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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *As Welsh rugby rallies round, the world game has also been galvanised by the current health crisis.  We are all acutely aware that, from present adversity new opportunity could, and very much should, be born.  Streamlining our playing calendar and balancing up the need for revenue generation while focusing on player welfare, has long been an issue facing our sport.*    *It’s a conundrum we must resolve and we need each other now more than ever in order to do so.  All rugby playing nations should now realise the full extent to which we are interdependent.  We will strive to work together through this crisis and the end result should be a truly global international calendar, which filters down through our respective national domestic leagues.*  *Unity is not only the key to survival, but it will also be the secret to long term prosperity.  There has been much speculation about where the game will go next, when it will start again and what state it will be in when it does. We are planning for every scenario and we will be ready. It is our responsibility to ensure that, when we get to the other side of the current hiatus, the world game rises fitter, stronger and more united than it has ever been.*    *Our source of strength will be our clubs and our community game and we will beat this thing together.*  *Yours in rugby,* *Gareth Davies* ***WRU chairman***  **COVID - 19 Club Support** We would encourage all clubs to complete the Club Impact Survey sent to secretaries in the Information Update on Friday. This will enable us to better understand where clubs require support and advice and to allocate the correct resources accordingly.  To date, we have received more than 70 surveys and more are coming in by the hour, but it is vitally important that as many clubs as possible provide us with the right information.  That said, we fully appreciate that clubs may not be in a position to answer all of the questions posed at present. It is therefore requested that clubs submit the survey to us as and when possible. However, in order to allow us to interpret the data effectively, this survey will close on Friday 24th April 2020. Any queries should be directed to the WRU Helpdesk [clubdevelopment@wru.wales](mailto:clubdevelopment@wru.wales)  **Community rugby department activity**  **SOCIAL**  Don’t miss your chance to hear at length from the WRU’s community director discussing how are clubs have rallied together, what is the WRU doing to help and what will the future look like when rugby eventually returns. Link to podcast with Geraint John: - [https://www.wru.wales/audio/welsh-rugby-union-podcast-14-2020/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=455A463A1A1145)    For more of the same and to keep up to date will everything happening in the community game, as it happens, why not follow @wru\_community on Twitter – this is an official WRU channel designed specifically for the community game.  If you haven’t followed already the account is incredibly active and even more so in the present environment with hints tips and updates issued regularly as well as news from around the game shared. The channel is posting daily fitness #StayHomeStaySafe / #StayHomeStayActive content including recipes for healthy snacks, Garden Rugby videos for the whole rugby community to enjoy and activity packs for children covering topics of baking, crafts, educational and outdoors.    Also in the pipeline, we have recorded a series of Youth and Senior community coach webinars with coaches around Wales, these will be released on the Game Locker site ([https://www.wrugamelocker.wales/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=455A463A1A1146)) as part of the Continued Professional Development support for the wide network of coaches and referees that service our grass roots game at all levels. If you haven’t used this before there is a simple registration and login procedure to follow to open up a world of resources to help you in your weekly coaching lives and seeking to upskill everyone, no matter what their current level.    For example, this weekend will see the first of ‘Sunday Skills’ on the Game Locker which will be a series of videos covering techniques from the game including Base Pass, Catching the High Ball, Catch Pass, Body Profile etc. One video will be released each Sunday morning via @Wru\_community      **Performance rugby**    The performance department has begun regular online CPD webinars open to coaches working in our talent and performance pathways. This will be a weekly initiative with a particular subject or guest speaker lined up each week. The aim is to build on the collaborative network in relation to elite coach development in Wales and continue our support for coaches in their quest for personal development during this period.  This week’s guest speaker Mark O’Sullivan, who is a world renowned coach in youth football currently working at AIK Stockholm, addressed 40 ‘Talent Coaches’ from across the regions we had present on his experiences of talent and player development. Topics covered included principles of a talent environment and coaching approach and how we could apply these to rugby.    A further 50 Elite Coaches from across the regions, including first team staff and academy staff, joined Wales pathways coaches (Men, Women, U20s, U18s & 7s) for an online presentation from Kirk Vallis the Head of Creativity Development at Google.  Kirk’s topical theme was ‘how to harness creativity in times of disruption’. Kirk is a leader in creativity development and regularly supports us on our elite coach development programme and was also joined by professional coaches working outside of Wales in the English Premiership, as part of our quest to support exiled coaches.    We are also pressing on with our player to coach programme this week and delivering sessions for the candidates virtually and can highly recommend ‘Zoom’ to all as an excellent method of keeping in touch in these difficult times.    **Around Wales**    The impact of Coronavirus is seeping into every nook and cranny of Welsh society, but many clubs are coordinating efforts to deliver food, medical supplies and provisions to the most vulnerable in their communities, or organising fundraising activities such as Rhydyfelin who on Monday had raised more than £1600 with players and coaches shaving their heads.    Denbigh Rugby Club is another showing that it is at the heart of its community in North Wales having opened its doors to local GPs to help in the global battle against Covid-19, it was only too pleased to hand over the keys when approached by South Denbighshire GP practices to become a Fever Assessment Centre.    In the small town of Treharris near Merthyr Tydfil, the local rugby club, Treharris Phoenix RFC is also proving to be a lifeline.  Despite limited facilities, a mother and daughter cooking team are turning out hundreds of meals for residents and keyworkers every week. An army of rugby club volunteers are arriving at the kitchen’s outdoor serving hatch to collect and deliver meals to doorsteps. Frontline keyworkers such as NHS staff and those keeping the cogs of daily life turning are collecting takeaways. Last weekend, 100 Sunday lunches were delivered to the homes of those in need.  Volunteers from grassroots clubs and WRU girls hubs across Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire have been helping to take food packages to vulnerable members of society who are self-isolating during the Covid-19 pandemic. More than 300 packages were delivered on Monday and Tuesday this week, with the initiative – like many others around Wales - highlighting that even without any action on the field, rugby clubs remain at the heart of our community.  **Rugby**  **UNBEATEN EIGHT**  Play may have stopped but that doesn’t mean there are no bragging rights left to play with    Cardiff Saracens were in good company when the season was cut short due to the coronavirus pandemic. At that stage they had won all 11 games and were the only team to have beaten top of the table Brackla – an epic 16-15 triumph away from home – in Specsavers Division 3 East Central C.    But this also made them one of only eight unbeaten teams in the 22 National Leagues.    Not only that, they were one of only six teams with a 100 per cent record. The only blemish on their season was a Specsavers National Shield quarter-final loss to Holyhead, but they remained on course for promotion and some significant silverware.    The other unbeaten teams in the leagues across Wales when the 2019/20 season came to a close were Aberdare of Division 2 East (who drew 2 of their 14 matches), Burry Port of Division 2 West, Glyncorrwg Division 3 Central, Llandudno Division 1 North, Ruthin 2nd XV of Div 3 North, South Gower Div 3 West Central and Wrexham of Division 2 North (who drew 1 of their 14 matches).    **TOP TACKLER**  Swansea may have been nearer the wrong end of the points table as a club, but in Callum Bowden they had a player a country mile ahead of any other tackler in this season’s Indigo Group Premiership.    The 24-year-old flanker missed just one of Swansea’s 17 games in the Premiership and certainly made his presence felt on the pitch.    He amassed a total of 196 tackles to be handsomely clear of his nearest challenger, Merthyr’s Jack Perkins who claimed 147 to just edge out Carmarthen Quins’ Lewys Millin for second place who finished the campaign on 146 tackles.    **WELSH ON THE UP**  London Welsh were back on track in their climb up the English League system after the RFU confirmed they will be promoted despite the suspension of rugby due to the coronavirus epidemic.    It means Cai Griffiths’ side will move up into London North 1 next season after completing three successive promotions.    The RFU had spent several weeks in trying to resolve the promotion and relegation issue before finally confirming both the Exiles and Hammersmith & Fulham will move up.    When the season was brought to a halt Griffiths’ side had just secured their 32nd straight home league victory in three seasons with a thumping 50-7 win over Hackney. That moved them 11 points clear at the top of a table and made it 17 wins in 18 outings.  **Club finances:**  **FLOOD FUND** Funding has been prioritised for 20 clubs who have been badly affected by Storm Dennis based around clubhouse and pitch damage and we are currently working with clubs to process the applications - to date £51,000 of more than £100,000 has been allocated.  We say more than £100,000 because donations have been gratefully received from a number of quarters including CRICC Caerdydd rugby club junior section, who raised significant funds, supporters who attended the Wales, France game at Principality Stadium in Ferbruary and the staff at Media Wales, who hosted and evening with Nigel Owens and James Hook in march to raise £1,000 for the cause.   We are continuing to liaise with our commercial partners to obtain preferential rates on equipment damaged by the floods.    **GRANTS**  Clubs have been sent information on a number of ways to access subsistence help including: Covid-19 Grants for Businesses in Wales linked to Non-Domestic Rates (NDR). Welsh Government Economic Resilience Fund - £500m. The Welsh Government and the Development Bank of Wales which has announced the £100m Covid-19 Wales Business Loan Scheme to support businesses affected by the outbreak and funding opportunities provided by Sport Wales Details on the newly launched Emergency Fund from Sport Wales  Any queries should be directed to the WRU Helpdesk [clubdevelopment@wru.wales](mailto:clubdevelopment@wru.wales) Further initiatives outlined in recent communications include: The Music Licence, In light of the current situation with Covid 19, PPL PRS Ltd have taken measures to support businesses affected by the Pandemic; Business Update Incorporated Clubs – advice on filing Company Accounts; Furlough of Workers, information released by the Government updating the Job Retention Scheme; Institute of Groundsmanship Guidance for Volunteer Ground Staff  Clubs should also be aware that the WRU lottery has been suspended until further notice. Clubs will no longer have payments collected for lottery subscriptions and no prizes or commissions will be paid.  **GENERAL UPDATE FROM WRU CEO MARTYN PHILLIPS:**    *We were extremely disappointed, last night, to announce that the highly anticipated Nitro World Games Wales 2020 event due to take place at Principality Stadium on 23rd and 24th May has, unfortunately, been cancelled.*    *All ticket holders will be contacted by their point of purchase in due course to process a refund.*    *Work is progressing at pace on the 2,000-bed capacity hospital, which will soon have a new name of its own, to be sited at Principality Stadium as well as centre to be situated at the WRU National Centre of Excellence building in the Vale Resort Hensol.*    *I know I’ve said this before, but the positive attitude of staff at these venues has been truly heart-warming and the are a credit to Welsh rugby as are the rugby club members around the country who are proving to me that our game can and will survive all that is thrown at it.*    *To our own staff, some of whom have been furloughed and those left holding the fort, thank you for your sterling work and I’d like to mention in particular Chris Munro and the team who work to look after our members clubs.*    *In the professional game, at the time of writing, talks are ongoing about the pay structure and the way ahead for our players and our regional teams who are discussing, with the help of the Professional Rugby Board, complex issues which will affect their livelihoods and those of their families.  I know the right decision will be reached soon and it will be one that has the best interests of our national game at its heart.*    *Please continue to stay safe and know that we are working hard to ensure that Welsh rugby rises again stronger than ever when this is all over.*    *Stay safe and a happy Easter to you all.*    *Martyn Phillips*  ***WRU CEO*** | | |