

THE YELLOW RIBBON

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB E-NEWSLETTER



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Welcome!

LUKE CULLEN, EURFC ALUMNI SECRETARY

Hello and welcome to the inaugural EURFC Alumni Newsletter!

It was fantastic to see so many of you at last year's Alumni Dinner, and my thanks go out to my predecessor Dave O'Sullivan for organising that. In lieu of being able to have another dinner this year, for obvious reasons, we thought we would connect with our fantastic Alumni through this The Yellow Ribbon.

In this edition, we get updates from the President of the club, as well as 4XV stalwart Toby Kirkpatrick, to give you the perspective from both ends of EURFC.

We hope you enjoy, and have a very happy holidays!

President Update

RUAIDHRI POWER, EURFC PRESIDENT

Hello and season's greetings from EURFC!

The joyfulness of the season is certainly being felt within the club, as we have recently been able to get back on the pitch and fulfil training sessions that resemble some sense of normality.

For those of you whom I have not had the pleasure of meeting, I am Ruaidhri and I am the President of EURFC for the 2020/21 season. This is my third year on the club committee, having previously served as Secretary and the coveted position of Kit Secretary, and it is my fourth and final year as a member of our fantastic club. Over my four-year EURFC career I have played in the centre from the 4th XV through to the 1st XV and, as many of you have before me, I have relished every minute of it.

It has certainly been a challenging 9 months for the entire world and this has been particularly felt at EURFC. The ending of the 2019/20 season was nothing short of a high-octane rollercoaster. The adulation of securing the safety of the 1st XV with a last-gasp try against Leeds on the final day of the BUCS North A season was immediately followed by the bitter blow of nationwide lockdown and the indefinite cancellation of all rugby activity.

This first semester running from September to December has been similarly turbulent. St Andrews will no doubt have breathed a quiet sigh of relief when it was announced that our annual Varsity Match at BT Murrayfield was cancelled. We hope to be able to take to the field in the late spring months of 2021 to give them the delayed schooling that has become typical of the fixture.

In brief respite from Nicola Sturgeon's stringent Covid-19 restrictions, we were allowed to conduct some partial contact on-pitch activity at the start of the semester. This saw over 140 first years come down to Peffermill to get a taste of our club. Whilst naturally we did not retain all of these newcomers, the club has recorded a record-high membership of over 160, which is an exceptional achievement and testament to the culture we have given the fact that there has been very little rugby to play.

We have been fortunate enough up here in Edinburgh not to return to the full lockdown measures that were reimposed on England not too long ago, but we did experience a month-long total hiatus from training. Fortunately, we have been able to return for over a dozen sessions before the Christmas break. Attendance has regularly reached over 90, which suggests how fantastically our coaches have done to provide imaginative and entertaining sessions that keep everyone on the pitch two metres apart!

The outlook for the rest of the season is better. As per directives given to English clubs, we are hopeful that the SRU will follow suit and provide a framework for a return to matches and contact training soon after the New Year.

Despite the difficulties that we have faced, there have still been a great deal of successes to take from the Covid-19 period. Through a number of initiatives, the club has raised over £3,000 for our partnered charity, Children's Hospices Across Scotland. During the initial lockdown, the club also raised over £1,450 for NHS Charities and delivered food parcels to the isolating vulnerable. We have also made great progress in enhancing our welfare support system. For the first time we have introduced a trained Welfare Officer to the Committee and we have run workshops on mental health and sexual consent to educate all of our members.



A special mention must also be given to our coaches. Head Coach Dave Adamson, whom many of you will know well, continues to work exceptionally hard in his 10th year with the club, alongside parenting duties. Luis Arola continues to chomp at the bit to get scrums back but has also been excellent in his coaching duties. We have welcomed two new coaches, Matt from Edinburgh Accies and former EURFC 1st XV Captain Nick Stephen, who have both taken to their new responsibilities well. Special mention must also be given to our 'Futures' Coach Gavin MacRae, who was awarded Coach of the Year for the entirety of Edinburgh University sport at the end of last season, following the promotion of our 3rd and 4th XV, and the latter's Scottish Conference Cup Final appearance.

We brought Gavin to the club with the money raised by you, through our alumni fund. The pandemic has hit the club hard on a financial front and thus I would like to once again encourage you to consider the club this Christmas time. Information on our alumni fund can be found on our website under the 'Alumni' tab. We are also for the first time offering alumni the chance to purchase some club kit, by emailing eurfcequipmentmanager@gmail.com. More information on this can be found at the bottom of this newsletter!

From everyone at EURFC, I wish you and your loved ones good health and best wishes over the Christmas period and prosperity in the New Year!

Yours in rugby,

Ruaidhri Power

President of EURFC

In Conversation

WITH CLUB STALWART, TOBY KIRKPATRICK

BY LUKE CULLEN

This week I had the pleasure of catching up with a good mate, and EURFC stalwart Toby Kirkpatrick. For the many Alumni that won't have met Toby, he has an extensive CV of service to the club, as well as being the embodiment of a social rugby player. He first served as Kit Secretary in 2019/20, helping design some of the great stuff you can purchase below. This year, Toby has taken on the newly created role of Welfare Secretary, helping first years settle in and looking out for the mental health of the club as a whole. Most notably, Toby coached our 4XV last season to an unprecedented league win, and a run to the Scottish Conference Cup Final.

Speaking about the run to the final, Toby described it as "one of my proudest moments". In particular, he recalled the stunning 10-8 win over Glasgow Caledonian 1s in the semi-final. A team two divisions above our 4s, this was a true David and Goliath story. In the driving Glaswegian rain, the victory "was characterised by our brilliant defence", and the ensuing celebrations were worthy of a team at the more social end of the club. Toby sees team spirit as something that "has always been key to the success of the fours". Although the team would go on to lose in the final, the team spirit generated by this cup run was truly amazing to witness. Nor did it go unnoticed in the club as a whole, with a crowd of around 75 supporters travelling to St Andrews for the final - truly unheard of at 4XV level rugby.

This team spirit is something that really helped the 4s boys during lockdown in March. Despite Covid cutting the post-season festivities short, Toby helped organise 16 straight weeks of Zoom quizzes: "It was a hard time, but we stuck together and have come out so much stronger". On Covid's impact on the sport we love, Toby was less positive. "Obviously Covid has had a major impact on lower level rugby. Not only in terms of how much we've been able to train and socialise, but also financially. If we don't get some money into the sport soon, teams like the 4XV will be the first to go. However, knowing rugby players and fans, I know we will come back better. I, for one, can't wait to get back into stadiums."

On his role as Welfare Secretary, Toby stressed how difficult it has been. His main role is integrating first years into the club, but without any socials this is obviously a lot harder. "I've been doing my best with zoom socials and chatting to the first years at training. I've developed a good relationship with the 3's, 4's and 5's - but haven't had the same opportunity with the 1s and 2s boys yet, I look forward to seeing them when we're finally allowed socials". As a great Pintman himself, Toby is desperate for pubs to be opened again "I'm really just looking forward to a bit of normality. All the boys back together chatting nonsense, having a few beers, and a right good time."

In addition to his work with EURFC, Toby is also a Student Ambassador for the Oddballs Foundation. "We are a testicular cancer charity working to raise awareness for the disease, through talks to schools and companies. I've already done a talk to EURFC virtually and I am very excited to do more. If anyone is interested in a talk for your club, work, or school don't hesitate to email me: edinburgh@theoddballsfoundation.com". I'd like to thank Toby very much for giving up his time for this interview. EURFC has always been a club that cares about its 'lower' sides as much as the 1XV, and I'm proud to tell you that this remains the case today. Despite the difficulties of Covid the spirit and values of the 4XV live on, and we look forward to meeting again, and sharing a beer again, as soon as we can.



Kit Opportunity

HOODIE AND TRAINING TOP

For the first time, we are offering alumni the chance to purchase some club kit.

Please email eurfcequipmentmanager@gmail.com to secure your kit! Deadline 15th January.

EcoLayer Hoodie - £50

Limited Edition VictoryLayer Training Tee - £40

(Prices include tax and P&P)

