



## **Glasgow Lions Touch Rugby Club 2013 AGM – Head Coach's Report**

### **Introduction**

This document aims to give an overview from the perspective of the Head Coach for the 2013 season, and to present the plans for the 2014 season.

### **2013 SEASON**

#### **Beginners' Academy**

As is the case every year, our season started with our traditional Beginners' Academy, which took place from January 2013 to March 2013.

The intake this year was 48 players. 12 of these players have become regulars. This year's Academy was relatively successful, with over 25% retention rate and great numbers attending. However, even when we are able to create a new team the retention rate was disappointing and we should be looking in how to improve the retention rate. Our aim was to obtain a retention rate of 60% and unfortunately we were well off the mark.

A new improved Academy project is being developed and hopefully it will allow us to retain a bigger number of players. Further details are included in the plans for next year below.

#### **Training**

In general, attendance at training has improved again this year mainly due to the arrangements which were put in place last year and the increase in commitment from our players; as last year the training sessions have been split into two to three identified training squads and this has been a great success when it has been possible.

This success, however, only remained the case until the end of the league. Since then, the attendance has been poor, making it impossible for the coaches to focus in on the areas that require improvement looking forward towards next season, which has resulted in sessions having to be repeated and not being able to use the training time efficiently.

This is something which will need to be considered and addressed, as the season is only halfway through when the Glasgow League finishes. While our results in the STS tournament have represented an improvement, it also highlighted the need for greater commitment to training especially from the members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad, post Glasgow League and some members of the 1<sup>st</sup> squad.

The winter sessions remain a challenge with low numbers and unfortunately this is a disappointment for the coaching team as this is the only time that we can work without the pressures of competitions.



In the other hand the high number of players involved in the National Squads will bring high rewards to the club in terms of high level touch. However the focus should be in improving every player whatever the level and this remains a significant challenge due to the lack of attendance to training in a more constant basis.

In general, attendance to training from the new beginner's players has been good and they have improved consistently. I am delighted with the commitment of these players.

### **Glasgow League**

This year we participated in the Glasgow League with 8 teams: 4 mixed, two men's and two women's (two more team than the previous year). We won one of the four divisions (women's) and finished runner up in the mixed beginner's division, finished third in the mixed intermediate division and achieved a 5<sup>th</sup> place in the Men's division, which were very much in line with our expectations.

I would like, in particular, to congratulate the women's 1st team for retaining emphatically (10-0 in the deciding match) the title against the toughest opposition that they have ever encountered.

It was a year of learning for our women's 2nd team but they still manage a win and several good results. I am expecting a huge improvement this year as the quality of our women is exceptional.

The Mixed 2<sup>nd</sup> team also performed exceptionally well (finished 5<sup>th</sup>) with several close games against Blue Jays and a draw against our Black team.

The Men's 1st Team came 5th, which it was slightly disappointing as we lose several games only for 1 or 2 scores and was not a true reflection of our potential. The main reason that is holding this team back is the lack of experience and fitness levels.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Men's Team managed to improve throughout the league obtaining their best results towards the end of the league. It was a tough season but next year they will be stronger and more importantly they have gained valuable experience.

The Mixed Beginners Teams struggled during the regular season due to the lack of experience and lack of consistency on the selection due to the huge amount of call-offs; however, towards the end of the League, the Green team achieved a couple of creditable wins and the Blue Team reached the final with their finest performance against Can't Teach This. They were unlucky as they lost the final in the drop-off. Next year they will have the opportunity to put this right.

### **STS Tournaments**

We also recorded our best results in these tournaments, with our A Team finishing sixth, equalling their previous best position with more points than ever, and our B Team finishing 12<sup>th</sup> (the best position ever) out of thirty-two teams making them the best 2nd string in Scotland.



Despite equalling our best position with the biggest point tally, Terry and I still felt that our first team's performance was below par, considering the potential and ability of our players. This was mainly due to the lack of consistent training for the latter half of the season and the number of absentees due to other commitments from our first team players in some of the key tournaments. This will be an area that we need to address as a team if we want to progress further.

In the other hand our second team performed extremely well recording victories against Blue Jays 1st team and Blackadders from Newcastle. A significant number of these players will be promoted to our 1st team next season and I am expecting great things from them.

We also achieved our objective of fielding a 3<sup>rd</sup> Team in Stirling which was a significant step forward in terms of promoting participation within the club and keeping our ethos.

### **Other Tournaments**

We participated in two International Tournaments: Valencia (March 2013) and Paris Women (April 2013).

In Valencia we achieved our best result to date travelling with two teams, and in Paris our Women's Team finished a very respectable seventh place out of 16. This was an extremely good result, considering that the majority of the teams in this tournament were formed using the best players from two or three different teams and the roster were full on international players.

We also participated in the Newcastle CTS tournament with a mixed team that perform extremely well despite the lack of experience finishing 9<sup>th</sup> out of 16 teams.

In the home front we participated in the Glasgow Cup winning both the mixed division and the women's division.

In our own Men's and Women's tournaments, our women were again excellent finishing 4<sup>th</sup> and playing extremely well and beating some of the select teams.

### **Regional and International Representation**

7 Lions players represented their countries in the Home Nations in Dublin and the Mainland Cup in Vienna: Adrian O'Sullivan for the Scotland M35 team; Victor Francisco-Suarez for the Spain MX Open team; Stephen Bennett for the Scotland Men's Open team, Jennifer Kieran for the Scotland Women's Open team; John Haggerty for the Scotland M40 team and Lizzie Willis and Elaine Clark for the Scotland W27 team.

Jen was our first ever representative female player in an open category, and I would like to congratulate her on her selection. She is one of our finest example of how hard work and commitment leads to success.



Several Lions' players also represented the Lions in the Glasgow Regional Sides: Rachel Facer, Adrian O'Sullivan, Lizzie Willis, Elaine Clark, Billy Milligan, Brian McCluskey, James Bandle and Laura Thompson. Congratulations to all of them.

### **Other Events**

For the second year, we have run social sessions (Touch For All) on the majority of Saturdays that we did not have any other events. The sessions have been well received by players of the Lions; however, we have failed again to attract players from other teams.

One of the aims of these sessions is to develop the sport and help corporate players to play regularly. This is an area that we will need to look at further during the closed season in order to improve it.

### **Youth Section**

One of the major targets for the club this year was the development of a Junior Section. We have run 5 after school training sessions, 5 Saturday's training sessions and a full day in the school when we basically introduced touch to approx. 300 teenagers.

The training sessions have gone well and a core of 10-14 players have attended regularly.

During this time we have assessed our capability as a club to run this in a regular basis, and we have come to realise that we need more volunteers, especially coaches. If the shortage of coaches is not solved in the near future I am afraid I will need to advise the Committee that we will need to cancel the development of our junior section. Personally, this will be a huge disappointment for me and all the coaching team that has worked extremely hard to get where we are now.

I am trying to resource volunteers and coaches at the moment, so please talk to me after the AGM if you are interested.

Last but not least, a person that I would like especially to thank as she has been outstanding in supporting me and Jenny is Audrey Murphy.

## **2014 SEASON**

### **Beginners' Academy**

Our traditional Beginners' Academy is planned to run from January 2014 to March 2014 in the East End Health Venue with Astroturf pitches. However, the name will change to Taster Sessions or similar.

We have a target intake this year of approximately 40-50 players and we aim to improve our retention rate to at least 70%.



Therefore, in the next few months, every Lions' player should try to promote the Beginners' Academy as much as possible, in order to achieve our objective.

It is also important to remember that during these sessions we should try to encourage the new players as much as possible.

This is also the pre-season training for our current players, so the Taster Sessions will run alongside our pre-season training.

### **Training**

The aim of the coaching team next season is to be able to increase level (especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> training squad) of training attendance during the whole season, trying to avoid the current lack of numbers towards the end.

Similar arrangements to this season will be in place this season, in terms of coaches and the splitting of the sessions in groups. Next year, we will try to set up the training squads sooner (by the end of November 2013), to make sure that every player knows our plans and what is expected of them as soon as possible.

### **Glasgow League**

We will be aiming to improve upon our very successful season, maintaining our top position in the women's, regaining the beginners' divisions, and hopefully winning both the intermediate and the men's divisions.

In terms of number of teams, the aim will be to have at least one more team than last year (nine teams).

### **STS Tournaments**

Our first team will be aiming to improve our overall position, and to be able to finish in the top four in at least one of the tournaments.

Our second team should be aiming to finish in the top 10.

A third aim is to be able to field a third team in at least 2 of these tournaments.

### **Other Tournaments**

We will be entering two international tournaments, Valencia and the Paris Elegance Tournament for women.

It is also our intention to participate in as many other tournaments as possible as they will be used as preparation for the bigger tournaments. Please make sure that you enter as many as possible as there is no better way to improve and enjoy the game that playing.



Details of our calendar next year will be posted on the website and newsletter as soon as possible to allow all players to plan ahead.

### **Youth Section**

A major target for the club continue to be the development of a Junior Section for several reasons, funding streams, keeping our ethos, etc. This requires a significant amount of resources in terms of coaches and volunteers as explained before.

I just want to reiterate that we need volunteers (e.g. coaches and also administrators), please contact me if you are interested.

### **Coaching Structure**

The coaching structure is being reviewed at the moment but it will be some changes especially with the creation of two new positions to coordinate the senior and junior sections separately in order to cater for the rapid growth that we are going through.

### **Summary**

This has been a very successful season and I am very proud of all your efforts. The success is bringing more players to the club (a great positive outcome) however this also is overstressing our coaching resources (and the rest of the resources of the club).

It is very clear that we need more coaches and unfortunately it is not a sport that we can resource them readily. Our only option is that the coaches need to come from inside the club. We have this year 4 more qualified coaches, Lizzie, Louise, John O'D and Alex that will help greatly but it is not enough to cover all our activities.

We obviously need more, so please let me know if you are interested.

To the players I will ask for your attendance to training in a more regular basis and try to keep as fit as you can during the close season.

Finally, thank you very much to all the coaches who have made my work very easy this year, and to all the players for their efforts during the past season. Thank you also to the committee for running the club so efficiently.

Victor Francisco-Suarez  
Head Coach