**WRU STATUS UPDATE 05/08/2020**

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       **FINALLY… DONOVAN REMEMBERED**

1. **Chairman’s comment:**

***The joy this week on the face of my young grandson, Tom, when he told me he was getting back into rugby training with the rest of his friends at Clwb Rygbi Cymry Caerdydd U7s was succour for the soul.***
***I know that this is a feeling repeated the length and breadth of the country as our clubs, hubs and community teams take their first steps towards returning, safely, to rugby.***
***I commend our club operations, medical performance and community rugby teams for creating the guidelines in accordance with the Welsh Government to enable this process.  We have taken some small steps but they are determinedly steps in the right direction.***

***In the professional game too our regional teams have entered a new phase in their return to rugby with training now full contact and able to resemble pre-Covid-19 routines and patterns, whilst observing the******stringent safety protocols that have been put in place. I know the aims and objectives here are very much to keep the virus off the pitch and away from the professional rugby environment altogether rather than to try to play the game itself in a different way, but we will continue to watch and learn from other nations who are ahead of us as well as other sports.***

***Sports like football, which could potentially provide a host venue for Wales’ replayed 2020 Six Nations match against Scotland.  There is still much to be decided in terms of crowd access, which will directly influence our choice of venue, but we now have a confirmed fixture (detailed below).  Again, it is these small steps which give us all hope and we look forward to the next positive move forward on this front, which would be test events in front of small crowds.  Once we have a venue then we will, assuming crowds are permissible, be making tickets available at the earliest opportunity.  We know supporters are keen to return with around 25% of those seeking refunds on the original Scotland fixture choosing the credit or donate options we have offered.  I would like to personally thank all those fans who have shown their support for Welsh rugby in this manner and in particular those who have donated the money they spent on tickets, which has provided well over £20,000 in extremely welcome funds to our game already.***

***Next week we will begin the interview process for the next chief executive of the WRU, to succeed Martyn Phillips who will leave us in the autumn.  Martyn extended his tenure having planned to step down after the Rugby World Cup and I know I speak on behalf of the Union in thanking him for ‘stepping up’. Not only has he led the WRU from the front during this period, he has been in the thick of the global issues facing the game, representing not only Wales but the best interests of the sport.  He’ll be a tough act to follow. We have half a dozen extremely high calibre candidates to talk to and I am very much looking forward to beginning this process.  This is a role of huge importance to Welsh rugby and we will be doing all that we can to ensure that we find the right individual to lead our executive team at this time of both great flux and opportunity for the game on an international scale.***

***Finally, now that nominations have been closed for the position of National Council Member I would like to reiterate my desire to offer a period of continuity and stability to Welsh rugby by serving a further term during these tough times.***
***If member clubs decide they want me to do so, I will take up the mantle during what would be my third and final term with as much passion and enthusiasm as I did in my first. I am looking forward to engaging further with member clubs in the weeks ahead to explain fully my motivations for standing and my plans for the future. However, suffice to say here, I still feel the same sense of duty and allegiance to Welsh rugby that I did in 2014 when I was first elected and I cannot justify to myself the thought of leaving at what is possibly our national game’s time of greatest need.***

***Yours in rugby,***

***Gareth Davies***
***WRU chairman***

**2. Nominations for National Council Member**

Nominations are now in and three candidates will stand for the National Council Member role currently held by chairman Gareth Davies.
In accordance with Article 57 of WRU’s Articles of Association, ballot papers will be issued to member clubs in the next few days, along with copies of the relevant candidate profile documentation.
Incumbent Davies will be joined by Ieuan Evans and Nigel Davies on the ballot paper.
No further candidates were nominated for any of the available District Council Member roles.
Bryn Parker (District A); Dave Young (District B); Ray Wilton (District C); Chris Morgan (District D) and Phil Thomas (District E) will therefore be re-appointed as District Council Members for their respective Districts.
Each will serve a three-year term commencing as of the close of this year’s Annual General Meeting (which will be held on 18th October 2020).

**3.               Return to Rugby**

We have entered the latest stage in our phased Return to Community Rugby plan. WRU Community online registration opened on Saturday – more than 19,000 players and volunteers registered over the weekend – and, providing the necessary steps have been followed by players, coaches and clubs, we can now sanction organised non-contact and small group training. In addition, following the advice from the Welsh Government update last Friday (July 31), our 7s to under 11s ONLY can now include tag and touch rugby in their training sessions.
However, with player welfare of paramount importance after four months away from the game, we are still not sanctioning contact rugby at any level so there should be no rucking, mauling, tackling, scrums or line-outs at any level this time. We will continue to review this and provide regular updates.
In readiness for this phase, detailed advice has been issued to those involved in the community game in Wales and a series of webinars have been held with Club Operations Managers and other key volunteers covering key areas such as the practicalities of preparing players, volunteers and club facilities for training sessions; changes to first aid procedures; the registration process and a return to training fund for clubs. For all advice and guidance on the return to play protocols, go to[https://community.wru.wales/returntorugby/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1401)
In addition, the WRU Community coaching department has produced an activity guide and webinar for coaches to support the safe return to training at all levels of the game which includes safety guidance and ideas for session plans within the current restrictions.
**All the links you need**
\* [CLICK HERE](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1402) for the **World Rugby** Covid awareness course.
\*Go to [wrugamelocker.wales](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1403" \t "_blank) to complete all other Return to Community Rugby steps - the WRU online registration process, the Covid symptom checker and for all coaching support.
Any new players, coaches or volunteers to the game will also need to follow the above process before attending club training.
**4. REGISTRATION OPEN**
As stated registrations are now open for coaches, referees and team managers for the forthcoming season, all parties must re-register before taking part in any WRU sanctioned training.
Clubs will also need to approve registrations ahead of any activity. Please be aware that this applies to ALL coaches, across ALL age groups male and female (including senior men and women), intending to coach rugby for ANY rugby club/female hub this coming season.
If you are under 18, you are required to enter in parent/guardian information, or you can have your parent/guardian register you on your behalf using the same process as below.
To register as a coach, you must visit the WRU’s Game Locker [https://www.wrugamelocker.wales/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1404) , and login with your username and password.

**5.** **Wales games**

The Six Nations has confirmed details of rescheduled fixtures for the 2020 Guinness Six Nations Championship:

**DATE   FIXTURE          TIME\* VENUE**
ROUND 4
24.10.2020       Ireland v Italy   TBC1             Aviva Stadium
ROUND 5
31.10.2020       Wales v Scotland         14:15   TBC2
31.10.2020       Italy v England 16:45             Stadio Olympico
31.10.2020       France v Ireland          20:00   Stade de France
*\*All times are UK Times*
*1The kick-off time for the Ireland v Italy fixture will be announced in due course*
*2The venue for the Wales v Scotland fixture will be announced in due course.*

In rescheduling these matches, the health and safety of players, associated staff and supporters has been at the forefront of thinking. Six Nations organisers remain in close contact with all relevant authorities across the respective jurisdictions to ensure these matches take place in a safe environment and will announce further details of health and safety protocols and guidance on spectator attendance in due course.
Six Nations has also confirmed that the Women’s Championship will be concluded this autumn on the following weekends:

*Weekend of 24th Oct:   Round 4*
*•          Scotland v. France*
*•          Ireland v. Italy*
*Weekend of 31st Oct:  Round 5*
*•          Wales v. Scotland*
*•          Italy v. England*
*•          France v. Ireland*
*Weekend of 5th Dec: Round 3*
*•          Italy v Scotland*
*A full fixture schedule will be released in due course.*

With regards to the U20 Six Nations championship, due to season scheduling constraints, it was decided that the three outstanding matches would not be played and there would be no winner for the 2020 Championship.
In recent weeks, Six Nations has also been progressing contingency plans for an alternative tournament format in place of the Autumn Internationals for 2020, primarily driven by travel restrictions not allowing many international teams to play the scheduled matches.
This tournament will be a unique eight-team competition, involving the Six Nations unions and two other international teams. Six Nations is currently finalising match schedules, operational details including venues as well as commercial arrangements. Further announcements relating to this competition are expected to be made later this month.
Ben Morel, CEO Six Nations commented, ***“We are absolutely thrilled to make this announcement today. While the past few months have been extremely challenging, we have always remained hopeful of concluding this year’s tournament and we are really looking forward to the final games in the Men’s and Women’s Championships. There is still so much to play for, and we are hugely excited for what lies ahead.”***
***“Public health remains the number one priority and while we must continue to be vigilant and cognisant of the dynamic and fast changing external environment, we are nonetheless extremely pleased to be moving in the right direction.”***

 **6.**   **2020 WRU Disability Conference**

On Sunday 23rd August 2020 (10:00-14:00) the WRU will be holding their first virtual Inclusive Coaching Conference.
The conference is aimed at anyone with an interest in developing opportunities for people with disabilities in sport through coaching - either in a disability / mixed ability setting or within the wider rugby community.
We are delighted that athletes, players and coaches from across the Disability Rugby Landscape are with us to share their knowledge across these areas through a range of keynote presentations and panel discussions.
The WRU Inclusive Coaching Conference is live on Eventbrite, for registration via the link:[https://wruinclusivecoachingconference.eventbrite.co.uk](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1405)
Please book on now to reserve your place.

**7. Rugby news**

**NEW DOCK STARS – BECAUSE THEY’RE WORTH IT**
The results of a great deal of hard work on Return to Rugby Covid-19 protocols and the webinars that have been put together to enable players to return to the game they love can be found in New Dock Stars U16s.
The side returned to training this week and club secretary Faye Davies says the delight was plain to see on the player’s faces.
***“These young lads have had their GCSEs disturbed, months indoors on games consoles and away from their rugby pals and were so happy to be back outdoors training,”*** she said.
***“At New Dock Stars, we have followed all your guidance and protocols precisely over the last month and, although I must admit it has been an enormous task for us all and myself as Club Operations Manager to cascade all info and ensure all the necessary protocols are adhered to, it has been truly worth it to see these young lads train.”***
***“Our other Mini & Junior Teams will follow returning to training next week and I must say that even the most anxious of parents now feel able to return confidently.”***
***“In the first instance some felt uneasy about returning to rugby in the current climate but, after receiving all the guidance and protocols issued by WRU that New Dock Stars RFC followed and put in place, they were assured that safety was paramount.”***

**MEETING MANDERS**
John Manders is the new man on the WRU National Council, after being voted on by the member clubs in Wales.
Tune into the latest WRU Podcast for a chance to hear much more from the man himself, his background, what he hopes to achieve and the remarkable project which is transforming his beloved Old Illtydians Rugby Club. [https://www.wru.wales/audio/welsh-rugby-union-podcast-31-2020/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1406)

**PAUL JAMES GRADUATES**
Paul James made over 200 appearances for the Ospreys in two spells and won 66 Test caps for Wales, so he knows what it takes to be successful at the highest level.
Now he has transferred into coaching by working with the Swansea-based region’s academy and James believes the future is bright at the Liberty Stadium.
Able to prop both sides of the scrum during his playing career, James played at two World Cups, won a Six Nations Grand Slam in 2012, and a Championship title the following year.
He was among a hand-picked group of players who last September, in conjunction with the regions and the Welsh Rugby Players Association, began the inaugural 12-month long Player to Coach programme overseen by WRU Performance Coach Manager Dan Clements.
James is joined on the ground-breaking scheme by Ospreys colleagues Justin Tipuric, Bradley Davies, James Hook and Rob McCusker, Scarlets duo Leigh Halfpenny and Angus O’Brien along with Dragons’ Aaron Jarvis and Brok Harries and Cardiff Blues’ Dan Fish. On completion of the course, James, like his fellow graduates, will shortly secure a UKCC Level 3 award in coaching rugby union.
READ MORE HERE: [https://www.wru.wales/article/james-predicts-exciting-ospreys-future/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1407)

**AMBITIOUS OLD PENARTHIANS**
The Division 3 East Central A side Old Penarthians have added a first director of rugby, Keri Lovell, to their back room staff in the wake of signing former Pontypridd player Jake Thomas as their head coach.
Lovell joins the club having previously acted as the Vale of Glamorgan Hub Officer for the WRU with special responsibility for developing rugby at all Penarth senior and primary schools. It was a post in which he won a National Hub Officers award for changing the women’s game and also the National award for Coach Development in his first year in his role with the WRU.
A qualified Level 3 coach, he is the forwards coach for the Cardiff Blues U16 side. Before moving to south Wales he was head coach of the women’s teams at Canterbury Christchurch University, head coach at Gillingham Anchorians RFC and a Development Coach for England RFU.
More here:
[https://community.wru.wales/2020/08/01/old-pens-building-for-brighter-future/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1408)

**JABBA STAYS PUT**
Former Wales hooker Steve Jones believes the struggles experienced by his Bridgend players to stay afloat in the Indigo Group Premiership last season will help them not to sink when rugby returns for the 2020-21 campaign.
With only three wins in 18 games before the season was cut short due to coronavirus, the Ravens were in danger of dropping out of the top-flight. They were eight points adrift of Llanelli and Ebbw Vale who also had games in hand.
But hopes are high for a change in fortunes when rugby returns with Jones leading the coaching group at the Brewery Field for a second season.
[https://community.wru.wales/2020/07/27/jones-and-bridgend-look-to-brighter-future/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1409)

**FISHER ANGLING FOR ANOTHER BITE AT LEAGUE**
Paul Fisher has lost count of the number of caps won by the players who have come through the ranks at Llanelli RFC since he began coaching at the club 15 years ago.
So many of the Scarlets players who have graduated into the Wales and British & Irish Lions ranks first cut their teeth in the senior game playing in the Premiership for the original ‘Scarlets’.
Striking the balance between pushing for club honours and developing players for a higher grade of rugby isn’t an easy one and two seasons ago Fisher found himself battling against relegation to the Specsavers National Championship in a game against unbeaten Pontypool.
With the Celtic Cup not taking place when rugby resumes Llanelli should have a better shot at moving up the table. It will also help their cause that they have been able to retain the bulk of last season’s squad.
On top of that they have added wing Harrison Button, who is coming back to from Cardiff Met, scrum half Tom Ham, who is joining from Swansea, and former Wales U20 back rower Ellis Thomas, who is rejoining from Cardiff University.
[https://community.wru.wales/2020/08/03/llanelli-still-vital-breeding-ground-says-fisher/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1410)

**BURNELL STEADIES SHIP AT PONTY**
Justin Burnell will continue as Director of Rugby at Pontypridd as the Indigo Group Premiership club seek continuity moving into the unknown of next season.
Joining him in the Sardis Road ‘boot room’ will be forwards coach Lee Davies, backs coach Paul Matthews, conditioning coach Nathan Evans and performance analyst Dean Parsons. Dan Godfrey is also continuing as team manager.
Burnell’s role will include mentoring the club’s senior squad as well as liaising with the Youth, Mini and Junior sections. He is also involved with the Valleys Initiative and Pontypridd Schools.
[https://community.wru.wales/2020/08/03/burnell-co-carrying-on-at-ponty/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1411)

**FINALLY… DONOVAN REMEMBERED**
They don’t pack the stand at Pandy Park like they used to these days, but they came in big numbers for Richie Donovan’s final appearance at his former stamping ground.
The former Cross Keys prop had an emotional send-off before being laid to rest after losing his brave battle with cancer earlier this month.
Mourners filled the stand as his coffin was carried onto the field where he played so many of his 413 games for the club.
The 63-year-old prop had been fighting the disease with the same all-out commitment and tenacity he displayed on the field throughout an outstanding career that also took in appearances for Pontypool, Newport, Abertillery, Monmouthshire, Crawshay’s and UWIC.
More here:
[https://community.wru.wales/2020/07/28/packed-stand-for-richies-final-pandy-park-farewell/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=7e1f6645b4724ab5c5295c3afd677ef7&i=495A503A1A1412)