

DoR Report – AGM 2024

Wild Cranes Season Review

Embarking on our 2nd season in the Inner Warrior Series, the Wild Cranes went into the season with renewed optimism that this year would be better than last, with more competitive fixtures and generally more opportunities to play rugby than the previous season. Unfortunately, this was not the case and the season overall was as disjointed as the year before. Several teams were unable to field sides against us and planned fixtures were constantly rearranged to make them competitive.

In the end the Wild Cranes played a total of 6 standalone matches and 2 triangular matches, ending the season with a record of played 10, won 6, drawn 1 and lost 4. Over the course of the season they scored a total of 211 points and conceded 150. Of the 10 matches played, 5 were against local rivals Horsham. Horsham winning out 3 games to 2 overall.

The Wild Cranes also hosted the Inner Warrior Mid-Season Festival. We finished a respectable 3rd place, beating Portsmouth Uni and a combined Chichester & Burgess Hill squad, losing out to a strong Horsham squad and eventual NC3 winners Dorking who topped the pile on the day.

One of the major positives to come out of this season has been our growing relationship with local friends Guildfordians. On regular occasions the Guildfordians players have helped boost our squad and likewise our players have boosted theirs when called upon. This relationship has grown throughout the season and has had a big influence on our plans for the coming season, which I will move on to shortly.

In summary, the Wild Cranes 23/24 season has been a bit like a winding road. Lots of changes in direction, lots of ups and downs but having arrived at the end of the road, the team can look back on a winning season and performances they can all be very proud of. The group continues to go from strength to strength and the individual players continue to develop their skills and continue to grow as rugby players, increasing their knowledge and experience week on week.

I'd like to thank the Wild Cranes leadership group, Captain Tabs, Club Captain Colette and Vice Captain/Fixtures sec Cath for all their hard work and support throughout the season. Also to our Wild Cranes coaches Gareth and Ben, who's help and guidance through the season have been invaluable.

Wild Cranes Season Preview

Next season the Wild Cranes will be embarking on their biggest challenge to date and will be playing in the first tier of women's league rugby, National Challenge 3, or NC3 for short.

For this to happen, we will be clustering with Guildfordians women and officially entering the league as Cranfordians, but still a part of Cranleigh RFC. Both squads have unanimously agreed to join forces for the mutual benefit of playing competitive, consistent league rugby next season. Home fixtures will be shared between the two clubs and there will be the occasional joint training session each month. Both squads are keen to maintain their individual identity and in the interests of their squad's continued development and growth will continue to train and recruit separately. League rugby is a big step forward for our players but a welcome step forward and one that they are more than prepared to take.

NC3 South East (West) is an 8-team league that will hopefully provide more fixtures than ever before and inevitably more challenges too. The other teams in our NC3 league next year will be Newbury 2's, Dorking 2's, Farnham 2's, Didcot, Camberley, Basingstoke, and Andover. The season gets underway on Sunday the 15th of September and will not only include league fixtures but a cup competition as well.

Exciting times ahead for the Wild Cranes next season. A new league with new challenges but hopefully the same vibrant brand of rugby, the same unbreakable squad bond and the same unyielding support from the rest of the club, bring it on!

First Aid & Physio Cover

As a slight interlude between our women's and men's season reviews, I'd like to quickly cover off our first aid and physio cover, which I believe deserves recognition.

At the beginning of last season we set ourselves a target of providing either physio cover or, as a bare minimum, first aid cover to all our senior men's and women's sides.

Driven by our Rugby Safe Lead Harriet Williams and aided by our M&Y section, we held a First Aid training course and successfully increased our pool of volunteer first aiders.

Throughout the season we provided more cover for more matches than ever before, however covering every single match proved a much more difficult task than first imagined as regardless of how many physios or volunteers you have on paper, not everyone can be available all the time.

Next season we are making an even bigger commitment and setting the target of providing physio cover to every single men's 1st XV and Wild Cranes match throughout the season, and continuing to provide first aid cover as a minimum for all other senior fixtures. This is still short of an idyllic situation where we can offer physio cover for all, however I hope you can all see that we are doing the very best we can, given the cost of quality physios.

I'd like to extend the clubs thanks to Lucy, Jess and Rob who have provided our physio cover this season, both pitch side and through our weekly clinics. The players have been extremely well looked after through the season and the service provided has been of the very highest quality.

I'd also like to thank all of our volunteer first aiders who answered the call this season, whose help and commitment is always appreciated, in particular Harriet who has been a revelation in her role as Rugby Safe Lead, improving standards across the club and generally being the club's (and my own) conscience and ensuring that player welfare continues to be at the forefront of everything we do.

Senior Mens Review

Vets

So first up are our indomitable warriors of glories past, the Portly Cranes. Our intention at the beginning of the season was to give our noble vets a handful of games to get excited about. However, this proved harder than anticipated as the few games we managed to arrange, only

one came to fruition, the others falling by the wayside due to the opposition pulling out at the last minute.

So only one game played but if you could play and beat anyone, who would it be? None other than our old foes, Guildford. So, one cold October evening under lights, the Portly Cranes went into battle, led magnificently by Captain Quickie and Vice-Captain Barraud, and emerged victorious 19 points to 8. Legends were enhanced, rugby spirits rekindled and if I may say so on my own behalf, playing careers ended.

One game is never enough for our evergreen vets, so here's to next season and the promise of a handful more outings to inspire the younger generations!

A note of thanks to Rob Wheeler for working tirelessly behind the scenes, organising fixtures and managing the vets squad throughout the season.

2nd XV

Next up, our mighty 2's.

With some clubs across the country struggling to put out a 1st XV, let alone a 2nd XV, going into the season we were not sure what to expect. Over the past few seasons we have prided ourselves on managing to put out a competitive 2nd XV where others have not, and this season was no different.

With a mixture of youthful talent and battle-hardened experience, our 2's faced off against all comers throughout the season, never yielding and always ready to play. Every challenge was met, every opposition defeated. Even when the league saw fit to "shuffle" the seasons results to make the last game of the season a fictitious winner takes all match, our mighty 2's triumphed once again and were crown undisputed and unbeaten league champions!

To win a league title is a magnificent feat, but to do it without losing a single match is an incredible, remarkable achievement.

Such an achievement is only possible off the back of the commitment of the players and the efforts of all involved behind the scenes. Congratulations to Captain Sam Lawrence, Vice-Captain Quickie and to every player that played a part in this historical season. Special thanks also to Gareth for his part, alongside the 2's leadership group, in ensuring we always fielded a side throughout the season.

1st XV

Finally to the pinnacle of our senior men's rugby, the 1st XV.

The 22/23 season was a real tough one for the senior men's 1st XV, one which unfortunately resulted in our relegation from Counties 3. However, despite the regular poundings from strong Old Boys sides that year, the squad took away every positive possible from that seasons run in, positives that we all hoped would stand them in good stead as they embarked on their campaign this season in Counties 4.

With a refreshed coaching team, Ryan, Robbie and Ross at the helm, the season got underway a little later than usual (due to an early Home Walk Over from Staines) with the team locking horns with old rivals Streatham & Croydon. A decidedly tough opening fixture away from home

in which despite a valiant effort we came off second best. Further losses to Southark Lancers, Harlequins Amateurs and Old Hamptonians was not the start neither players nor coaches were hoping for; however, it must be said that 3 of those 4 teams would make up the top three sides come the end of the season.

The 1st XV's first win came away at Old Glyn's in November, however a loss the following week away at Old Paulines meant the lads struggled to gain that all important momentum to get their season going. A welcome win at Guildfordians and a frustrating loss away to Haslemere closed out the first half of the season. Despite only winning two games at the turn of the year, the team was still playing good rugby and everyone, players, coaches and supporters alike could see the team's potential, if only things would start to click.

With the Christmas break out of the way a very satisfying win at home to Harlequins Amateurs going into was unfortunately bookended by losses to both Streatham & Croydon and Old Hamptonians, the top two teams in the league. A tough start to the year indeed but things were about to change. Taking away the Southark Lancers frozen pitch debacle, the loss to Old Hamptonians would be the last time the 1st XV lost a match on the field for the rest of the league season. The team would go on to win all of their remaining games, beating Old Glyns, Guildfordians, Haslemere and Staines, scoring a total of 126 points and conceding just 14. The team's potential was finally beginning to shine through and they deservedly finished the league in 4th place, however the best was yet to come, bring on the cup!

Buoyed by their league form, the 1st XV took the Papa Johns Cup by storm, smashing local rivals Haslemere, demolishing Old Paulines on the road and out playing Harlequin Amateurs in the semis to reach the final where they would face a well-known (or so we thought) Old Glynionians side.

Having beaten Old Glyns twice in the league the players and coaches were unsurprisingly optimistic. However a much changed side took to the field to face them in the final, one that would inevitably triumph that day 22 to 21, denying our lads the glory of a cup win to top off their season.

My congratulations go to Ross and his team, Pierre and his players and everyone involved with the 1st XV squad, they can all be extremely proud of their season. It may not have started too well but certainly burst into life in February and finished strong with a 4th place finish and a cup final appearance, something of a rarity over the past few seasons.

Confidence and spirits are high throughout the squad and I'm sure both supporters and players are keen to see what next season brings as we look to build on this season's successes and push onwards and upwards.

Mens Preview - Ross