

Good Evening everyone and welcome to the AGM, season 22/23. I am delighted to welcome everyone here at LRFC, those joining us online, and MOB EDB from Leinster Rugby. It was an incredibly busy and successful season from the point of view of everything that we achieved as a committee despite how we finished up at the end of the season.

Introduction:

At the AGM last year, Kevin Quinn, the former Commercial Manager, referred to LR's vision of forming a community post-pandemic. They had been impressed over the years by fan zone areas in Northampton, Exeter, Leicester, and Bath, a place where the club as a community could come together. When Kevin Quinn talked about community, he was referring to the club, the players, the season ticket holders, the management, the OLSC, and the broader supporter base. LR wanted to create a fan zone space where everyone in this community could come together as a group. Leinster approached us about this vision and asked for our help, and we worked collaboratively, and in particular with Gary Nolan, (Matchday Operations Manager) to help bring this vision to reality. We moved out of the LO and into the new Guinness Fanzone, the LD, a much more inclusive and accessible venue for all. A space where we set up the OLSC shop, the Legends wall, where we hosted players' Q&As, listened to live music, access to giant screens to watch the other games, and a great space to meet friends new and old.

The season:

Last Season was our first full season since the Pandemic. The season kicked off last year with an away trip to Zebre, OLSC committee members were in attendance, organising the first SOB of the season and an exchange of gifts with the Zebre Supporters Club.

We returned to the RDS the following week for family day at the RDS, the launch of the LD, and the distribution of the Season ticket packs. We had our first pre-match Q&A hosted by the OLSC with RK and HK in attendance, and our younger supporters asking the questions. This set the scene for the remainder of the season, over the next 7 months we interviewed over 20 players from the current squad, retired players, and coaches, pre and post-for-all of the games, and there were many highlights, but the ones to note are.

1. We welcomed the 2011 and 2012 Legends back for the exciting clash against Ulster, we were honoured to have had the opportunity to chat with JoeS, MikeR, and SOB, it was a great success and proved to be a very boisterous and fun evening.
2. The Christmas Night on the 16th of December when we welcomed Gloucester to the RDS, it was a fabulous event, the BOI Choir provided festive carols, and Madigans provided mulled wine and mince pies. We organised a bucket shake for our charity partner Jigsaw, It was an absolutely freezing night, and the fanzone was rocking afterwards to the sounds by the popular band Spring Break.
3. One of our favourite nights, was Seachtain Na Gaeilge on the 18th of February, Q&A hosted by MOB, a Ceili, and the amazing Henshaws Trad band post-match, with Robbie getting up for a few songs
4. 2023 Legend T-shirt Launch: Our last night in the RDS was March 24th, and we launched our 2023 Legend, Dave Kearney, all proceeds on the night for our charity partner Jigsaw.
5. Laya kindly donated 16 Bodhrans to us last season, and along with the drums we already had we were able to loan these out to supporters at each game in designated areas in the stand to create that all important noise and atmosphere.

Supporters Buses:

We ran 3 interprovincial buses, away to Ulster, Connacht, and Munster. We had buses organised in Le Havre but the extreme cold weather conspired against us, and many people did not make it to the games. We ran several buses from Birmingham and Bristol to Gloucester to help people get to that game easily.

AVIVA Matches

It was our last game in the RDS on the 24th of March, and In January in collaboration with Leinster, we began planning ahead of the move to Aviva for the potential 7 games. We put a detailed plan on how these matches would be handled to ensure that the move was seamless and that the fan experience was maintained. We worked closely with LFC who offered the clubhouse and outdoor spaces as an additional supporter's base pre and post-match. This was a very welcome addition and worked very well in partnership with the established fanzone at the Sandymount Hotel.

SOB:

As it was the 1st full and normal season since the pandemic, we were able to plan and execute incredible SOB's, away trips in particular Gloucester and despite the weather, Le Havre. We had 8 games in Aviva last season, 2 pool games, and were lucky to have had a home run to all the knockout games of both the URC and Champions Cup. We saw ourselves in Aviva for 6 of those. As part of the Aviva plan we relied heavily on teams of dedicated and hard-working volunteers, we had a regular team of early morning volunteers who gave up their time and turned up week after week to help flag the Aviva and create that incredible SOB., a team who lined the route from the SH to the entrance, and a team of volunteers who carried the giant flag on to the pitch. The culmination of all that hard work was the day of the Champions Cup final in May, the early morning flaggers worked from 8 am to 12 pm putting flags all over the stadium top to bottom, and then another group managed the SOB from SH to the entrance and the chant off against the La Rochelle fans, whilst the result did not go our way, we were very proud to have been able to contribute to the most amazing and memorable fan experience.

STH Gifts:

Without our most generous sponsors, we would not have been able to produce knock-out stage merchandise for our supporters. The Bridge provided us with sponsorship to help us produce Blue sunglasses for the semi-final, and in partnership with BOI we produced a blue Bucket Hat for the final. The OLSC organised temporary tattoos and blue cheering sticks for the final as gifts to our supporters.

PRO and Social Media:

We did not have a dedicated PRO last season, and so the duties and work were split amongst the committee members. In terms of our SM reach, we currently have 62k FB followers, on Twitter, and Instagram, we have marginally increased our followers across these platforms, and over the knock stages the interaction spiked.

Our Legends

We said goodbye to some unbelievable legends this year, CEO Mick Dawson stepped down after 20 years, and we had the opportunity to say goodbye at the Leinster v Munster game. We had a Q&A with Conor O'Brien in the RDS, Conor was forced into early retirement due to injury. Finally, we were able to say goodbye to Leinster stalwart Devin Toner at a packed Aviva stadium in April.

Our Charity Partner.

Covid was tough on everyone, especially our younger population. We chose Jigsaw this year as our charity partner because we felt that the age group 12 to 25 years had particularly suffered during and Jigsaw provides much-needed mental health services to this group. We were delighted to have raised over 5k euros for Jigsaw during the year, an online auction, the annual table quiz, and our legends t-shirt launch

The Shop:

The move to the LD has been hugely successful, reaching supporters that we have never interacted with before, and our online sales have remained very strong. We produced new postcard images of the Legend t-shirts and some new SOB pins. Our main sellers are Leo the Lions, the beer carriers, blankets, and hip flasks.

Volunteers

It is safe to say that we could not have achieved a fraction of what we did last season without the army of volunteers who have given up their own time week in and week out to help us. From People coming to help to give out season ticket packs, set up and close the shop, handing out flags in the RDS, those who travelled away and helped, the early morning Aviva flaggers, the giant flaggers, the SOB volunteers, and everything else in between. On behalf of myself and the committee, thank you very very much for all your hard work.

Thankyou:

On behalf of the committee and myself we would like to extend a huge thankyou to all the sponsors, BOI, LAYA, Lantech, Best Menswear, the blue benefit partners, The Bridge, The Bath, Oslo, and all those companies who gave us prizes throughout the year. The players for their time for Q&As. jersey signings, and their interaction. To everyone in Leinster for all the help, support and advice throughout the season.

Conclusion:

It's been an amazing 2 years for me as president of the OLSC. I believe we have achieved so much in those years, and I believe I have done a good job. I have enjoyed working closely and in partnership with Leinster Rugby to serve the needs of the season ticket holders and the wider supporter base. Congratulations to Alan and the new committee, I wish you the very best of luck and I am looking forward to being part of the coming season and continuing all the good work that has been achieved to date. It is an exciting time for the club as the redevelopment of the RDS commences.

Personal Note:

As you may know myself Gavin and Rory lost our beloved son and brother Andrew along with his friend Max Wall at the beginning of the summer. It's been an incredibly hard 3 months and I probably wouldn't have been able to stand up here this evening if it wasn't for the kindness and love that myself and my family have been shown by the wider Leinster Rugby family. On Behalf of Gavin, Rory and myself I would like to take this opportunity to extend a huge heartfelt thanks to the many supporters, players, coaches, staff, sponsors and friends who took time to write to us, ring us, those who came to the funeral, those who dropped food and drinks at our door, sent flowers and showed us immense love at our most terrible time. Thank You to the OLSC committee for the support you have shown me, and in particular I would like to thank Mary Carroll who picked up my role and duties on the 2nd of July and has covered it for the last 3 months.