

Devizes RFC Juniors – End of Season Report 2025/26

The 2025/26 season has been another important year for the Juniors at Devizes RFC. While the season began somewhat unsettled without a Junior Chairman in place, stability was restored as the year progressed and there have been many positives to take away both on and off the field.

The biggest success this season has, undoubtedly, been seeing the enjoyment shown by our players throughout the year. Whether at training, festivals, club events or our end of season awards.

It has been fantastic to see so many young players enjoying their rugby and continuing to develop within the club environment.

Player Numbers & Development

Throughout the season, the Juniors supported approximately 150–180 players across all age groups from U6 through to Colts. The strongest age groups this year were generally U12 upwards with good stability and player engagement across many teams.

One of the standout success stories of the season has been the growth of the U13 age group. Starting the season with only 2 to 3 players available, significant effort and recruitment work by Andy Fuller helped grow the squad to approximately 14 players by the end of the season. This demonstrates the importance of committed volunteers and what can be achieved with hard work and persistence.

Overall player numbers dropped slightly compared to the start of the season, however there is confidence and ambition to improve this significantly next year through stronger recruitment, better engagement and increased visibility within the local community.

Girls' rugby remains an area we are continuing to develop. While numbers have been challenging at times this season in younger age groups, there is real optimism moving forward with plans already underway to establish a U12 girls team next season, with the longer-term aim of developing multiple girls teams across the club in future years.

Rugby Highlights

All age groups represented the club well throughout the season and continued to show strong development, teamwork, and enjoyment of the game.

The Chippenham Rugby Festival was a particular highlight for our younger teams, with several teams performing strongly and some returning home with trophies. More importantly, the festival demonstrated the enthusiasm and spirit that exists across the juniors.

The club has also continued to support player progression pathways, with one player achieving selection into the Bath Rugby Academy development squad, alongside several other players who continue to perform strongly and develop within their respective age groups.

Volunteers & Support

The Juniors continue to rely heavily on volunteers, with approximately two coaches per age group alongside team managers and supportive parents helping throughout the season.

Special recognition must go to Dave Panes, our RugbySafe Lead and juniors First Aider, who was nominated for Dorset & Wilts Volunteer of the Year. This nomination was thoroughly deserved and reflects the enormous amount of time and effort Dave continues to give to the club and its players.

Further special recognition should also go to Andy Fuller for the exceptional work carried out rebuilding the U13 squad this season and his tireless work supporting the junior committee and myself.

Despite the commitment shown by many volunteers, the season has at times been difficult due to a lack of wider support and too much responsibility falling on the same small group of people. Volunteer shortages impacted fixture organisation, event planning, home match operations, and general administration.

However, following recent meetings there are encouraging signs moving into next season, with more parents and volunteers stepping forward to take on roles and responsibilities. This additional support will be vital to the continued success and sustainability of the Juniors.

Events & Community

The Juniors successfully organised both Christmas and Easter events during the season, with the Christmas event in particular proving extremely popular and widely praised by players and families.

This season also saw the introduction of junior training kit sales as a way of raising funds for future projects, events, and initiatives, while also aiming to give something back to the volunteers who contribute so much of their time to the club.

The end of season awards day was another major success and a fantastic way to celebrate the efforts of all players throughout the year. Special thanks go to Theresa and all catering staff for the excellent food provided during the event.

It was also fantastic to welcome back Chris Moore, now a professional rugby player, to present awards to our junior players. His attendance was a great example of the pathway and lifelong connection rugby can create within the club.

While events were generally very successful, increased engagement and support from parents and families remains an area where improvements can still be made moving forward.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

This season highlighted the challenges that come with running a large junior setup with limited volunteer support. Communication between teams and the wider group has at times been inconsistent and balancing fixtures, administration, events and general club organisation has often been demanding.

One of the biggest lessons learned this season has been the importance of delegation and ensuring more people are involved in helping deliver activities and operations. Moving forward, the aim will be to distribute responsibilities more effectively and focus more on coordination and oversight rather than relying on a small number of individuals to manage everything.

Looking Ahead

The focus for next season is clear:

- Continue improving and expanding club events such as the Christmas and Easter activities
- Successfully establish a U12 girls team and continue growing girls rugby within the club
- Recruit and retain more volunteers across all areas
- Increase player numbers across age groups
- Improve parent engagement and communication
- Continue recognising and celebrating the efforts of all players and volunteers

Longer term, the ambition is to continue growing the Juniors into an even larger and stronger part of Devizes RFC, with successful and competitive teams across all age groups, a thriving girls setup, and stronger integration between junior and senior rugby throughout the club.

Thank You

Finally, thank you to all players, coaches, volunteers, parents and supporters who have contributed throughout the season. Grassroots rugby only succeeds because of the time, energy, and commitment given by so many people behind the scenes.

While there have certainly been challenges this year, there is also a great deal to be positive about and the future of junior rugby at Devizes RFC remains very promising.

Sincerely

Graham Dixon

Devizes Juniors Chairman