



ECCLES RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Founded 1897

Season record:

Played: 15

Won: 2

Lost: 13

Bonus points: 4

Performance review

Season start: At the start of the 2021/22 season, we were struggling significantly for committed bodies at training and for games. Whilst we had established a strong core group that were skilled and committed, we lacked the additional players to be competitive and properly prepare during preseason.

In August and September after a preseason friendly with Didsbury Toc H we set to work on targeted recruitment of key individuals that would allow us to compete in the upcoming season. We brought in several young players new to the area or returning from university as well as some key experienced players from local teams looking for a different type of rugby experience.

Midseason: After continued recruitment during the winter months the turn of the year saw a mass increase in the numbers at training and available for games. This recruitment came from two main avenues; firstly, the relationship with Salford University yielded a large number of casual players looking to play infrequently but happy to support whenever they could. The second was through building a formidable reputation within the league and surrounding area of a team with an outstanding culture where individual needs are met, and players developed. During this period, we had recruited players from the rugby league super league, players who had been tasked by Sale Sharks to go and find some more experience as well as players who had never touched a rugby ball in their lives before the start of the season. This melting pot of individuals made for fantastic training sessions where lots was learnt, and players grew massively however these learnings would take time to manifest into results on Sundays. Up to this point in mid-January we were yet to secure a win and would have to wait until mid-march to secure our first Win.

End of Season: In the final stages of the season the work put in by the group would start to bear fruit unfortunately slightly too late to ensure our survival in the league. Hard fought victories against a struggling Darlington side and a very strong Didsbury team would show glimpses of the potential this team has. We enter next season with a strongly committed group who have a year of experience added and are ready to convert their potential into points.



Coaches Notes:

The 21/22 season has been a season of significant growth and development for the Women's and Girls section ultimately resulting in; increase playing numbers, increased interaction with whole club events, increased volunteering, increased engagement with junior players.

Unfortunately, this growth has not translated to entirely positive results, this season the ladies' section has recorded only 2 wins resulting in us finishing second from bottom in our respective league. As a result, we will be relegated to the 4th tier of women's rugby playing in NC1 Northwest. Whilst this outcome was not part of our 5-year plan we must consider the uncontrollable factors and look to continue our growth towards becoming a Championship side (2 promotions now required to achieve this).

Prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic the Ladies sections were in a very difficult transitional period, our playing numbers were often below the minimum requirement to compete at any level. Due to a combination of inexperience and players moving onto to other things whether that be a higher tier or a different stage in their life. But for the efforts of the leadership group the club could have been without a ladies section. The pandemic gave us an opportunity to take stock and forward plan towards creating a more sustainable, appropriate and thus more effective model that suited our playing group and allowed us to recruit effectively.

We have adopted a hybrid training style that better suits our players who are made up of very accomplished professionals who's commitment is unquestionable but struggle to commit their time during the week. We have also looked further afield to recruit using our social media platforms to encourage engagement with players new to the game and in the months up to Christmas we averaged 2 new players a month.

Our relationship with Salford University Women has also been a great success story from this season. Creating a mutually beneficial relationship where our senior coaches go and deliver sessions to support the teams BUCS campaign in return for players transitioning for university rugby to club rugby began to bear fruit after the Christmas break. Teams selected on a Sunday have very rarely contained less than 4 university students boosting our squad numbers to a consistent 20 for most fixtures.

With the nature of our recruitment the experience level of new players is often low when they arrive. It is testament to our culture and playing group that we have retained all these players whilst asking them to play in a highly competitive environment. The youthful enterprise of these players has given a real shot of enthusiasm and energy to our group as well as the obvious numerical advantages at both training and games. The continuation of this relationship is imperative to the growth of ladies' team and its future success.

Highlight performances: The 19-0 defeat to Bishop Auckland at home, although this seems counter intuitive to celebrate a result where we were beaten and failed to score a point. This result was a turning point in this groups mentality showing incredible resolve and determination to challenge the eventual league champions.

Didsbury Toc H away 19-22 win, the game where it all came together in the end to show that what we had been working on all this time was eventually going to pay off. A result against a mid-table side would cement this groups resolve and belief in its abilities and spurs us on into the latter parts of the season with a clear blueprint of how to win games at this level.

Penultimately this season has seen the continued growth of our junior girl's section, our U13s and U18s girls have competed in fixtures throughout the season demonstrating outstanding ability. Their development is something that we are incredibly proud of and excited about, we have a proven track record of developing young players and integrating them into our senior team. At present we have 6 players who are a product of our junior section playing weekly and an average age of around 24 on most match days. Our latest addition being transitioned this season from playing U18s to senior ladies. This is in addition to the players we have produced and sent off to play in the highest tier of the women's game. Through continued hard work from coaches Glen and Matt I'm sure this current crop of girls will form the backbone of our future successes.



Finally, regarding the wider club objectives the ladies section have worked incredibly hard this season to become more visible and engaged in the whole club. On any given weekend you will see our senior players supporting the junior section, volunteering on the bar, watching the men's section and supporting our DofE participants. This is all in addition to playing their own games on Sunday afternoons. This commitment to be more involved has seen fantastic integration between our senior playing groups this is no better represented than in our summer touch league.

The 2022/23 season will start early for Ladies section with clear targets to take forward, we need to be physically fitter and capable of sustaining our performances through the full 80 and beyond. We continue to recruit strongly becoming something of a hub for young ambitious players to cut their teeth before taking on the higher levels of the game.

We are confident that this group now secured with a playing base of 20+ committed individuals will grow towards being a very competitive outfit. All be it in a lower division than we would have liked. Our leadership group has been bolstered by ambitious and creative young players who want to take their club back to the heights of previous seasons and I have no doubt they will be successful.

In conclusion this season for the ladies section is all determined by how you choose to measure success. If you choose to look objectively at results and league standing, then you will conclude that we have been unsuccessful. However, if you choose to look at the growth of our section and the growth of its influence on the wider club then you will see great positive strides which I am confident will transfer very quickly onto the pitch. Of course, none of these successes are possible without the continued hard work of the players, coaches and support team that have been in place all year. I want to thank you all for your efforts and continued work in growing the Women's and Girls section.

James Wright

Ladies Coach

Ground and Clubhouse : Gorton Street, Peel Green, Eccles, Manchester, M30 7LZ
0161 789 2613 | info@ecclesrfc.org.uk | @EcclesRugby | <https://eccles.rfu.club>

President: M. Dutton 07802345380 | Chairman: C. Gaffey 07971 817375
Hon. Secretary: D. Nicholls 07867 724264 | Hon. Treasurer: M. Bateman 07843 756160
Fixture Secretary: D. Edmondson 07821 683516 | Director of Rugby: S. Simpson 07935 403171
Safeguarding Officer: H. Thorpe 07762 081105 | G&P Secretary: A. Brunt 07743 825459
M&J Chair: D. Nicholls 07789 202189 | DofE Chair: M. Baines 07850 082122