

AGM 15th July 2026 Chair report

Yet again as our season has ended and we look forward to the next the RFU have been in turmoil. Failing to make changes to its organisation and not reflecting the wishes of clubs. Turkeys do not vote for Christmas and the RFU Council are minded to preserve their positions.

Despite their best efforts to make life difficult, even in June 2026 announcing massive changes to coaching requirements which we need to comply with (very last minute) we continue to manage the club guided by the RFU core values of Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship, and benefit from our huge army of volunteers. We could not do what we do without you.

We continue to represent BSRFC at Hertfordshire RFU meetings and as the senior county club do our best to influence their activity.

We had 712 playing members (plus the 1st XV squad) engaged in activity across all age groups and levels of the game. Detailed reports by section follow.

Minis – Report by Nikky Wilkins –

This season we have seen 325 Minis from U6's to U12s registered to play. Which is a slight increase on the previous year. Each age group has nearly 50 players, which demonstrates the need for rugby at minis level in Bishops Stortford. We also have multiple age groups with waiting lists. We welcomed a good intake of new U6s which now stands at 25 registered players.

All our minis players are well equipped with around 70 Coaches spread across the section who are there every Sunday morning to give them all the expertise and fun they need to enjoy the game of rugby. Many of which have completed First Aid training and RFU Safeguarding courses throughout the season.

Our annual Minis Festival took place in October. As always, it is organised and run by the U9s age group. This year we welcomed between 650-700 players from U7s-U12s from multiple different clubs playing some competitive rugby throughout. We have received some very positive feedback from the visiting clubs across various age groups, which we take pride in. Thank you to the U9s for all the hard work.

The 2025/26 season has thrown a few challenges at the players and coaches, mainly with the weather causing trouble with pitch conditions and matches and training being cancelled. We have however managed to overcome and use other facilities and got some fun rugby in.

We also held multiple 1XV Match Day Experiences which were well attended by all. BSRFC minis also attended the Saracens Showdown 5 at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium again, showing how strong a Mini's section we truly are! Thank you to Jimma Taylor for organizing again!

We also had the Minis Tour, that is organised by the U10s age group, this year we groups dressed as Music Genres from Rock to RnB and saw 250 BSRFC members, (of which 131 were players) head to the Overstrand, Norfolk for a fun filled weekend of team building activities and great rugby on the Sunday fuelled by adrenaline and Haribo as well as the boom box for the all-important macarena! Thank you to the U10s for organising such a great Tour.

Our U12's went off to take part in The Leicester Tigers Challenge at Butlins in Bognor Regis. 32 Boys took part in the tournament and represented the club, with a packed tournament schedule format seeing them play 4 matches on Saturday in a League setup and the heading into a knockout competition on Sunday with various trophies to play for. They all had a great weekend. We wish them lots of luck as they enter the Youth Section next season.

The end of season Minis Day, celebrated the success of the section and the development and bonds the players have made with each other throughout the season. Each player received a well earned trophy, with inflatables, music and luckily some sunshine!

Youth – Girls

Last year we announced that U12 girls would start under a coaching team lead by Nikky Wilkins and Matt Slade. With the help of the Oval club. This has been a great success. Taster sessions are happening through this summer to get more girls engaged.

[More content outstanding](#)

Youth – Boys – Report by Jim Tanfield

The youth section has again proved that rugby is booming in the town and its environs. This, however, is bucking the national trend, with many of our county colleagues suffering from declining numbers; two of the biggest names even failing to field a team for the National Colts Cup - this is unprecedented. Stortford Colts on the other hand managed to enter three squads into the county cup. This is testament to Dave Macfie and his coaching team putting in the hours to ensure all boys got competitive game time, including a magnificent run in the National Cup. I would like to personally thank the team for their efforts as they move on from their Colts roles.

The lower age groups have also been capitalising on the club's popularity, with consistent two squad Sundays.

Our U13s went unbeaten in the County Festival and the 7s won the Fordingbridge tournament. Meanwhile the U14 A's lost only 1 HML match all season and the B's did the heart-warming double against OAs.

U15 B's won their HML league while the A's got the double, HML and county cup as well as the squad nabbing an international festival crown on tour in the Netherlands.

U16s were runners up in the cup and finished top of HML division 1, built on strong defence, big pack and dynamic backs.

A quick note to highlight the three brilliant Friday night light games hosted by the club for the U15s - a packed bar and lively support was most welcome.

With rising cases of poor discipline in youth rugby across all clubs in recent seasons, the executive had to make some tough decisions this year, including banning a player for persistent bad behaviour. These decisions don't come with directives from the RFU other than ensuring all players, coaches, parents and officials can enjoy their sport in a safe and friendly environment. It seems the tough call has worked in this particular age group.

On the back of this, we understand that coaches aren't necessarily equipped to deal with all challenges that come their way in the modern youth game, so our objective is to ensure that a more thorough pre-season briefing for 26/27 will help ease concerns about how to recognise and react to situations avoiding any escalation.

Here's looking forward to an even more successful 2026/27.

Women's Senior rugby – BSRFC Women's XV

The women's team have had another outstanding season, continuing the momentum built over previous years and further establishing themselves as one of the leading sides in the region.

Following promotion last season, the squad embraced the challenge of competing at a higher level and responded in remarkable fashion. The team completed the league campaign undefeated, demonstrating consistency, resilience and an exciting brand of rugby throughout the season. This achievement has secured another promotion, and the women will proudly compete in NC1 during the 2026/27 season.

It was another season of first with their first entry into the National Cup, where they were sadly defeated at the fourth round.

The growth of the squad has continued at an impressive rate, with recruitment efforts and strong player retention resulting in increasing numbers throughout the year. This has allowed the coaching team to maintain strong competition for places while also providing opportunities for new players to develop and gain valuable match experience.

With participation numbers continuing to rise, the club is delighted to announce plans to enter a second women's team into the Inner Warrior League for the 2026/27 season. This represents a significant milestone in the development of the women's section and will provide additional playing opportunities for both new and established players, supporting the long-term growth of the squad.

The commitment shown by players, coaches, volunteers and supporters has been exceptional throughout the season. The atmosphere around the women's section continues to grow, both on matchdays and across the wider club, and the future looks incredibly positive as the team prepares for the challenges ahead in NC1 and the launch of a second side.

The women's section would like to thank everyone who has contributed to another successful year and looks forward to building on these achievements in the seasons to come.

Touch Rugby

The 2025/26 season has been another successful year for the Touch Rugby section, with continued growth in participation, player development and competitive performance.

One of the key changes during the season was the move of our weekly training session from **Wednesday to Monday**. This change has enabled the continued growth of other sections within the club while maintaining a strong and well-attended Touch Rugby programme.

We once again competed in the **Autumn/Winter** and **Spring/Summer London Touch Leagues**, providing regular, competitive rugby for our members throughout the year. A particular highlight was securing a **second-place finish** in one of the league competitions, reflecting the commitment, improvement and teamwork shown by the squad across the season.

We are also extremely proud that an increasing number of our players are now representing their regional touch rugby associations, with the club also being represented in the **National Touch League**. These achievements demonstrate the high standard of players within the section and the positive reputation the club continues to build within the sport.

Further to this, we have also been in action on the European Touch circuit. Competing in Pisa - finishing a creditable third in the at competition.

As this AGM marks a change in leadership, we would like to place on record our sincere thanks to **Adam Akhurst** and **Gaz Tracey**, who both step down from their respective roles after their dedication and commitment to developing the Touch Rugby section. Their hard work has helped establish the strong foundations on which the section now continues to grow.

We are delighted to welcome the new committee and management team who will lead the section forward:

- **Jake Tilley** – Chair
- **Ant Riley** – Team Manager
- **Lunette Opperman** – Team Administrator
- **James Milnes** – Head Coach

we are confident that, under their leadership, the Touch Rugby section will continue to develop, attract new players and build on the successes achieved this season.

Finally, thank you to all of our players, coaches, referees, volunteers and supporters for your continued commitment and enthusiasm throughout the year. Your efforts are what make the Touch Rugby section such a positive and successful part of the club.

Senior Men's rugby– Matt Slade –

Social Sides End of Season 2025/26 Review

Bishop's Stortford men's social rugby teams, comprising the Mitres (3rds), Chindits (4ths), and Abbotts (5ths), have had a strong 2025/26 season, with over 100 players playing across the three sides. This season, we have seen greater cohesion between the squads, with several players playing at a higher level and in new positions. This includes players being called up to play for the Blues (2nds), which is a testament to the strength, depth, and talent we have as a club.

Also, four players (Chris Collings, Anthony Sanday, Damon Rodney, and Stuart Blemings) made their debut for the Hertfordshire County Vets team, with Chetan Sharma and Nick Kane continuing to play for Hertfordshire Super Vets (over 50s). Age is no excuse not to play rugby!

Mitres

At the start of the season the plan was for the Mitres team to be competitive in their new league, RFU Counties 3 Herts but also to provide a pathway for younger players into senior rugby. To this end it must be said that the season has been a massive success. There is no doubt that the step up from playing just 5 games in the Merit Tables last season to 18 fixtures in the new league was going to be a challenge, and this was born out in the first two fixtures away to Cheshunt and Cuffley, where grit and experience beat youth and enthusiasm.

As the season progressed, we went on several great runs, winning four in a row twice with great results away at Fullarians and Harpenden, scoring over 60 points on both occasions as well as grinding out a hard fought 13-26 win in the dark and sideways rain of Old Grammarians.

We have also started to build for the future, discovering young talent from the Colts such as Tom McKean, Louis Mills, Freddie Howard, Freddie Bevan, Alfie Ward and Nick and Cam Scoulding all running out for either Mitres or Blues this season.

A squad is built of more than just those that are available every week and this season's Mitres squad is testament to that fact, throughout the season a total of 81 players have put on the Mitres shirt. We finished the season 'mid-table' – 7th in a league of 10...bring on 2026/27.

As always, a massive thank you to Mortgage Money Management for their unwavering support and sponsorship this season. This chapter would not have been possible without you!

End of Season Awards:

Player of the Season Award – Kyle MacDonald

Most Improved Player - Max McMullan

Breakthrough Player - James McCrae

Golden Boot Award – George Knight

Thank you to Richard Sanders, Ben Millard and Michael Sankey for all your hard work throughout the season including putting on training sessions throughout the season for all 3 social sides which has aided the movement of players up and down the sides.

Chindits

It's been a tricky season for the Chindits, as league structures have made it difficult for us to fulfil fixtures, combined with appalling weather in the first couple of months of 2026. Since January, the Chindits played only five matches, two of which were in the Plate competition. Despite disruption,

the squad demonstrated resilience, finishing 3rd in the first-half league and 3rd again in the second half, maintaining consistency and spirit.

After being knocked out of the cup by Tring in the opening game, the team responded emphatically just before Christmas, winning 59–10 at Silver Leys. Tring had been crowned “undefeated champions” two days prior, providing added motivation; the result underlined the Chindits’ quality and character.

For the third consecutive year the team progressed to a cup final, defeating Watford 2s 50–20 in a committed semi-final performance. The Plate final against rivals Hertford was fiercely contested; despite a strong effort, Chindits were beaten on the day.

The Max Oliver Cup was a standout club occasion and a fitting tribute. Co-founded by Andrew Mackenzie and Sam Stockley, the memorial match versus Royston 2s drew over 400 spectators including 200 for lunch, raising more than £15,000 for the charity CRY through lunch tickets, raffle and auctions. The day reflected Max’s spirit—competitive rugby played the right way—and demonstrated the club’s togetherness and community impact.

I would also like to say a big thank you to our sponsor, Cleaner Group, who came on board this year and have been supporting us every step of the way.

End of Season Awards:

Max Oliver Award - Damo Rodney

Player of the Season - Chris Kilner

Most Improved Player - Stuart Blemings

A big thank you to Andrew Mackenzie and Sam Stockley for all your work getting a team together in a league where fixtures are so sporadic.

Abbotts

The Abbotts, supported by their long-time player and sponsor Steve Marshall of Marshall Fire, continue to take on all comers, never shirking from a game no matter how tough it may be. The highlight of the season must be beating Hitchin 3s at the Stonex (Saracens' home ground) in a very special and memorable day for all. We would also like to thank Caulfield's for their continued support with post-match rehydration.

We welcome all ages and all abilities. Feel free to drop an email to abbotts@bsrfc.co.uk or seniormenschair@bsrfc.co.uk

End of Season Awards:

Player of the Season – Jude Evans

Most Improved Player – Antony Sanday

Lasty thank you to Chetan Sharma, Billy Hatherall and Ollie Collen for all your relentless player recruitment and driving engagement into the “one club” ethos. We are in such a fortunate situation where we can still put out five men’s sides on a Saturday which is mainly due to new players filtering up rather than down the sides.

Senior Men’s Rugby – 1st XV, Blues and Colts – Our Head Coach Tom Coleman has developed a strong “one squad ethos” since coming back to the role. This has shown its value, no more than at the start of our 25/26 season when resources were stretch through injury, and many had to step up and play at levels they had not done so before.

That early part of the season was a real challenge, but how the team fought for every possible bonus point. Then the season turned on its head and wins started to be enjoyed (not just by the team).

Right up to the last match of the season BSRFC supporters were thrilled by the efforts of our 1st XV, the second half of the season was a real joy to be part of.

The Rams and Leeds away wins were outstanding and the win vs Sale at the end of January a real pleasure to witness.

We have seen some notable retirees for the coming season plus some significant new signings. Being in the top six of National 1 is something to be very proud of, and sets the bar high for the coming season.

All the best to all who have given so much to the club and good luck for their futures.

Tom said in the last programme of the season some great words

“I’m incredibly proud of my players, coaches, physios, and management team, all of whom have contributed significantly throughout the season. What stood out most to me was how we responded during difficult periods. When we were under pressure and struggling, that’s when true character was revealed and everyone came back determined to improve and be better. You can’t ask for much

more than that. The time and effort required to compete at this level is immense, and it makes me very proud to lead this group”

The coaching committee continue to support Tom in all he does and has proved to be an invaluable organisational change.

Our Blues squad enjoyed their first season in Counties 1 league with Steve Hearn leading the coaching group. They will look to improve again next season and hopefully some Blues will make 1st XV appearances.

Much has been said about our Colts putting out 3 sides in the County cup, but that is the result of the great work over many seasons by our Colts coaches.

There will be a new structure this coming season but with the same drive to succeed and mature in to senior players for BSRFC.

It is right under this section to mention our Volunteer of the year award which we presented in April which was given to Rob Faiers who coaches across the club and support Tom as part of his team.

We remain very grateful John Allanson for his journalist skills preparing match reports for our own communications and also for the rugby paper. They are really appreciated by many. He needs a replacement to be found to ease the burden and be our reporter of the future.

We submitted our annual Payment of Players return to the RFU this year, in respect of all gross payments of material benefits, such as playing and coaching expenses, NI, travel and housing. We declared total payments of £167k for the period 1st June 2024 to the 31st May 2025. This is 1% up on the figure we declared last season. We remain well within the guideline maximum.

Your Executive Committee met five times during the rugby year. As well as day to day issues that were dealt with, we undertook/oversaw the following significant actions: -

- Strengthened our Executive team by bringing on board Claire Sanday as Safeguarding Officer. She is real asset to the team. A new Safeguarding policy is in place.
- Mehmet Mehmet has taken over Fixtures Secretary duties on top of his Rugby Safe role. This will enable us to modernise our operations and keep the club safer managing male and female changing.
- Agreed to increase our use of other spaces for rugby including TBHS all weather and other schools.
- Continued to engage with Return2Play medical scheme which ensures all players who sustain a head injury (not only at rugby but in any circumstance) have a consultation within 48 hours (normally under 24 hrs). T his has been a great initiative which will be continued for 2026/7 season. We also get data reports from the system which will aid coaching going forward.
- Engaged with our community through charitable events such as the St Clares colour run in May and other fund-raising activities for non-club charities.
- Moved our club blazer operation “in-house”
- Agreed an ongoing arrangement with BS College for the coming season
- Hosted TBHS playing events (community engagement at work)

Regarding club officers and officials, you will see in our AGM agenda that we have a number this year and they are proposed for AGM for approval.

We have a number of vacancies for key volunteers including Volunteer Co-ordinator, Environment Manager and Herts County representatives. In addition, we need to increase the number of volunteers available for clear-up operations on post-match Mondays.

Including in our calling notice for the AGM are details of Directors standing for re-election and election. The membership of the TS board is also changing. Full details will be given at the AGM.

Despite fund raising efforts and great work by our Trading Subsidiary to raise income we remain challenged to ensure all necessary costs are financed and we deliver rugby for all on great playing surfaces and with trained people in place. Everything has a cost.

With the over-riding imperative that we manage our finances (and not make a loss) within current legislation and report accordingly, we changed our accountancy provider last year to great benefit. More details of how we are progressing at the AGM.

Financial updates will be given at the AGM as advised in the calling notice.

We have produced provisional budgets for 2025/6 which shows our intention to hold subscription prices for the forthcoming season. The last two seasons did have increases but this season we feel unable to increase again despite cost pressures. Our member families are finding the cost of living a challenge.

In addition, all players, from Under 9 through to seniors will pay a compulsory £10 charge per season for the Return2Play cover as they did last season.

We have continued to face the challenge of members not making subscription payments. We recognise that our system has in the past been complicated, but by being very flexible in 25/26 we have managed to bring in a few more payments for Associate Members and Non-Playing members. Players across all sections are fully paid up.

We continue to be frustrated seeing ex-members at the club, often in blazers who do not pay anything in to the club. As we find them, we have a discussion, and in nearly every case they make payments. New gate arrangements for the coming season will help.

We will once again run "registration days" in September 2026 including match days to encourage payments for those with on-line difficulties. Our request remains that all members enable us to see their e-mail details and phone numbers so we can better communicate.

Colin Tilley will report in detail on capital projects and our ambitious plans for the year ahead including the work of a new Development Committee. New RFU National League minimum operating standards are driving some of investments, as well as of course enhancing our playing and spectating experiences.

Working parties have been in full swing managed for one more year by Jon Allanson. More hands always welcome. We will be organising more days as jobs build up.

To repeat what I reported last year as so relevant still, our club is like a medium sized company but without employees. We are a volunteer organisation, blessed with a huge number of members who give up their time for the good of rugby. Thank you to them all.

I would like to thank everyone who contributes financially to the club. Our loyal Sponsors and Advertisers, our “internal sponsors” Club Stortford and the Oval Club, and recognise the above and beyond sponsorships and support given by Gareth and the team at Garsons.

I am delighted to conclude this report by saying that I, all members, all volunteers and all involved in any way with this club should be proud of our reputation as a National 1 club with its feet firmly set in community rugby.

Steve Dunkley

Chair - BSRFC