



# ECCLES RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Founded 1897

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

## 2019/20 Season AGM Mens Section Report

### Mens 1XV

On Saturday 7th September, after a successful start in the cup, the 1XV travelled to Southport for the opening fixture in the 19/20 season, promoted to Level 7. A strong side was selected in preparation for what we were sure would be a real test. Messages pre-match were simple, we belong here, let's go and show them why. Whilst there was a cautious level of expectation inside the camp, and most certainly within the leadership team, nobody was ready for the performance that was to follow. The 1XV scored an impressive 69 points giving us our first win in this new league, a statement sent to the rest of the league that we were not here to make up the numbers. In a post-match interview Sam Simpson praised the platform created by a dominant pack and the efficiency of how the backs were able to translate this dominance into points.

The 1XV would continue through 2019 with mixed levels of success, strong results at home to Tarleton and Aspatria were punctuated with disappointing away results against Winnington Park and Bolton. A season highlight must be the home win against fellow league new boys and bitter rivals Aspull, a fantastic team performance led by a core of #homegrown players followed by a great social at the Super League Grand final.

At Christmas, the 1XV were in a respectable position and looking to cut out errors that had restricted their progression. The messages were clear- if we can get our best team on the field playing our brand of rugby then we were a match for any side in this league. These targets would prove to be difficult to achieve. What would follow would be a tough stretch of games where Eccles would struggle to find form and the standard we have come to expect. Whilst to the onlooker it can appear that the performance showed a lack of heart and desire to win, I can assure you that the pride in the shirt still runs very deep in the core of this side. A change of tact brought a series of very tough sessions that would make us more competitive physically and provide crucial league points. In February, the last minute penalty claiming a 24-22 win against Anslemians after a long run of defeats and the full bloodied single try 10-9 victory over Bolton in the wind and rain were memorable. However, following successive defeats to the division's title contenders, Manchester and Glossop, and the premature ending to the season with 5 games to play, we found ourselves in the relegation spots and heading back out of Level 7.

Although not the outcome we were expecting on that sunny afternoon in Southport we must now begin to look forward. We must take the lessons we can from defeat and the confidence from victories to carve a new path for the advancement of this team. We are fortunate to have several young players who have had the opportunity to cut their teeth at this level blended with a collection of vastly experienced home-grown players coming into their best years. This is but a bend in the road not a step backwards we will return with newfound ambition and drive to be better prepared for our return to level 7.

James Wright, Mens Captain.

North 2 West (level 7) - 13th Place: Played 21 W6 D0 L15.

President: M. Dutton 07802345380  
Chairman: P. Thorpe 07766 512552  
Hon. Secretary: M. Greenhalgh 07525 434790  
Hon. Treasurer: M. Bateman 07843 756160  
Fixtures Secretary: D. Edmondson 0161 7476697  
Director of Rugby: S. Simpson 07935 403171

Sponsorship Secretary: A. Brunt 07743 825459  
Communications Officer: C. Gaffey 07971 817375  
Safeguarding Officer: H. Thorpe 0161 7902622  
M & J section Chair: P. Fleming 07889 601558  
D of E Award Chair: M. Baines 07850 082122



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## Mens 2XV

Our Second team's season would somewhat echo that of the First team. As is the case with a club of our size, if there is struggle at the top, this struggle percolates into all senior teams. This symmetry with the 1XV would show not only in the availability of players but in their results.

The 2XV won their first two fixtures of the season convincingly against stern opposition in Leyland and Littleborough. However, despite some highlight away victories at Oldham, Littleborough and Southport, they would go on to struggle in the remainder of their fixtures due to availability of players. A real shame as there is great potential in this side. Changes in line up are inevitable in 2XVs rugby and a settled stable core of 6 or 7 players, used to playing with each other, is invaluable. When reviewing the results from the season it is clear to see when this core was playing, the result would more that likely go in favour of Eccles. This core also allows the development of younger talent. The fundamental pillar of all of Eccles success in every senior team is our faith in youth.

In years gone by the Eccles 2XV has provided the perfect environment for our Colts and young players to develop their skills in a less pressured situation. This season would be no different as several Senior Colts bolstered the ranks of the 2XV and at times lead from the front. Whilst the results may not have always reflected the ambition and effort that these young players have put in, it will serve them well in their careers, whether they move up the teams or become a leader in the 2's.

Special mention must be paid to the senior group that has supported and driven the 2XV this year through a difficult campaign. Fin Cox and Anthony Dutta have turned injury into inspiration, transferring their energies from playing to a coaching role. This selfless act of support has ensured that there has very rarely been a game where the players have not had a designated coach which is paramount to the lads' success and enjoyment of their Saturday rugby.

James Wright, Mens Captain.

Coach Dutta adds his season highlights:

Ross Eaton's impression of a Brazilian football star at Littleborough away where he dribbled the ball 80m before dotting down ( As a member of the front row I can neither confirm or deny that this is entirely fabricated). Coach Dutta, before a brutal finger injury cut his season short, did show the boys how it's done with a barnstorming run at Southport. Spectators on the day said that it was reminiscent of a prima ballerina the way he gracefully floated up the field. At least I assume this was the aspect of his game that they were referring to. The premature ending of the season has not impacted the 2XV they will continue to play their rugby in the same league next season. Lessons have been learnt and experience gained on and off the field, the 20/21 season fills me with optimism for the 2XV.

Halbro Division 2 North - 10th Place: Played 17 W6 D0 L11.

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## Casuals & Vets

Our casual and vets' side and walking rugby contingent is, in my opinion, the jewel in the crown of Eccles RFC. We are a community rugby club, a place for people to come and enjoy the sport they love. This philosophy has developed into a mantra amongst the leadership teams and coaches we are so lucky to have; Rugby for everyone.

Whilst the accolades will always be focussed on those teams fighting for league titles and county honours, I think that there is a real cause for celebration that we are able to facilitate pensioners and youths alike in the enjoyment of playing Rugby.

Our Vet's side have played a number of fixtures throughout the season travelling within the M60 circle to local clubs for the fun of Friday night lights. Each game is a celebration of the enjoyment that rugby can bring, when the competitive aspect is removed ( I say that with a touch of sarcasm for those who have watched boo play I can assure you this is not just a run around). A game a month has served as plenty to quench the thirst with players from multiple generations lacing up their boots and sporting the famed Navy and White hoops again with no less passion and enthusiasm than the first time, if at a slightly slower pace.

## Thank you

A huge thanks to Director of Rugby Sam Simpson for his efforts this season both on and off the field. I am sure I speak on behalf of the entire playing squad when I say that his input is not unnoticed and always appreciated. Honourable mentions must go to those who have supported the leadership team especially in the later part of the season. Nick Spooner, Mark Greenhalgh, Sam Long, Simon Donovan, Glen Cahill, Chris Gaffey, Fin Cox, Anthony Dutta and Tommo to name a few. Each have provided inspiration, leadership and organisation when it was fleeting from myself, so a personal thank you to you.

And to our wider club volunteers; your work is not unnoticed and is appreciated by all. Whether you are helping on a Thursday, supporting a senior or junior team or just something as simple as coming for a pint on a weekend, a sincere thank you.

Looking to the future, our current situation is out of our control. Rugby like all our lives has been put on hold. It may be cliché, but I have found it true that distance does make the heart grow fonder. We will come through these challenges and the club doors will open again. I hope that you return with a newfound appreciation of what we offer at Eccles RFC, we are a rugby club for everyone.

The 20/21 season will provide an opportunity for us all to reengage with our local rugby club. It is my hope that this absence will give us a greater understanding of how lucky we are at Eccles. I hope that it will inspire past and current players to commit their time and effort to the improvement of our club. But mostly I hope to see you safe, healthy and happy when I great you at the bar, whenever that may be.

James Wright, Mens Captain.

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