023 in Swansea

LAURANCE DANIEL (1942 – 2023) **Cap No 734 – 1 cap**

Born in Pontypool in 1942, Laurie learned his rugby at Abersychan Grammar School before training to become a teacher at Caerleon Training College. During his club career he played for Pontypool, Newport and Ebbw Vale in the first-class game.

He also turned out for Pontypool United and Blaenavon, playing up to the age of 38. He then turned his hand to coaching, launching a Youth section at Pontypool United.

Daniel launched his first-class career at Pontypool and was captain for two seasons between 1967-69. He also set a club record of 190 points in the 1967-68 season.

In 1969, he was in the Newport team that became the first Welsh side to beat the touring Springboks since 1912 as he completed the set of playing against the big three southern hemisphere touring teams.

After spending four seasons at Pontypool, he switched to Newport in the summer of 1969. By then he had put himself on the radar of the Welsh selectors having appeared in four trials and toured with Wales to Argentina in the summer of 1968.

He played in four of the six games on tour, notched all eight points with two tries and a conversion in the 8-8 draw with the Argentine Juniors and featured in both uncapped 'test' matches.

He was an instant hit at Newport, where as well as beating South Africa in only his sixth outing, he was one of two players to notch a century of points over the season.

Skipper John Anthony reached 162, while Daniel top-scored with 166 as Newport amassed 720 in total to beat their previous best of 716. He was also the leading try scored with No 8 John Jeffrey on 20.

In his second season at Rodney Parade he raised Keith Jarrett's points scoring record from 250 to 281, and then went even higher in the 1971-72 campaign when he reached 305. That tally included another club record of 32 in one match after he scored five tries and six conversions in a WRU Challenge Cup game against Cwmllynfell.

That record stood until it was finally better by Paul Turner, who notched 368 points in the 1986-87 season. His final tally in 109 games in Black & Amber was 756 points, including 66 tries.

When he moved to Ebbw Vale in the 1972-73 season, he became the record points scorer for the Steelmen as well, scoring 264 points and a season high, 17 tries. He played in three Welsh Counties Cup finals with Monmouthshire, winning the title once in 1963.

His one and only Wales cap came in the opening game of the 1970 Five Nations. Newport clubmate Bily Raybould pulled out of the game the night before with a throat infection and Daniel's goalkicking prowess won him the nod.

He played on the right wing and Phil Bennett moved into the centre. The Scots took a 9-0 lead before Daniel struck with a debut try in the right corner. His touchline conversion crucially cut the gap to four points at the break.

Gareth Edwards, who took over the goalkicking duties, banged over two conversions of further tries from Barry Llewellyn and Dai Morris to complete the Welsh revival and earn an 18-9 victory.

It proved to be a winning start and end to his international career as he wasn't picked again. Nevertheless, Daniel enjoyed an amazing career both as a player and then as an inspirational coach and schoolteacher at Twmpath Secondary Modern.

Laurie Thomas David Daniel – Cap No: 734 (1 cap)
b. 5 March, 1942 in Pontypool; d. 14 March, 2023

RON EVANS (1941-2023) **Cap No 683 - 3 caps**

A prolific points scorer for both Bridgend and South Wales Police, he helped Bridgend become Welsh club champions in 1964 and 1966 and won the Welsh Counties Cup with Glamorganshire in 1962.

He learned his rugby at Bryncethin School and played for Bryncethin Youth before joining Neath. After leaving school he joined the Glamorgan Police and he was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1978.

He was in the Possibles XV that beat the Probables in the final Welsh trial in 1963 and went on to win three caps in the Five Nations championship soon after. His debut came in the 6-0 win over Scotland at Murrayfield in the game of 111 line outs.

He remained in the side for the defeats to Ireland in Cardiff and France in Paris, but didn't win any more caps after that. He played for the Combined Bridgend & Maesteg XV's against Canada in 1962, when he scored a try in a 17-3 win, and in the 23-12 loss to the touring Fijians in 1964.

As well as playing for Bridgend - he joined the clubs from Neath at the start of the 1961-62 season - he also turned out for the Glamorgan Police XV and then the South Wales Police club. He also played for Welsh Police and British Police.

He scored what was claimed to be a world record number of points in one season in 1966-67 when he notched 440, including 147 for Bridgend, and when the South Wales Police team was formed in 1969, he was their first captain.

In their opening games they beat Pontypridd, Swansea, Bridgend and Pembrokeshire before overpowering Cardiff 21-12 with 14 men at Waterton Cross in their first home game. He led the South Wales Police team to the Police Athletic Association Challenge Cup title in 1972.

Ron Evans – Cap No: 683 (3 caps) b. 6 November, 1941 in Bryncethin; d. 5 March, 2023

TONY BROWN (1937 – 2023)

The owner and chairman of Bisley Office Furniture, Tony became one of the biggest benefactors of Welsh rugby through his association with Newport RFC and then the Dragons. His business acumen, vision and considerable financial backing allowed rugby fans in Gwent to experience some fantastic times, including winning the WRU Challenge Cup in 2001. By the time he stood back from his executive role at Rodney Parade his investment had topped £10m.

Having become a vice-president at Newport in 1997, he oversaw the move to make the club a limited company in 1998 and became the first chief executive at a time when the club was struggling for results on the field and coming to terms with the professional era off it.

He became the major shareholder and invested significant sums of his own money into the team on the field and the backroom staff off it. Born in 1937, Brown took over his father, Freddy's, company when he retired. What began in 1931 as a one-man car repair shop, developed into Bisley Office Equipment.

Having bought out his father, Brown turned Bisley into a multi-million pound company that continues to be one of the few industrial operations left in Surrey. Its Newport base was opened in 1988.

His company won two 'Queens' Awards for Export Achievement' in 1992 and 1997, and at its peak was the largest manufacturer of office furniture in the UK and one of the largest in Europe.

He was awarded an OBE for his services to industry and was presented with an Honorary Doctorate from Newport University to underline his company's contribution to the economy of South Wales.

The main function room at Rodney Parade is named in his honour, 'The Tony Brown Suite', and that is contained within the 'Bisley Stand'.

PETER THOMAS (1943 - 2023)

The 79-year-old, who was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2021, passed away peacefully at home in the early hours of Wednesday with his family by his side.

A former hooker for Cardiff Youth, Cardiff Rags and Cardiff's 1st XV, he became a hugely influential figure off the field at the Arms Park, spending 22 years as club chairman. He was also a long-standing investor in, director and chairman of Cardiff Blues, now Cardiff Rugby.

Born in Edinburgh in 1943, Peter was educated at Cyfarthfa Castle School and Taunton. He returned to south Wales, where he played for Cardiff Youth for two seasons.

His progression to senior rugby saw him playing for Ebbw Vale for two years before returning to the Arms Park. The majority of Peter's playing career was with the 'Rags' (Cardiff Athletic) and he was part of the side that won the Silver Ball in 1966.

His first XV debut came in a game against Chester in 1966 – one of eleven first team appearances between 1966 and 1968. He ended his career playing for Bedwas.

His father, Stan Thomas senior, was a big supporter of Cardiff RFC and both Peter and his brother, now Sir Stan Thomas OBE, followed in their father's footsteps in going into the pie business. They eventually sold 'Peter's' Pies for £75m before heading into the world of property and airports with a new company, TBI.

He poured much of his wealth into Cardiff Rugby, where he served as chairman from 1996 when the game went professional. During his time at the helm some of the world's greatest players turned out in Blue & Black – Jonathan Davies, Jonah Lomu, Neil Jenkins, Rob Howley – and he saw the Cardiff side win the WRU Challenge Cup in 1997, the Welsh-Scottish League in 2000.

Cardiff Blues won the EPCR Challenge Cup in Marseille in 2010 and in Bilbao in 2018, beating Toulon and Gloucester respectively. They also won the Anglo-Welsh Cup in 2009, beating Gloucester 50–12 at Twickenham.

Peter decided to step down as Chairman after the win in Bilbao but remained a major shareholder with the honorary position of Life President of Cardiff Blues. At that stage he pledged to write off debts of more than £12m yet remained a major benefactor until his death.

Peter Thomas b. March, 1943 in Edinburgh; d. 29 March, 2023 in Cardiff

BOBBY WANBON (1943 – 2022)

Cap No – 723 (1 cap)

A high-quality No 8 at Aberavon, Bobby played for the Wizards between 1964-68 before heading to rugby league to join St Helens. He had the distinction of making his Wales debut against England in both rugby union and rugby league in the same year.

He joined the Wizards after learning his rugby at St Joseph's School, in Port Talbot, the Aberavon Boys Club and Aberavon Green Stars. His senior Aberavon debut came at Cwmavon on 6 April 6, 1964.

A bricklayer by trade, he was a rugged back row man who stood 6ft 2in tall and weighed in at 15 ½ stones. He played in Welsh trials in the 1966-67 season and played for West Wales against the 1967 touring All Blacks at Swansea.

He was picked to make his Wales debut in the opening game in the Five Nations Championship on 20 January 1968 against England at Twickenham. One of three new caps, he had three Aberavon teammates lining up alongside him in full back Paul Wheeler and locks Max Wiltshire and Billy Mainwaring.

The game ended in a draw, 11-11, with Wanbon claiming the equalizing try off the back of a scrum close to the English line. England had led 11-3 with a team that contained eight new caps.

The English pack dominated the game, winning five strikes against the head at the scrums ruling the line-out battle 38-17 (yes, 55 line-outs in one game!). The Welsh selectors reacted by axing six players, for the next game against Scotland, including skipper Norman Gale and Wanbon.

Gareth Edwards became Wales youngest ever captain for the Scottish clash and Coventry's Ron Jones was recalled to take over at No 8. Wanbon had been criticised on the field for picking up at the scrum and scoring when a move for a drop goal had been called.

Being left out of the Test side for the next game was the final straw and on 29 January he switched to rugby league with St Helens for a fee of £4,500.

His debut for St Helens came in a league game at Batley on 7 February in an 18-12 victory. He joined four other former Welsh rugby converts in the Saints side that day, Kel Coslett, John Warlow, Graham Rees and Cen Williams. He made 79 appearances for the Knowsley Road club, scoring 18 tries, before joining Warrington in 1971.

Injuries forced him to miss out on the Saints' run to the Championship final at the end of the 1969-70 campaign. He was a forward substitute the following year when Wigan were defeated at Swinton in a marvellous back-to-back title triumph.

At Warrington, he was at the heart of a pack that helped the Wire beat Saints to win the Club Championship final at Wigan in 1973-74. He also saw success in the Captain Morgan Trophy, John Player Trophy and played at Wembley twice, winning the Challenge Cup in 1974 when Warrington beat Featherstone Rovers and ending up as a runner-up the following year.

He made 163 appearances for Warrington before knee injuries ended his career in 1978. On the international front, his Wales rugby league debut came at Salford on 7 November 1968 against England. Wales won 24-17 and he went on to win a further seven caps, including playing in the World Cup defeat of England in Brisbane in 1975.

In later life he became a highly popular pub landlord in Warrington.

Robert Wanbon: Cap No 723 (1 cap) B: 16.11.1943 in Port Talbot; D: 08.11.2022 in Tenerife.

JOHN RYAN (1939 – 2022)

The first non-international player to become Wales' national coach, John Ryan took charge of the Welsh team for nine matches between 1988-1990 after the departure of Tony Gray. He resigned after his side suffered a record defeat, 34-6, at Twickenham in 1990, and was replaced by Ron Waldron.

Ryan, who became Wales' sixth national coach, learned his rugby at Newport High School and was a good enough back row forward to play for the Welsh Secondary Schools in 1959. He joined Newport from school and played for the club until 1962.

He also played for Nottingham University and the UAU while studying for his degree before joining London Welsh. While playing at Old Deer Park he also represented Middlesex County as he pursued his career as a customs and excise officer.

He took over as coach at Rodney Parade in the 1973-74 season and stayed for five campaigns. After leaving the Black & Ambers he joined their biggest rivals, Cardiff in 1979.

In his first season in charge his side won 26 and drew three of their 48 games, while in the centenary season in 1975-76, they notched 29 wins and four draws in 51 regular season matches.

The Cup winning campaign of 1967-77 improved to 34 wins and two draws in 42 matches.

Ryan switched to Cardiff in 1979 and helped the Blue & Blacks to win five of their seven games in a pre-season tour to South Africa. They then went on to score a record 1,090 in a season that included 32 wins and a draw in their 46 regular season fixtures.

He stood down for personal reasons before the 1981-82 season but was brought back by Wales to coach the U20 and U21 international sides. Then, in the wake of the heavy defeat suffered by Wales on their tour to New Zealand at the end of their Triple Crown campaign in 1988, he took over from Tony Gray as national coach in July that year.

On his appointment he said "I like to keep a low profile" but saw a number of leading players opt to turn professional with rugby league. Adrian Hadley was the first, then Jonathan Davies.

He brought former Wales captain Jeff Squire and Stan Addicott into the fold with him as assistant coaches and appointed Jonathan Davies as captain. His first game in charge was against Western Samoa in Cardiff on 12 November 1988 and Wales won 24-6.

His second game in charge saw Wales plummet to an ignominious 15-9 defeat to Romania. A home win over England in the final round of the 1989 Five Nations Championship saved Wales from a first whitewash in the tournament, a Mike Hall try and the boot of Paul Thorburn allowing Wales to win 12-9.

It was a tough time for Welsh rugby. The report on the New Zealand didn't make for good reading, Secretary Ray Williams stood down for personal reasons and there were only 40,000 fans combined at the games against Western Samoa and Romania.

The autumn clash with the All Blacks in 1989 turned out as another crushing win over the tourists, 34-9, and the 1990 Five Nations opened with a 29-19 home defeat. When Wales then fell to that record defeat at Twickenham in round two, Ryan had had enough.

A few days after the Twickenham defeat, he handed in his letter of resignation to WRU secretary Dennis Evans and a few hours later Ron Waldron was appointed to replace him. Ryan had been in the job for nine games and only 19 months.

Despite standing down as national coach, Ryan didn't walk away from the game he loved. He stood as a National Representative on the WRU General Committee and worked very hard to improve the structures that supported the National team and its coach in the future.

EDDIE BUTLER (1957 – 2022)

Cap No – 784 (16 caps)

B.08.05.57 Newport, South Wales D 15.09.22
Cusco, Peru

Welsh rugby and broadcasting legend, Butler, 65, won 16 caps for his country, during a career that also saw him become an integral part of the all-conquering Pontypool side in the 1970s and 80s. He also won three blues while studying modern languages at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge.

Butler went up to Cambridge at the age of 19 after leaving Monmouth school and his first significant game for the light blues was against Japan in 1976. His final game in university colours came playing for a past and present Cambridge side against Japan.

While a student he acquired the unenviable record of being the first Cambridge man to be sent off, although his punishment didn't stop him from playing against the touring New Zealanders a few weeks later.

He played for Wales B and went from the 1983 Wales B tour to Spain out to New Zealand to link up with the British & Irish Lions side as a replacement. On that tour he joined fellow Pontypool clubmates Graham Price, Bobby Windsor and Charlie Faulkner.

His first cap for Wales was against France in Cardiff in 1980. The last of 16 caps for Wales Cap No 784 was against Australia at the same venue in 1984. He captained his country on six occasions.

After finishing his playing career, he established himself as a much-loved rugby commentator and was considered the voice of rugby on the BBC. He enjoyed sparring with the likes of former England hooker Brian Moore and ex-Wales fly-half Jonathan Davies.

Butler also worked alongside Cotter at a number of Olympic Games. He also called the action at the Invictus Games. In 2010 he was one of 15 former Welsh captains who took on the 'Captain's Climb' to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro in an attempt to raise £1m for the Velindre Cancer Centre's 'Stepping Stones' appeal for lung cancer. He was once again raising money for charity on his final adventure in Peru.

As well as being a strong advocate for Welsh independence, he found the time to write two books of non-fiction and three detective novels..

DENNIS GETHIN (1944 – 2023)

Dennis Gethin, the former Secretary and President of the Welsh Rugby Union, died at the age of 79 in October 2023.

Born in Seven Sisters, he enjoyed a hugely successful career in both rugby and the law. He was the 11th and last Secretary of the WRU – the role became CEO in 2002 – and the 40th President of the union between 2007-19.

His 12-year stint as President made him the second longest serving person in that office, behind Horace Lyne, who served from 1906-47. He was also chairman of the Trustees of the Welsh Rugby Charitable Trust.

Prior to joining the WRU, he had been chief executive of Taff Ely Borough Council between 1982 and 1996. After leaving the union, he became a member of the BBC Broadcasting Council in Wales from 2004-2009.

He learned his rugby at the famous Neath Grammar School nursery before heading to Cambridge University to study law.

Current WRU President, Gerald Davies, was in the three-quarter line along with another Wales and British & Irish Lions star, Maurice Richards. Former Newport captain John Jeffery played in the pack and another future Cardiff clubmate, double international Keri Jones, played against the French.

Having gained a place at Cambridge, he found himself thrust in at the deep end after going up to Selwyn College by playing against the touring All Blacks. He would eventually play against all three southern hemisphere touring teams before hanging up his boots in 1971 to concentrate on his job in the legal profession.

When his family heard he had won a place at Cambridge, his oldest brother Meredith, a coal miner like their father, presented him with a new pair of boots. They cost him two weeks' wages, but he was able to wear them against the All Blacks.

A star-studded New Zealand side won the game at Grange Road 20-6, with Dennis picking up tips both on and off the field from the great Don Clarke.

He played against the 1966 Wallabies for the Light Blues, in a side captained by another former Neath GS product, life-long friend and Wales hooker Brian Rees. They went down 6-5.

He played in two Varsity Matches at Twickenham, converting a try by Rees in a 5-5 draw with Oxford. The pair were on the losing side, 8-6, in 1966.

Having played a few games for Seven Sisters, Swansea and Neath as a schoolboy and while at Cambridge, he joined Cardiff in 1966 and made 109 appearances in Blue & Black through to 1971. In the 1968-69 season he scored 199 points to equal the club record that had stood since 1894.

He faced the 1969-70 South African tourists at Cardiff Arms Park in a game the Springboks won. After leaving Cardiff, he played a few games at Glamorgan Wanderers.



COMMERCIAL PARTNERS

WRU Principal Partners



WRU Official Partners



WRU Official Community Partner

Official Supporter of Wales Women



WRU Official Suppliers



EDDIE BUTLER
1957 – 2022





WRU



STADIUM
Principality
STADIUM

The Welsh Rugby Union Limited

Principality Stadium, Westgate Street,
Cardiff CF10 1NS

Tel: 02920 822 000 Web: wru.wales
E-Mail: info@wru.wales