

# WRU Status Update 28/05/2020

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#### **1. Message from our President**

*As President of the Welsh Rugby Union I wanted to get in touch with you all, if I may, to express my admiration at the way you have all responded to the very difficult time we are all experiencing during this unique and frightening period in our modern history. I hope you are keeping healthy and safe in every way.*

*Let us hope that it will soon be over and we can play again.*

*Fel Llywydd Undeb Rygbi Cymru fe hoffen anfon gair i chi, ein clybiau, yn ystod yr amser unigryw a diflas sydd heb ei ail yn ein hanes fodern. Gobeithio eich bod yn cadw'n iachus ac yn ddiogel gan obeithio fydd y trafferth a'r gwenwyn drosodd cyn bo hir.*

*Mae 'na eiriau sydd yn addas ac yn adnabyddus i ni gyd.*

*There is a refrain that is familiar to us in Welsh rugby.*

*'The club is the hub'.*

*This has been a catchword in our rugby for quite a few years and this belief, almost a faith, lies at the heart of the game and gives an idea of what, in essence, rugby means to us in Wales.*

*A Welsh rugby club is an important focus in all our towns and villages for what is a great competitive sport providing weekly competition. It has also proved to be a focal point for social get-togethers, for celebrations of all sorts and what we must never forget, it is a source where friends, players and non-players alike can have some fun and laughter together. It can give a sense of belonging and provide an identity, a sense of togetherness in all our communities, in our villages, town and cities. And for us as a people, as a nation.*

*Y mae clybiau rygbi yn ganolbwynt hanfodol bwysig yn ein trefydd, phentrefi a dinasoedd led led Cymru, dim dim ond fel gem gystadleuol bwysig ond hefyd mae'r clwb yn le i gael pobol i ddod at ei gilydd fel cymuned cymdeithasol, i thathlu cyfeillgarwch ac i gael pobol i fwynhau cwmni ei gilydd. Yn wir gymuned.*

*At no time do I think, that this theme has proved so relevant and so true. This is an extraordinary time, unique in modern times. I know how badly some clubs have been affected, previously by flooding during the winter and now followed by this awful Covid19 virus. It is truly devastating.*

*You, our rugby clubs, are going through difficult times as the season has come to a halt with all the problems that arise from this, but nonetheless you are, if I may say so, showing terrific patience and resilience, of pulling together, and to go beyond the clubhouse to help each other and those in your communities who are in need of companionship and to help with deliveries of essential supplies and some wonderful fund raising activities.*

*The club, indeed, is proving to be the hub; of a strong community spirit. We should be proud of our clubs and the wonderful contributions you are all making to our national well-being.*

*Mae'r clwb a'r aelodau, y chwaraewyr a'r cefnogwyr, teuluoedd a ffrindiau, yn ymestyn at y tu allan ac yn helpu mewn sawl ffordd i esmwyddio a lleihau yr ansicrwydd a'r poen.*

*There are examples from players, supporters, families and friends who have come together in support of everyone on the front line to help lives who are at risk from the effects of the pandemic as well as to the community at large, to give hope and a heart-felt support to those who are vulnerable and elderly and who are thought to be at risk.*

*You have conducted activities to raise funds for the NHS, the care workers and all others who are in the front line to combat this terrible illness, which has shown to be fatal in vast numbers.*

*You have gone beyond the playing fields and embraced the community at large.*

*These are tough times but we must be optimistic and wish that once this is over we shall return to better times, to face the challenges, turn them in our favour with confidence and to leave any disappointments or grievances, if there are any, behind. Perhaps, after the current grim time, to have a revived sense of purpose, to pull together.*

*There is much to look forward to no more so than among our young people who I know from my grandchildren who yearn for the clubs to be back in action again.*

*Whilst we understand the desire to return to play, to be active and to enjoy each other's company once more, it must be done **in good and correct time**. We need to be patient.*

*This is the position that the Board and Council of the Welsh rugby union stand by. The Welsh Rugby Union is ensuring that you are informed of all the details that are available and to keep you all up to date and to be as supportive as possible during this time.*

*Y mae'r Undeb yn ymdrechu i fod more agored a thryloyw ac am wneud siwr bob amser eich bod yn derbyn pob gwybodaeth sydd ar gael.*

*As your President I want to reassure you all that you have my total support and I will do all I can to help all clubs across Wales, to revive and to rebuild.*

*It will be a privilege to do all I can in whatever way is possible.*

*Can I thank you all most sincerely for your tireless work and dedication as volunteers for the good of Welsh rugby.*

*Diolch o galon. Cadwch yn iach.*

*Keep healthy and safe.*

## **Gerald Davies.**

### **WRU President**

## **2. Club News**

### **Club Development Virtual drop-in sessions**

From week commencing 1st June, a series of regional drop in sessions will be provided for our clubs. Members of the Club Development Team, Regional Managers and a representative from the Investment Team at Sport Wales will be available to answer any questions and clubs will be encouraged to stay on the call to share good practice. Further details of the regional drop in sessions will be provided in our weekly update to clubs this Friday.

Invites and instructions on how to join the drop in sessions will be sent to Club Secretaries in due course.

### **Club catch-up**

The weekly updates to our clubs in forthcoming weeks will include club catch up calls with volunteers from each Region to discuss how they are coping during this period. For this week, the focus has been on the Ospreys region. A video call with Simon Knoyle (Club Secretary) of Glynneath RFC Ltd was included in last week's update to our clubs. We are releasing a further call with Graham and Jo Thomas (Chair and Treasurer respectively) from Tondu RFC Ltd this Friday. In the meantime, the link below provides a snapshot of the discussion with the club.

[Tondu RFC](#)

We will be issuing a full version of the call in our update on Friday along with further catch up calls with clubs from North Wales.

### **Club Impact Survey - Final Call**

As stated in previous weeks, we are now finalising the information provided by the clubs to present to WRU Board in June. We would encourage all clubs to complete the survey by following the link below if they haven't already done so. Staff are working closely with District Representatives to ensure that all outstanding clubs have been contacted.

A total of 251 Impact Surveys have now been completed and all surveys will need to be received by no later than Monday 1st June.

## **3. Fundraising**

### **Trebanos smash target to raise vital funds**

Trebanos members, players and officials set themselves the target of running, cycling and walking 1897 miles last

weekend in a fundraising event in aid of the NHS locally and the charity Mind. The reason for the target of 1897 miles? It just happens to be the year Trebanos RFC was formed. With ex-British Lion and Wales star Robert Jones leading the challenge, the wider rugby community responded brilliantly to the task at hand as the target was smashed with an amazing total of 10,077 miles covered. Nearly £8,000 has been raised so far – there is still time to contribute [here](#):

### **Rhondda Schools fundraise to climb mountains**

Rhondda Schools Rugby pride themselves on being an integral part of the community. For over 25 years, their project through the medium of rugby union, has asked individuals to "Be the BEST you can be!"

It was therefore felt, given these unprecedented times, extremely important and appropriate to challenge the boys and girls to help others. Rhondda Schools coaches Jack Dunning, Chris Jones and Neil Boobyer have come up with an inventive way of raising money for the local NHS trust -Cwm Taf Morgannwg NHS General Charitable Fund.

Past and present players were tasked to walk their own stairs 150 times, (which is approximately equivalent to the height of Pen y Fan) and raise monies using the [www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com) internet platform. Participants in addition to the players, have included; parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, coaches, local rugby personnel, current Cardiff Blues players and more! As a result, the team are on the last incline to reach their target of £2000.

### **Pontarddulais fundraising in memory Gerallt Davies**

Pontarddulais RFC Players have arranged a virtual distance challenge to Run, Walk or Cycle to raise funds for St John Cymru in memory of Gerallt Davies MBE who was the first paramedic in Wales to die with Covid-19 on April 20th, 2020. A paramedic at Cwmbwrla Station in Swansea, Gerallt was awarded an MBE in 2019 for his work with St John Ambulance Cymru, where he was a national operations officer. Gerallt had also given twenty years of service as a first aider for Pontarddulais Senior team as well as service to St John's Ambulance for forty years. The Challenge has been planned in three stages as below: - STAGE 1 - 3885 miles – (Total mileage of their away match journeys in Division 2 West) x (15 players on the field of play). (259 x 15) STAGE 2 - 6332 miles which was Gerallt's Paramedic Pin Number FINAL STAGE - 10,000 miles The challenge which is open to all players and members of the club and has been embraced by players and members from as young as seven years of age up to some in their sixties. Current Mileage total as at 24th May 2020 was 3316 miles and the final stage to be completed by end of June. There is a just giving page for anyone who wishes to donate: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/prfc-gerallt](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/prfc-gerallt)

### **Nothing sheepish about Gwernyfed**

Gwernyfed RFC has been selling weekly lottery tickets both online and by conventional methods (including sales in many local pubs and shops) for a long time but have had to reduce to online only in these tough times.

Chairman, Rob Stephens farms between Talgarth and Brecon and is promoting the lottery by using his farm to do the draw. Last week he numbered 20 lambs and the first four to take a carrot were the lottery numbers for the week! (The draw is conducted live on Facebook). As it happens, last week's draw was won by Gerwyn Williams, First XV full back/scrum half who has had to postpone his wedding due to the virus – but who will use the £1900 to help set up home once conditions improve. Through the Club's website/Facebook page Gwernyfed has recruited a group of volunteers, in conjunction with the Town Council, with the Club Officers co-ordinating the volunteers who are doing shopping, collecting prescriptions and carrying out various other tasks for those unable to get out in Talgarth and the surrounding areas.

### **Taff's Well seniors crowdfunding for NHS**

Following the Covid Lockdown the Taff's Well RFC Senior men decided to raise money for the NHS.

They had planned to go on their annual end of season tour to Albufeira in Portugal in June. Instead they decided to cover the distance between Taff's Well and Albufeira by walking, running or cycling. The distance was 1621 miles which they aimed to cover in two weeks starting on Monday 20th April 2020. The initial aim was to raise the mileage equivalent in £s. The squad then decided to make the return journey from Albufeira to Taff's Well, hoping to double the money they had already raised! The boys were surprised and delighted to receive motivational messages on Twitter from Jamie Roberts, Gareth Anscombe, Tom Shanklin, Jessamy Duke, WWE Coach, Jonathan Coachman, Lenny Woodard, Leigh Halfpenny and many other professional players! Currently the crowdfunding donations amount to £3191. The players have decided to support the NHS teams in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan to fund items that go over and above what the NHS can provide.

### **Milford Haven pushing up for a pressing issue**

Milford Haven RFC 1st XV – with a little help from some willing friends throughout the club – have raised more than £8000 for local care homes after completing more than 60 000 press ups in five days!

Player and backs coach Steve Martin said, "It started out as a team exercise to help keep the boys together, to show that even if you can't see each other, you can still do something as a team, and to raise money for a cause we cared about. All the care homes we chose have direct connections with our players via a family member either working there or as a resident so the challenge meant something personal to us all.

“We had 22 players so the challenge was initially to do 36,000 press ups in five days – 450 press-ups a day. But it soon became clear that we would smash the target early, especially as other players, coaches, committee members and supporters joined in with press-up videos too, so we increased the target to 50,000 – and then 60 000. We ended up with 52 people completing 69 288 press-ups. Some players would do them in their break at work – one player was delivering oil around Pembrokeshire at the time. We took turns to go live on Facebook three times a day so help with the team effort. “The challenge certainly helped to keep the boys focussed so hopefully that will help when rugby resumes and it was great to see they were so willing to help out when the going gets tough. It’s fantastic to see so many other clubs around Wales raising money too at this time. “We’ve delivered the funds to the care homes now and they were all very grateful. One said the money will help build a sensory garden for its residents, another said they will use it to treat the residents. As a hub officer at Milford Haven School, Martin is helping with the school provision for children of key workers along with home schooling by day. “Along with helping at the hub, I post fitness videos on the school Facebook page and a rugby challenge on the school Facebook page and after half-term the PE department is running a run, walk, bike challenge to virtually visit every secondary school in Pembrokeshire – 257 miles I believe. I’ve also been delivering the Scarlets care packages in Milford.”

#### **4. Rugby News**

##### **WRU Podcast – Treharris Phoenix Rugby Club**

Treharris Phoenix Rugby Club has proved itself at the heart of the community in these difficult times, providing food in the area for those who need it. You can listen to Committee Member Huw Evans by following link below:-

[Huw Evans – Treharris Phoenix](#)

##### **Creativity helping rugby officer Hannah during lockdown**

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai’s Rugby Hub Officer Hannah Hughes has provided a personal insight on what it’s like to manage work creatively from home in these uncertain times. She is determined coronavirus will not prevent her from engaging with College students and staff alike, especially as she thinks it’s important to keep in touch and be positive and make the most of the challenging situation we all find ourselves in at the moment. As Grŵp Llandrillo Menai’s Rugby Hub Officer her role is to develop, grow and improve the national game, expanding its appeal whilst ensuring that rugby is inclusive in all sections and ages of our communities. By increasing and improving engagement and participation the WRU can promote the core values of rugby as well as providing an opportunity to improve the cohesion of health and well-being, families and communities.

[Full story...](#)

##### **Walking Rugby family there for each other**

Pontyclun Walking Rugby group was one of the first to set up in Wales. Less than two years on, there are now around 20 active groups and Pontyclun coordinator Julius Roszkowski believes the popularity of the inclusive format will continue to rocket in the next few years. As you get older and particularly when you retire from work, your social circle shrinks so it’s very important to get out and meet people. Exercise in itself is great for physical and mental well-being but we also have a lot of fun and banter, both on the field and off it in our social time.

[Read more...](#)

##### **Greatest Ever Wales try**

Nearly 5000 votes were cast in the first round for the search of the ‘Greatest Ever Wales try’.

There were some clear winners in Round 1, as well as a few close contests, and still in the running are three holders of the title of Wales’ record try scorer.

Current holder, Shane Williams (58), saw one of his two entries beaten, but made it through to the quarter-finals thanks to his 2008 solo effort from half-way against the world champion Springboks in Bloemfontein.

Ieuan Evans (33) also saw one of his two entries reach the next round, the side-stepping masterclass against Scotland in 1988, while Sir Gareth Edwards’ (20) 1972 special from his own 22 against the Scots comfortably saw off Scott Williams’ rip-roaring effort against England at Twickenham in 2012.

Also through are Phil Bennett (v Scotland 1977), Scott Gibbs (v England 1999), Gareth Davies (v England 2015), Josh Adams (v England 2019) and Justin Tipuric (v England 2020).

The voting means that the quarter-finals will be as follows:

Scott Gibbs v Ieuan Evans

Gareth Edwards v Gareth Davies

Phil Bennett v Shane Williams

Josh Adams v Justin Tipuric

Go to [wru.wales](http://wru.wales) to cast your vote for the quarter-finals.

## **Refereeing, WRU Digital Classroom & Enterprise Depts update**

This week interview webinars are focused on the benefits of refereeing and will be released on the WRU Game Locker. After hanging up his boots as a player, WRU referee Kelvin Shorte discusses his 15-year journey as a referee to WRU Coach Development Manager, Gerry Roberts, [CLICK HERE](#) to view the full video

- A new 30 day challenge is being created by teachers in conjunction with education consortiums for the WRU Digital Classroom
- Admiral, DSW Play Together programme resources are now live on the WRU Game Locker

## **5. Comment from the Chairman**

*I've been involved in various Six Nations operations meetings over the past week, where we talk to representatives from each of the Unions to evaluate last season and look into what we may review for the year ahead. These meetings occur each year, with team managers – like our own Martyn Williams – and coaches reporting in with their thoughts and findings with the operational teams at each venue driving the discussions.*

*We discuss travel arrangements, the operational requirements of host broadcasters in each nation, captain's runs, training programmes and host venues in both the men's and the women's game. Commercial requirements and demands are always high on the agenda.*

*Obviously, in the current climate, these meetings have an extra dimension as we are all still unsure about how the season ahead will pan out, but I mention them here because they have given me the feeling that, when the time comes, rugby will be ready, willing and able to return as quickly as safety precautions dictate.*

*A lot of hard work is taking place behind the scenes, as it always does each year at this time, to bring a Six Nations competition that is the envy of the sporting world and, once health and government advice allows, I know it will be a case of now 'the show must go on'.*

*I am reminded and share the pride of each participating Union, that the Six Nations is very much ours. Yes there is a Six Nations office and committee, which runs and administers the tournament, but the competition is very much the sum of its parts and it takes an equal contribution from each participating union to host the tournament – to put on the show.*

*Our own operations team at Principality Stadium, led by Alex Luff, received glowing reviews from each visiting Union and from a Welsh perspective we have been keen to point out and thank our Six Nations partners for the welcome we have received in each relevant venue.*

*The women's fixture in Energia Park being a particular case in point for us last season. Much was made of the problem with the shower facilities at this particular venue, but the Wales women's management were unrelenting in their praise for their Irish hosts, who - far from taking their eye off the ball or being mischievous as some commentators surmised at the time - could not do enough to try to mitigate this unexpected and unavoidable problem.*

*Standards are high throughout the Six Nations competitions, this is credit that is shared six ways but staff at the Welsh Rugby Union have been more than equal to their one sixth contribution and are fully deserving of the plaudits they have received in my recent meetings.*

*Elsewhere this week we have received the news of new investment in the Guinness PRO14 competition and I would like to join my colleagues in Welsh rugby in expressing a warm welcome to CVC to our rugby family. Our future together is one that is rich in potential, the investment received is most welcome but the onus is now on those in receipt to behave responsibly whilst in its possession, proceed with a finely balanced mix of ambition and also caution and, above all, spend wisely and with the future in mind. In short, the investment must be just that - a welcome financial boost which is used to pay dividends to the future of the competition and its teams.*

*Finally, may I welcome an important individual into the Welsh rugby family in Marianne Økland who joined our Professional Rugby Board (PRB) last week as its second independent non-executive director, alongside recently appointed chair Amanda Blanc.*

*Marianne is yet to attend her first meeting but I know she has spoken in person to each of her colleagues on the PRB and in particular those who directly represent the regional game in Wales, namely the chairmen of each of our four regions. She is extremely enthusiastic about the way ahead and comes to us from an impressive background in the finance sector which included spells at banks in both Iceland and Greece which dealt in turn with the crisis of a financial crash in the last two decades, so is a hugely knowledgeable professional who boasts a wealth of invaluable experience at this pivotal time for our game.*

Yours in rugby,

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