



ECCLES RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Founded 1897

Ground and Clubhouse: Gorton Street, Peel Green, Eccles, Manchester, M30 7LY
0161 789 2613 | info@ecclesrfc.org.uk | [@EcclesRFC](https://www.ecclesrfc.org.uk) | www.ecclesrfc.org.uk

2019/20 Season AGM Ladies Report

When Rugby Stopped:

Upon the completion of the 2018/19 season an away win up at Sunderland flames set to kick start the next phase of the rebuild of the Ladies section after a difficult couple of years. Young players had been blooded senior players had been reinigorated and excitement was building over what this new look team could be.

Its safe to say that a global pandemic put a stop to all those plans, but through adversity comes opportunity to be creative and resilient. If I was to use a couple of words to describe the lockdown period as the head of Women's and Girls rugby, I'd say we have been creative, resilient and collaborative. These words have manifested in our efforts to keep our players engaged during our time away and like most successful Eccles sides of the past although we are small, we hard to beat.

Fast forward to the depths of the pandemic, the sun is shining, we are locked indoors, and Boris is saying just one more month and we will be all back to normal. The Eccles Peak Challenge is launched as an opportunity to use your 1 hour of exercise to connect with our clubmates and support the NHS. This was our first dip into the world of virtual collaboration and what a success. Money raised, thousands of kilometres covered, and new friendships made a success.

This was us hooked, our junior team were up and running with there Ecclesathalon under the fantastic leadership of former 1XV captain turned coach Glen Cahil. The Senior Ladies were practicing their best Sue Barker impressions for the weekly quiz. Through the creativity and perseverance of our members we have found a way to remain a club in its most simple of forms a group of people with a mutual interest and enjoyment of each other's company.

As restrictions have lifted our opportunities to connect with the whole club have grown with a regular contingent of Senior Women playing touch on Saturday mornings as well as attending senior training. The quality of our offer and the creativity of our leaders has meant that we have been able to recruit quality players and give them an outstanding initial rugby experience without the usual pressures of the playing environment. We leave the pandemic hopefully in a few weeks' time having recruited 6 new senior players keen to take the senior section forward into the

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Director of Rugby: S. Simpson 07935 403171

Sponsorship Secretary: A. Brunt 07743 825459
Communications Officer: C. Gaffey 07971 817375
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restart of competitive fixtures. Whilst other teams have started to struggle the resilience and creativity of our leaders have made it possible for Eccles Ladies to metamorphosize and now we are ready to flourish in the upcoming season.

This takes me onto my final point and our biggest success as a section, it is a proud tradition for all senior teams at Eccles RFC to cultivate and develop young talent to bolster the ranks of our senior squads. This is no different in the Ladies section, the emergence of players such as Molly Young, Freya Waterhouse, Alicia Calton, Holly Bawden, Molly Wild, Amy Wallace and Detysha Harper have shown the quality that we can produce.

Through the lack of volunteers and increased demands of the Ladies section job, there has been a lack of investment in the Junior Girls section. Lockdown gave us an opportunity to refocus and return to our ethos of #homegrown and #rugbyforall. From this new focus Mini Warrior was born with the sole purpose of showing our junior girls' members that they are part of something. We connected our girls at monthly events and started to grow, showing the pathway for our junior girls to become senior players. To say this is our biggest success to date may be overstating but it is most certainly the most important piece of work since I took charge. We want every girl to know that as soon as you put on a blue and white shirt you are an Eccles Lady and that means you are important to us.

As we enter the final stages of lockdown and move towards our preparations for the 2021/22 season, I am filled with optimism for what is ahead. We have a growing senior section full of #homegrown players and talented individuals with a common goal. We have a flourishing junior section with girls in every age group connected and enjoying their junior experience. And most importantly through our collaboration we have made a huge leap in connecting our senior players with the club. This would not have been possible without the outstanding work of our senior playing group and coaches. A special thankyou to Siobhan Mullen, Shelley Maddocks, Rebecca Roden, Glen Cahil and all the volunteers that have given up there time to make the Women's and Girls offer the best it can be

As we approach normality whatever that looks like in this new time, I am keen for us not to reflect and find the negative and the dismay in our experiences over the last 18 months. Through adversity we have collaborated to be competitive and create an environment that has given every member and club to rely on. Through this adversity we have flourished as a section we have shown that this club possess outstanding

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individuals with the sole aim of making this club better. We will emerge from this turmoil better, stronger, more resilient and focus on what our club should truly be. The last time there was such a space between competitive games we were in the midst of a world war, so it feels pertinent to finish on a quote from our war time leader.

“Do not let us speak of darker days; let us speak rather of sterner days. These are not dark days: these are great days —the greatest days our country has ever lived; and we must all thank God that we have been allowed, each of us according to our stations, to play a part in making these days memorable in the history of our race.

Kind regards

James Wright

Eccles RFC Women's and Girls Lead.

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