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# DUWRFC END OF SEASON NEWSLETTER

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*Written by Rosie Inman (DUWRFC Club Captain) Edited by Phoebe Jackson (DUWRFC Publicity Officer)*

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DUWRFC have had a season to remember. The club has grown in size and also in professionalism this year, which we are proud of; the 1XV have played all home fixtures on the main pitch at Durham City RFC for the first time. We do, however, still have a way to go with minimizing the disparity that exists between the men and women's club at the University, and we are looking for support to help us achieve this.

## 1XV

Our 1XV had an excellent run in the Women's National League this season, winning 9 out of 10 matches to be crowned National League Champions - a huge achievement. They narrowly missed out on a place in the final of the BUCS Championship Cup, but fought bravely until the end in a nerve-racking semi-final that was a performance to be proud of. The girls were gutted and are determined to redeem themselves in the upcoming season. The outstanding talent of our players did not go unrecognised, with Bianca Ortiz-Pallen nominated for BUCS' Fans Player of the Year, and with five of our



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*BUCS Women's  
National Premier  
League Team of the  
Season 21-22*

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players (Bianca Ortiz-Pallen, Allie Schrenker, Jess Wiesheu, Maelle Picut, and Chloe Broom) included within BUCS Women's National League Team of the Season 21-22.

## 2XV & 3XV

Meanwhile, our 2XV had a perfect season, being undefeated in the Women's Northern Tier 2 League which has led to their promotion! They finished their winning streak with a massive 117-0 win against York 2XV in March; an outstanding year for everyone involved. It will be great to have some of these talented young players progressing into the 1XV next year. Finally, the 3XV had several wins this season finishing in the top three in the Northern Tier 4 League. It has been excellent to see so many new girls entering into the programme and developing as players.



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*BUCS  
Championship Cup  
and Trophy Semi-  
Finalists*

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## 7s

Following on from the 5s season, we took a first team to the BUCS 7s Championship where the team did well to secure a place in the semi-final, however, unfortunately missed out by just one try on a chance to play for the cup. The following week our second 7s team, travelled down for the BUCS 7s Trophy Tournament, again making it to the semi-final and narrowly missing out for a place in the final.

## PREMIRESHIP & INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

In addition to playing at DUWRFC, we have multiple girls who dedicate their time to higher level teams as well, which deserves recognition! We have eight players who represent DMP Durham Sharks in the Allianz Premier 15s, one representing Saracens, and one representing Wasps. Additionally, Matilda Mahlberg has been capped for Sweden's National team this year and is currently playing sevens with them overseas.



*Our DMP Durham Players (from left to right) Chloe Broom, Maelle Picut, Amy Layzell, Rosie Inman, Jess Wiesheu, Nic Haynes.*

## EVENTS & OTHER NEWS

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*Written by Tiggy Teare (DUWRFC Events Manager) & Phoebe Tebb and Ana Martinez-Bailey (DUWRFC Welfare Officers)*

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After a year of zoom socials and number restrictions, we were finally able to organize our weekly socials in their full form this season! Socials have been a really important part of the season to integrate all the girls across our three teams, and also for celebrating some great wins. A highlight was definitely our annual 'Iron Man' social, where freshers battle through elimination rounds to be crowned as the Iron Man (congratulations Libby Hall!). We have also enjoyed beach trips and club meals which have been great for getting to know each other and have created a cohesive club atmosphere. We are now looking forward to our tour to Prague at the beginning of June as a way to celebrate the end to a fantastic season. This should provide the girls with a perfect opportunity to relax and unwind from all their hardwork both on and off the pitch this year.



This season saw the first year of in-person welfare, as the role was established last year during the Covid-19 pandemic and was therefore restricted to online. Our welfare officers this year were Phoebe Tebb and Ana Martinez-Bailey who were able to provide key support to DUWRFC members. We found that having two welfare officers was highly beneficial, as it helped with task management and promoted more nuanced and informed conversations around wellbeing and best approaches, while at the same time maintaining confidentiality, safety, and autonomy within the role.

One of the main avenues for support we offered were weekly drop-in sessions that members could attend to exchange with others, give general updates and receive welfare information, support and/or signposting. While Ana was in London on her placement year, she held these sessions online, whilst Phoebe's were in person. This meant players had more than one person to speak to and various options for communication to choose from. While these drop-in sessions were usually community-based, with many players attending together, there were also options for 1-on-1 support, which numerous DUWRFC members made use of to seek tailored support throughout their time in the club and at the university. Moreover, we produced an online Welfare Reporting Form, through which players could anonymously report anything or simply share information they felt Welfare should be aware of, as well as give feedback and suggestions for improvement. It also included a comprehensive and information-rich document signposting various mental



health resources and ways of seeking support, including local charities, University services and more. However, Welfare was not just people sharing personal struggles or seeking support, but also team-bonding: we organised a few social activities, including picnics and brunches, to bring everyone together in a calm, supportive and fun environment. In general, we both thoroughly enjoyed being Welfare Officers, we feel that this role was a success and hope that we managed to support our DUWRFC family and give back to this fantastic club that has brought us so much joy and love over the past years.

We are currently looking forward to our end of season celebrations, where girls will be awarded prizes for their achievements this season. We will then look to preseason where the new teams will begin to gear up and bond as we approach the new season. We have a few ideas coming in for activities during this time, which include a sponsored hike, if this might interest you!

## SPONSORSHIP

All the sponsorship that we secure is invested into the club. This season we were able to use our sponsorship funding to obtain a lot of new equipment including tackle bags, training bibs, and balls. Next season we would love to start providing a basic kit package for as many girls as possible. We would start by looking to supply a kit bag with essential training kit inside (training tops, shorts, etc.); more details can be viewed on our website ([www.duwrfc.com](http://www.duwrfc.com)). We are also keen to acquire the funds for new sub-suits as our current ones have seen better days! Importantly, we are getting new 1XV shirts and are looking for a major sponsor to be on the front and centre of these. For more sponsorship opportunities, please do look at our website, here we have 'donate now' button for small donations to help us reach our goals, as well as details on sponsoring a position. There is a cost of £100 for your logo to appear on the team sheet each week by your chosen position on the 1XV.



We would like to extend an enormous thank you to all of our sponsors and supporters throughout this season, for which our success would not have been possible without you.

We would also like to finish with a special mention to Cam Henderson, who is the heart and soul of DUWRFC; we are so grateful for everything you have done for us in the last 38 years!

## A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

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*Written by Steve  
Colwell (DURFC  
President)*

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As we have reached the end of the season, I want to thank the membership for their efforts this fantastic season. It has been a fantastic year for Durham winning both our 1XV and 2XV leagues, and in my opinion, pushing Durham to the forefront of the Women's student game. We have achieved all of this while keeping our identity as a student-led club, full of genuine and hardworking, lovely people – who LOVE our sport and each other.

I am grateful to our coaching and management team who put in so much effort in the background to support this programme and to our generous sponsors who provided funding for equipment and capital costs throughout the season.

This season saw an influx of overseas players who brought with them a huge amount of experience, enthusiasm, and professionalism. They will leave such a positive impact on Durham, and I am grateful for their time here and my time spent in their company.

Collectively, we have supported the wonderful Cameron Henderson through a difficult period. Cam loves DUWRFC and all of its members and it is this kind of support that will keep him smiling back to the touchlines where he belongs.

Being able to help at DUWRFC is an absolute privilege. I genuinely find it difficult to express how much it means to me, to be involved, and to share your experiences on and off the field. As people begin to leave for pastures new, I will miss them incredibly and only hope that you stay in touch in the future.

Finally, to Maelle and Rosie, who have worked so hard for us all season, always positive and always kind – thank you. You are really valued by everyone at the club and of course by your President.

Steven





@duwrfc

www.duwrfc.com

Durham University Women's Rugby

BUCS Live Stream Durham VS Hartpury:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ona8ZZfbNoQ>