



ECCLES RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Founded 1897

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2019/20 Season AGM Ladies Section Report

After a turbulent 2018/19 season which resulted in the Ladies team being relegated from the second tier of women's rugby, it was clear that a rebuild was required. A new captain, new leadership team and a lot of new faces went into preseason, slightly understocked in terms of numbers but with a clear long term plan. We would need to utilise the loaning system whilst we got back on our feet and we would need to adapt our ethos to match our current situation and playing squad.

It would be season where lots of lessons needed to be learnt not only by the players but by the coaching staff. We needed to rediscover what it meant to be an Eccles lady the camaraderie and resilience that had propelled this team to the second tier of the game must be instilled in a new crop.

Step 1 find the enjoyment for playing again. This was sadly lost for large parts of the previous season due to our situation. We were keen as a leadership group to bring that back in a big way and our emphasis all season was on enjoyment of the game. **SMILES ON FACES.**

Step 2 was to re-engage the players. This was aided by an injection of youth. I don't exaggerate when I say that without the work of the junior coaches that have developed these young players the ladies section would have struggled to field a side. They have brought energy, enthusiasm and a winning mentality to everything they have done so far, and I am very excited to see the players that they become.

Step 3 was to upskill our new recruits. In the previous season we had worked tirelessly to develop our core skills to a level that allowed us to play the style we wanted. Aided by new coach Andy Stimpson (a fantastic addition to the team) and returning former captain and all-round Eccles Lady Shelley Maddocks the players went about building a game plan and a team that we believed could compete.

The results that followed were a mix of flashes of brilliance and moments of madness, but this is not the measure of this team's success. We would measure success much more simply, we have fulfilled every fixture and been competitive in every fixture. Most importantly, we have given opportunity for more than 15 female players to play the game. Whether it was their first ever senior fixture or their return to the game, they had a home at Eccles. This is testament to the group that we are building and I am sure that successes on the field are just a matter of time.

We are by no means a finished article and this journey will take much more than a season, but I believe that a revival of the winning teams of the past is coming. This Ladies side possess all of the traits of a great Eccles team; a solid set piece, dogged defence and most importantly a deep-rooted love for playing their rugby in Navy and White.

James Wright, Ladies Head Coach.

Women's Championship North 2 - finished mid-table in 5th Place: Played 13 W5 D0 L8.

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