

Watsonian Football Club Annual report 2019-2020

The 2019/20 season saw the biggest change in men's club rugby in Scotland since the 1973 introduction of the National Leagues with the start of the FOSROC Super6 semi-professional league.

COVID-19 brought an early close to all rugby in March 2020, but not before Watsonians Rugby topped the Super6 league ahead of the cancelled play-offs. Under the guidance of head coach Fergus Pringle and his assistants Nikki Walker and Richard Snedden the side won eight out of 10 matches to finish ahead of Heriot's Rugby, Ayrshire Bulls, the Southern Knights, Stirling County and the Boroughmuir Bears in the table.

Captain Lee Millar was a star performer for the team from stand-off while centre Joe Reynolds was a constant threat.

In the pack, hooker Cal Davies led the way with a number of tries while Jamie Hodgson, who also played for Edinburgh Rugby during the season, was very consistent and back-rows Connor Boyle and vice-captain Morgan Inness carried ball very well.

A number of players were named in the official Super6 Team of the Season as a result while prop Jack Stanley earned a professional contract with Gloucester in England and Boyle was handed his first full-time contract with Edinburgh Rugby alongside prop Sam Grahamslaw.

Along with scrum-half Roan Frostwick, centre Matthew Currie, hooker Rory Jackson and second-row Kieran Watt, Boyle played for Scotland under-20s during the campaign too.

The cross-border competition with Welsh clubs was called off.

Watsonians Women won all their games to lift the Tennent's Premiership trophy in spectacular fashion.

The team, led by captain Rachel Bragg and coaches Freddie Main, Scott Nightingale and Duncan Wilson, were unstoppable and were victorious in all 10 of their league games. They then defeated Hillhead/Jordanhill 36-26 in a cracking final at Myreside in December 2019.

The team started their Sarah Beaney Cup campaign with a run of wins too before that tournament was called off.

Hannah Smith, Molly Wright, Panashe Muzambe and Megan Gaffney played for Scotland throughout the season with Smith 'Sonians top try scorer with an amazing 21.

The Watsonians Club XV finished mid-table in National League One, with a very good home record.

Thanks to coaches Bruce Ruthven and Gordon Smith for their hard work along with team manager Stan Buchan.

It was great to see so many former GWC pupils in the squad - one of them, Kerr Stoddart, the top points scorer with 112 - and the top try scorer was Stuart Allison.

Club second and third XVs also played, when opposition teams were available, and enjoyed some success.

The Watsonian Warriors also increased their P2-P7 player base to over 200 for the first time and were victorious at the Biggar and Currie festivals.

One rugby was stopped, during lockdown and the subsequent phases players from all WFC teams helped elderly and vulnerable club members with shopping and other tasks.

Thanks to club president Euan Kennedy for all his work as well as director of rugby Chris Hunter and all the other coaches, players and volunteers not already mentioned who help the club function week after week.

Thanks also to the ground staff for their hard work, especially in a year when they had lost Head Groundsman Willie Morton during the summer of 2019. Morton passed away suddenly in that July after producing quality pitches at Myreside for over 30 years while he could often be found sharing a pint and a laugh with club members after rugby matches in the clubhouse.

All at the club were also very sad when club treasurer Mike Crerar passed away in February 2020.

He will be sadly missed by all at the club given the phenomenal service he put in at Myreside for decades as a player, secretary and treasurer. As president Kennedy said: "Mike was the backbone around which the club functioned."

Gary Heatly (Class of 2000)