

MINUTES OF OLSC AGM HELD IN THE CENTURION BAR, RDS - 26 JULY 2014

Welcome and Introduction

John Martin, president of the Official Leinster Supporters Club (OLSC) opened the meeting at 3pm by welcoming those members present to the 8th AGM – a quorum was achieved.

Minutes of the AGM held in the Laighin Out on June 22nd 2013, which are available on the club website, were approved by a show of hands.

Presidents Report

John remarked that Leinster have been very successful under new head coach Matt O'Connor, becoming the first team to win the Celtic League/ Rabo Direct Pro 12 tournament 2 years in a row. He noted that Leinster did very well in the Heineken Cup, topping a tough group before being knocked out by the tournament champions in the quarter finals. He also commented on the Leinster "A" team becoming the first team to win back to back British and Irish Cup tournaments.

He also noted Leinster's large contribution to the Ireland squad who won this year's 6 nations tournament as well as narrowly missing out on beating the New Zealand team for the first time.

It was remarked that this year we also said goodbye to two of Leinster's greatest players Brian O' Driscoll and Leo Cullen. These were both presented with engraved Dublin Crystal and gifts from the OLSC.

This year also saw the unfortunate retirement of Eoin O Malley due to injury. Eoin was also given engraved crystal from the OLSC.

Also noted were the departure of Greg Feek and John Gibbes, the Club wishes them the best of luck in their new roles.

The OLSC Committee

During the year there were a couple of changes to the Committee, Gavin Doyle & Andrew Mc Donnell stepped down due to unforeseen work commitments. John thanked them for their assistance while on the committee. In accordance with the constitution the committee co-opted Declan Doyle.

Operationally, one challenge facing the Club annually has been Continuity. During this Season the committee have created a Library of "How to do's" for each separate function of the club to ensure the method of maintaining the output of the club is available to the incoming committee each year.

The club have adopted a new policy of inviting "Expert" volunteers to fulfil specific functions of the Club eg Photography, Videography, Social Media etc. These are areas which really need in depth knowledge to operate at the standards and volumes expected of the club. Going forward we have been offered the services of:

Terry Quinlan - Away guide editor and other adhoc artwork design and layout
Dave Cahill – Legend T shirt designs
Gwen Forde - Video work
Barry McHugh – Still Photography
Jarrod Bromley - Digital Media strategy and analysis

Leinster Rugby Administration

One of the challenges the OLSC faced this year was that the personnel we dealt with on a daily basis in Leinster Rugby over the years have changed since our last AGM.

Marcus O’Buachalla came in for Peter Breen as new Communications Manager

Paul Dermondy came in for Keira Kennedy as Commercial & Marketing Manager

Sheena O’Buachalla came in for Ian Murray as Marketing Executive

Conor Sharkey came in as new Digital Marketing Executive

Colm Murphy came in as new ticket office person to replace Kevin Leahy

This amount of change required a rethink on how we communicate with Leinster Rugby at source. Leinster Rugby have kindly provided a sole day to day contact who handles the normal flow of business between the OLSC and Leinster Rugby. We have been extremely fortunate that Selda Simsek was the choice made by Leinster Rugby. Selda has performed minor miracles and jumped through hoops as a matter of course for us during the last 12 months and for this we are extremely grateful.

Funding

The club has seen a significant increase in merchandise sales as well as the number of supporters using our bus services for away games. The Clubs Finances are in good shape handing over to next season’s committee.

A lot of our work has been made possible by various sponsors during the year, brands such as Lifestyle, Wolf Bass, Matheson, City Jet and Samsung who supported us at various events for this we are very grateful. In particular we would like to thank our biggest financial supporter, Bank of Ireland. Our thanks to Ian Murray for his continued commitment to our work.

Communication

The club continues to provide regular content for the official website, leinsterrugby.ie as well as match programmes and the Evening Herald at the beginning of the Season, now the Irish Independent since they became the main newsprint partner to Leinster Rugby. Our main form of communication is however through web based media.

For a number of reasons not least experience we decided that Jarrod would handle Social Media for the club along with the help of ex Committee member Alison Moore. We had hoped to recruit & develop an "expert" volunteer for this role but in spite of two attempts this never quite happened.

Meanwhile the clubs success in this area has been something of a phenomenon. Not only have the followers grown, but so has the rate of interaction and range of material being communicated. In terms of numbers, Facebook users have increased from 12,600 to 49,800 over the last season while our Twitter followers increased from 13,400 to 19,500. The significance of these numbers is that while not everybody uses social networking regularly, it is being accepted as a main communication vehicle for delivering information to our members quickly, while the Leinster Rugby website and Ezine remain the most reliable methods of communication.

The Club received a final nomination in The Bord Gais Social Media Awards or #sockies2014 as they are better known. This achievement speaks volumes of the amount of effort put into our social media management and execution.

Although the roles of PRO & social media are seen and managed as two separate entities Jarrod also handled The PRO role this season and has been putting continuity steps in place for both roles, while at the same time supplying content for leinsterrugby.ie, match day programmes the Leinster Ezine as well as the Herald/ Irish Independent slots.

Expert volunteer help was also enlisted in the areas of video and photography, again expert volunteers came forward and produced the goods when we sent out appeals for them.

Thanks here to Jamie Hickey & Gwen Forde for the countless hours of work under critical time pressure to produce our You Tube offering for the season. Regarding photography our thanks go to Kelan O'Nualain and Barry Mc Hugh for literally hundreds of photographs they shot and uploaded during the year this is all seriously painstaking and time consuming work which they gave to the club.

Keeping it blue

Flags continue to be provided at key home fixtures as well as all away Heineken Cup fixtures. The club also ensures that at least 10 flags are at every single away game in the Pro12, we know that when travelling numbers are low that the players appreciate seeing even a small pocket of blue.

We distributed 500 blue Santa hats for the two pre Christmas European fixtures and 900 blue commemorative caps at the Heineken Cup Quarter Final in Toulon. Thanks again to Bank of Ireland in respect of these two initiatives.

As per last season the club invested in blue face paint, tattoos and hairspray to help supporters be blue throughout the latter end of this season. This was a success and the club hopes to continue this for key fixtures next season.

There will be a one off gift in the Season ticket Holders packs from the OLSC this coming season which is a branded trolley token on a keyring.

The Laighin Out

We have continued to invest in improvements to our "Clubhouse" the Laighin Out at a steady pace and all the evidence shows a steady increase in the numbers using the facility after each match and coming to our events.

This year the stage was moved to facilitate a better setup for the Q&A Sessions, The Sound System had quite a lot of Repairs and upgrades, the Legends wall was rearranged and the biggest most noticeable improvement was a new series of murals.

These murals commemorate something which no other team in the world can boast: Three European Cups in four years including back to back wins, a European Challenge Cup and four Celtic League/Pro 12 Championships again including unique back to back wins. They also capture the shape of the future with a glimpse of the two B&I cup wins ... again a unique back to back achievement. In fact the last mural was only put in place yesterday. Our Club shop also had some upgrades with new cabinets for storage & display purposes.

Singing Section

This Season also saw the emergence of a new "Singing Section" in the stands and while the OLSC don't run this section (it is completely organic in structure), it is made up largely of our members and definitely falls under the "supporters services" heading, so the OLSC will give it all the support it can to ensure its growth both in the form of logistic support and communications with the RDS, Leinster Rugby and of course our members.

OLSC Travel

As many of you are aware, the club is not a bonded travel agent so therefore we are not allowed by law to sell packages that involve international travel.

We do however continue to put together package information and share with our members. This is about providing information from various firms (Leinster Rugby sponsors and others) and allows supporters to book what suits them.

We provided airport bus transfers for our members to help them get to all the Heineken Cup away matches during the season and additional travel information for every Pro12 away game.

Away Guides

The production of the away guides and travel information throughout the season continued per normal and again we enlisted Expert volunteer help who came forward when we sent out appeals. Our thanks to Alison Moore & Terry Quinlan who set the away guides this Season.

These guides contain a growing number of discounts (including fast track and food and beverage specials at Dublin airport new for this season). These take approximately eight hours each to produce (research, edit, design and layout) and provide a valuable revenue stream through advertising/branding to the club (the only cost is committee time). The OLSC produced its 30th away guide this season. We get very good feedback on these and can see that they are viewed worldwide. We also know that other clubs also use these for their supporters. Bank of Ireland continues to sponsor the away guides and we would like to thank Bank of Ireland for their continued support in this regard.

Looking to the new season we hope to (subject to demand) run an airport bus service for the Castres game again, we will also access what services can be offered regarding the Wasps and Harlequins fixtures.

OLSC Global Support

Work for supporters abroad continues. At present, we research TV times for those abroad for every game, maintain a set of away bases and along with 'Blue Planet' which lists rugby friendly venues in over 55 cities around the world.

During the season we also facilitated the posting of Herald calendars and trophy celebration posters.

Charity Partner

This year we chose The Crumlin Children's Hospital as our Charity Partner or Children's Medical & Research Foundation (CMRF) as it is officially known which turned out to be a good choice of Partnership.

We ran a very successful Big Big Table Quiz, A Signed Stuff Raffle, an Easter Raffle and to top it off we had a Clear The Cabinets Raffle.

In total we raised a very satisfying € 11,000 which says a lot about the generosity of our Members. Well done and thanks to everyone involved.

We would like to thank the many Volunteers for the effort and hours they put in behind the scenes for these events.

Merchandise

The Merchandise sales were strong this year in spite of economic circumstances. A large contributor to this was the Special edition Triskaidekaphobia T shirt which simply shot off the racks as did the Rob Kearney Legend T Shirt. Expert volunteers

Thank You

John concluded the AGM by thanking a few people on behalf of the OLSC.

He thanked the all new team at Leinster Rugby who we work with closely as mentioned earlier in particular Selda Simsek who really has been phenomenal in her commitment to accommodate us in all our efforts.

To our volunteers - the work we do is very time consuming and our volunteers are vital to the success of every event we get involved in from Flagging the stadium to posting out Merchandise counting quiz scores, everywhere there is a need for volunteers so thank you to those of you who have helped us out during the season.

John then presented gifts to those stepping down from the Committee, Ginine Power who joined the Committee at the last AGM and Jarrod Bromley who has been serving on the Committee for seven years now. On behalf of all supporters he extended thanks to Ginine and Jarrod for the work they have done throughout your time on the committee.

TREASURERS REPORT

The accounts were presented by the club treasurer, Rebecca Legget. It was confirmed that there was a surplus of €1970 to be carried forward to the new season. There were no questions and the accounts were approved by the members present by a show of hands.

ELECTION OF OLSC COMMITTEE FOR THE 2013/14 SEASON

The president advised that the required number of 7 members have put themselves forward for election to the OLSC Committee. Returning members John Martin, Declan Doyle, Rebecca Legget and Liz Power will be joined by new members Ciara Conlon, Mary Mckeever and William Bayley. The new committee was approved by a show of hands by all members present.

John Martin was the sole member standing for election for president and was thus re-elected for the 2014/2015 season.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The issue of disability seating was raised by a member of the club. They informed that they are not able to get a suitable seat during knock out stages which are not covered by their season tickets. The President advised that the OLSC will discuss this issue with Leinster Rugby as well as the relevant tournament organisers .

The idea of a stand for the OLSC in the grounds of the RDS was suggested. The President informed that the OLSC are available in the Laighin Out shop before and after games for any questions or suggestions. He also advised that any comments can be sent via our email address.

A question was asked about where in the city center the OLSC busses leave from. The President advised that this information is provided by email to those who have booked (and paid) for a bus seat.

OFFICIAL LEINSTER SUPPORTERS CLUB



Brian from the singing section attended the meeting and provided a brief overview on what they plan to achieve. He requested that anyone with questions or suggestions come to him after the meeting to discuss them.

CLOSE

With there being no further business to discuss, John Martin concluded the 2014 Official Leinster Supporters Club AGM.

Footnote: Formal proposal and seconding of the Presidents Address and the Treasurers Report for 2013/14 Season will precede the approval of these minutes at the next AGM.