



CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT FOR 2010/2011

PREAMBLE

This is my first report as Chairwoman and I will try and keep it as short as possible! After a nail biting season as Chair and 8 years on the committee working as secretary, Membership Secretary, bus captain on occasion, socialite, sandwich maker, mediator, arbitrator and/or shoulder to cry on, through passion or sheer madness, I have decided to stand again for another season. I am SO glad I made that decision, as on 13 May 2011 at the Falcons Big Bash, the Supporters Club were recognized for all of their hard work and won the award "Clubman of the Season 2011". For those of you who were at the Big Bash, you will have seen my delight, emotion and complete disbelief at this award. I wish someone had given me a hint that we were up for it, as I may then have been able to give some sort of coherent speech, rather than the tearful gabble I actually managed to produce! I am extremely proud of the Supporters Club for having won this Award which has been down to the culmination of a lot of hard work by everyone concerned either on the Committee who are all volunteers, supporters giving up their spare time to assist with lottery selling, handing out flyers, attending social events and any other aspect that is asked of them. Of course, by continuing to renew your membership every year is also a message that you support the Committee and what we are doing with the Club. This is very heartwarming and encouraging. We can do nothing without your support, and for that I personally thank you all.

However, at this point, and as we go to an election shortly, there are certain people I would especially like to thank. Firstly, to my trusty Treasurer, Kevin Nergaard, for putting up with having bags of money thrown at him at all times during the season and to my constantly asking him what the bank balance is looking like! To Steve Richardson for all of his ideas, passion and commitment not only to away travel over the past 3 season, but also to talk-ins and to social events. To Julia for her compilation of endless lists of guests attending socials/talk ins and of course, the AGM and for her humour, which by the end of the season also keeps us going. Also thanking Helen and Stef, who have decided to step down this season.

Finally, and this will be my message as long as I am associated with the Supporters Club! A team effort is crucial for the Supporters Club. Our team of committed volunteers and members, and our team on the pitch both go hand in hand, both wanting the same results – a successful Supporters Club following a successful team. I believe, and so does our captain James Hudson and the rest of our team, that this can be achieved this season. Come On Falcons!!

MARGARET SMITHURST
CHAIRWOMAN

SUMMARY

The 2010/2011 season will probably go down in history as one of the most tense and frustrating seasons we have had in the Premiership, hanging on to Premiership rugby by our finger nails, if we had any left! That last game at



Bath, my blood pressure was sky high and my heart was beating so loudly I thought the Leeds supporters could hear it pounding at Franklins Gardens. We did secure a place in the finals of the LV Cup, but I think it was the semi-final which was the highlight for those who travelled down to Quins that evening. We have high hopes for the upcoming season and James Hudson set the bar with his frank, but passionate interview last month. The team all believe they can be in with a shot at top 5 table so fingers crossed they make it happen.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership has dropped off over the past season, although travelling numbers have increased. Last season we attracted 336 members and this season this dropped to 231. The membership of 231 consists of 5 life members (Rob Andrew, Dave Thompson, Matthew Burke, Dick Godfrey and Micky Ward), 28 junior members and 71 family memberships. The drop in numbers we believe to be because we didn't insist on membership for those travelling on the buses as we had done in previous years. This year, we are going to try and promote membership more through various methods, and as we will have a full committee, this should be achievable. It is down to every single one of us though to promote the Supporters Club and its benefits.

The outgoing committee felt that membership fees should remain the same for next year, being £5 for juniors under 16, £10 for adults, and £15 family membership (2 adults and 2 children (under 16yrs) living at the same address).

AWAY TRAVEL

We were lucky to secure sponsorship from the Falcons in the total sum of £2,500 for coach hire which proved invaluable as the price of coach hire has rocketed as quickly as the fuel increases. Our aim was to use all of the sponsorship to attract more travelers, by offering breakfast bags or lunch bags on the coaches, and a "buy 4 get 5th free" trip promotion. This worked well and did increase the number of travelers.

In 2010/2011 we provided coaches to all Premiership away matches this season and in total provided 15 coaches (as opposed to 11 in 09/10), including a full bus to Galashiels in treacherous weather which was hired and filled with only 24 hours notice. The only game where we did not run a bus was to the LV cup game to Exeter where lack of interest made the trip unviable. We have made a very small profit on coach travel of £21.23.

I will now ask Steve Richardson to comment in more detail.

TALK-INS

In 2010/2011 we held 5 talk-in events:

August – Alan Tait, Paul Moriarty and James Hudson (with Andy Perry making a surprise appearance)



September – New Players talk in – Jeremy Manning, Tim Ryan, Joe Graham, Luke Fielden, Ally Hogg and James Fitzpatrick were quizzed.

October – New Players talk in – Andy Henderson, Darren Fearn, James Hall, Redford Pennycook, Luke Eves and Glen Townson talked about their new lives at the Falcons.

January 2011 – Commercial Director and New Signings talk-in – Mark Foster, Andrew Van Der Heijden and Euan Murray. A very humorous evening showing the talents of both players and also the knowledge of the Commercial Director of what was required at the Falcons.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

In 2010/11 we provided 3 social events.

We held a very well attended 80's night in July, a Xmas party in December and The Mickys End of Season Awards night in April 2011, where proceeds went to Micky Wards Testimonial. These events mainly made a profit, but the talk-ins did make a small loss of £18. All of these events were well attended and were popular. The Hiding Place staff have also once again to be commended for their excellent buffets and service and continuing support of the Supporters Club.

We will also be holding a comedy night on Friday 22 July.

FUND RAISING

In 2010/11 we handed over £1,291 in charitable donations, being the Community Foundation, Micky Ward's testimonial, Marie Curie (in memory of Supporters Club Member, Terry Pickering) and Clic Sergeant (Redford Pennycook's charity). Although the charity donations are down on last year (£4,642.72), bearing in mind we are in a recession and money is tight for everyone, we are still pleased with the amount we have raised this year. Again, next season will see charity donations being addressed and with a full committee this should be achievable. In addition, our fantastic young volunteers also managed to raise over £7,500 for the Community Foundation by selling lottery tickets on match days, which is a fantastic achievement.

We have provided our members with the chance to win many items of Falcons memorabilia, including signed shirts, signed balls, match tickets, tickets to an international match, and tickets to the Big Bash.

We also funded the refurbishment of the Falcons office space at a cost of £180, we bought a line out machine for the gym for £176.25 and also sponsored a beer at the Gateshead Beer Festival for £100. All of these bear the Supporters Club name, giving vital advertising and promotion.

SUPPORTING THE PLAYERS



Due to the generosity of an anonymous sponsor, we continue to provide our Player of the Month and Annual Awards to the Players. Framed photographs of the presentation are also given to the presentee.

This season we were lucky enough to sponsor Grant Shiells, Luke Fielden and Flash the Falcons. By sponsoring these players we received 10 places to the Big Bash and places were offered to Supporters Club Members and then entered into a draw. We also raffled a pair of Big Bash tickets off on the last game of the season to Bath.

The winners of the Player of the Month Award for this season were:

September 2010 – Jimmy Gopperth

October 2010 – Luke Fielden

November 2010 – Luke Fielden – presented by Amie Edge

December – not enough games played due to weather conditions.

January – Tim Swinson – presented by Jack Stewart

February – Matt Thompson – presented by Margaret Smithurst

March – Andrew Van Der Heijden – presented by Richard Varle

Presented at The Mickys

Player of the Season award - Jimmy Gopperth

Moment of the Season - Euan Murray

Emerging Player of the Season – Mark Wilson

Unsung Hero – David Bell (CEO Newcastle Falcons)

COMMUNICATIONS

Our website continues to be improved and the online booking facility for away travel and social events is finally catching on, this being the safest and easiest way to pay for any events that the Supporters Club are running. We encourage everyone to pay via the website for all away travel and social events, if they can. Although Paypal take a small commission, if everyone pays this way it allows us to know how many are attending, make provision for any catering needs, and especially on away travel, it stops the need for the bus captain to be in charge of large sums of money.

Unfortunately we have not been able to provide a review this year due to time constraints, however, as we have a full committee for next season, we hope this will be addressed and improve upon on this and we will be able to send you at least a newsletter every couple of months.

Having said that, the weekly ezine seems to work very effectively and everyone is kept up to date with what is being planned and what socials/away travel is coming up.