Candy Leagues

The Northumberland Board has been made aware of inaccurate and disparaging narratives circulating amongst the rugby community in Northumberland with regard to the recent changes to the Candy Leagues. This note summarises the actual situation and should be read in conjunction with the Board minutes of 11.10.2023.

For several years the Candy Leagues have been very successful at providing additional competitive match experience for many of our adult male players. The organisation and coordination of these activities were overseen by Craig Johnson. The board thanked Craig for his service when he chose to resign from this role early in the '23-'24 season rather than operate under the auspices of the County.

This year 40 clubs have participated in 819 CANDY, County and Merit League matches which has enhanced the playing experience for many players. Next season we are anticipating many more participants with interest from several Durham, Tees Valley and North Yorkshire sides who have heard the Leagues are well managed, effective and fun. We may be in a position where a sixth Candy League as well as the Merit League is operated. In short, the move in oversight of the Leagues to the Director of Rugby has, as a minimum, maintained if not enhanced the quality and quantity of the offer to our players. This was achieved from a standing start, after the commencement of the season, and with no support or handover. This is a link to this year's results
- https://northumberlandrugbyunion.com/candy-county-merit-tables/

The Candy Leagues have always been funded by an RFU grant. All RFU grants have reporting and accountability obligations attached to them. All such obligations fall on the CB irrespective of who delivers the project. All RFU monies are supposed to be channeled through the CB in order to demonstrate accountability and transparency. This year the amount bid for was £3,000 with £500 of that amount received in November 2023. The RFU has yet to confirm final grants totalling £2,500 (normally confirmed at the end of May once all fixtures have been added to GMS). For the first time, the RFU grants has been managed through the CB bank account. These monies and grant bids have been overseen by the CB Finance Director and County Administrator. The sums have been fully accounted for in the management accounts and reported to the RFU. They are also transparent to all clubs and members via board reports and on the NRU website. Historically the use of Club bonds (usually £30 per side) was also outwith the oversight of the CB board and not processed through the CB bank account. These bonds have been abolished.

The Board is now confident it is able to control, monitor and report with accuracy all rugby and financial activities related to the Candy Leagues. This is a requirement of the RFU grant and also allows for transparency to participating Clubs and players. We remain open and receptive to any constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement and innovation.

If you have any questions or queries about this note please don't hesitate to contact me, Brian Fergie, Finance Director or Dave Challenger, Director of Rugby or any of the central RFU team.

Thank You
Lucy Armstrong
Chair