

## 2025 OLSC President's Report – September 10<sup>th</sup>

Good Evening to everyone for this, the 18th AGM of the OLSC as we wrap up and say farewell to the 2024/25 season and a warm welcome to those of you joining us here in Bective RFC. It was another busy season both at home and abroad and I would like to take a few moments to run through a lot of what the OLSC achieved as well as looking forward to what is coming up for the 2025/26 season. We're also delighted that Leinster Rugby have once again joined us and there will be an opportunity later in the evening to hear an update from them as well as putting any comments/ questions/ queries you might have to them. A warm welcome to Matthew Dowling (Chief Commercial Officer), Eamon De Burca (Commercial & Partnerships Mgr) & Helen Geoghegan (Strategic Growth Manager).

As with the last couple of seasons, this one is no different as we're once again kicking off our official campaign with away fixtures – this time though we're on the road to South Africa as our usual April fortnight has been brought all the way forward to Sept/ Oct of this season, and so a new focus in that sense but one that Leo and all the team will have been preparing for. We wish them all the best down there and to those of you travelling down also we thank you as always for your commitment and look forward to you waving the blue. Before that though we have our preseason friendly in Tallaght Stadium as we look forward to welcoming the Cardiff Blues and seeing as many of you there as possible. The aim as always is to get the familiar roar behind the blue and a change of venue for this one will bring a new challenge also, but one the OLSC will always get behind.

The end of August last year saw the last of the clear-out of OLSC memorabilia from the Laighin Out as work on the RDS formally began but more on that later from Leinster Rugby in their update. We were delighted to be warmly welcomed into Lansdowne RFC where we established our temporary supporters base and our plan is to continue there for the coming season as we have enjoyed many an enjoyable Q&A in the Zurich Room. My thanks especially to Gary Nolan (Matchday Operations Mgr), Elayne & Stephanie (Lansdowne RFC) as well as Tadhg, Caelan, Ciaran, Garry, Jack C, Joe Mc, James, Hugo & Ryan for their time with both the Q&A as well as mingling with supporters afterwards.

September and October saw us on the road to Edinburgh, Benetton and Connacht whilst hosting Munster in Croke Park and we're delighted that this fixture is also in the same venue in October (Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>).

## THE NEW YEAR

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The new year saw us once again on the road to La Rochelle where Pepe and all the team in General Humberts welcomed us as always with open arms. The weather was certainly more pleasant than the December fixture of 2023 and another victory here on this day showed the locals that when the blue marches, it does so in droves. The support both at home and away for the team never ceases to amaze me and I hope that whether you travelled to games in the Aviva, Interprovincials, or further afield, you enjoyed the experience and camaraderie that we in the OLSC have always looked to bring with us. The new year again saw us in Croke Park for a number of fixtures and whilst we thank Harlequins for bringing the weather on the day they were there, we cannot say the same about the Bulls when they visited the same venue in June! Nevertheless though, the result made up for the rain. A shoutout also to Glasgow who were over here so many times in a short space of time it might have made sense for them to just stay instead of travelling back and forth. No doubt they're looking forward to us paying them a visit in March next year.

## SUPPORTERS & THE BLUE

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It wasn't just the Aviva though where the blue was evident. The Committee as well as our tireless volunteers worked hard throughout the season to ensure the blue was at the Aviva, Croke Park, Galway, Belfast, Limerick, Italy, France, South Africa and the list goes on. A special word of thanks must go to Jim Bastick (Kitman Jim) for always ensuring there are flags tucked away in the van before he sets off on his travels. To JJ (sorry Leo), my thanks for his constant energy that gets the crowd fired up when it's needed. All of us on the committee had our dedicated roles throughout the last season and I know John especially is grateful for all the volunteers who give up their time on matchdays. Whilst it is always unfair to single out any one person, I think we as a committee can all agree that some volunteers go above and beyond the ask and they know who they are. It really showcases the spirit of Leinster Rugby when fans undertake such tasks as arduous journeys week in week out, providing up to date travel information regarding public transport disruptions which ensures those travelling to games can do their utmost to have the blue on show. For those not always able to travel to games and watching from afar, we're thankful up-to-date broadcast information is always compiled and provided to us also. The reception for Ross Byrne for his legends t-shirt launch for example is a standout moment for me, and we plan to hopefully be in a position to organise a reception for Cian in the near future to allow supporters show their gratitude for his many years of service. Thanks to all who assisted in all of those and hopefully like our other volunteers, you'll be able to assist the new committee for the 2025/26 season.

Once again over the course of the season, we ran supporter buses to Connacht, Munster and Ulster and thanks to all of you who availed of the buses and travelled as well as those of you who were there to show your support. The committee will once again be looking to run the buses to those fixtures this season as well as seeing about options for Leicester and Bayonne to name just two. Details will be relayed accordingly.

On Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March before the Cardiff game, we organised an Open Mic type event in response to supporters who had reached out to us over the last while to see could some songs be introduced around match-days in the Aviva stadium. At the start of last season a small group of supporters emailed with a suggestion involving players, social media as well as voting and polls however due to the time constraints a project of that effort would warrant, we felt an Open Mic event would be a better option. The committee as well as some of the wider group of regular volunteers, put a lot of time and effort into organising the event through organising the venue, the equipment as well as promoting the event on social media and both in the lead up and on the day itself, we felt as if this might be something that would be well received.

Whilst the event itself on the day was warmly received, it became clear in the following days and weeks that this was not the case. Social media commentary on our own pages, fan forums for Leinster Rugby and the other provinces as well as nationally on several podcasts clearly demonstrated a negative reception to what supporters had proposed. Such was the reaction we had no option but to cease with further plans for rolling out on a grander scale. The committee felt the sting of the backlash and there are no further plans to revisit this in the future.

## THE COACHES

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At the start of last season, we were delighted to host a Coaches Evening and our thanks to Bective RFC for hosting. We were joined on the evening by Leo Cullen, Jacques Nienaber, Robin McBride & Tyler Bleyendaal and our thanks to them for addressing all questions thrown their way. We will liaise with LR for the upcoming season and see if the same can be organised again.

## THE THANKS

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Some more Thanks must go to BOI and The Bridge for their continued support which allowed us to produce the Away Guide to Dublin. From myself a special word of thanks to Michael Donnelly (Woolly Mammoth) for all his guidance and assistance with our social media and I'm delighted that Michael will continue to work alongside the committee for the coming season. Thanks also to LAYA who entrusted us with their "We are one. Always" campaign. It was a privilege as a supporters club to be asked to spread the message about sport, loneliness and encouraging people to get involved with volunteering, no matter at what level or level of experience you have. Thanks also to Lansdowne RFC, Sandymount Hotel, and anyone else who we reached out to over the season and who assisted us in any way. You made the season flow, and we hope that we can perhaps call on you for the coming season.

The final look back on last season is our Charity Partner – Neurodiversity Ireland. Once again, we held several fundraising initiatives and were delighted with all the support from those who both attended and contributed. Thanks also to those who donated prizes for all our events, most notably JWT, Leinster Rugby, Best Menswear and many more. A fantastic evening was also held in Slattery's Beggars Bush and a great night was had by all in attendance. Neurodiversity Ireland were also delighted to have accepted the Irish Shield at the Glasgow URC game in the Aviva back in June.

## A LOOK AHEAD

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A look to the season ahead for the new committee is that with the works now firmly underway with the RDS, there comes new challenges. The OLSC and LR (Gary & Co.) worked hard last season at creating an atmosphere for the team and fans in the Aviva, and I acknowledge that there was a tremendous amount of work done on this by us as a committee and perhaps there is more that can be looked at. I believe an area of focus for the new committee however will be continuing to work alongside LR in ensuring our new home in the RDS is one that will allow the OLSC to once again showcase itself to both the Leinster faithful as well as the travelling support. Believe you me there is plenty of memorabilia that came from the old Laighin Out that is just itching to get itself back up on a wall.

FINALLY

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When I stepped into this role two seasons ago I honestly had no idea what I was taking on given those who have held the title before me and what they had brought about in order to firstly get the OLSC off the ground but then to a position where it is (I believe) a supporters club that is admired and revered in the rugby community. I feel I have worked hard in carving out my own path as well as with changes implemented across committee and its day-to-day workings which will continue to allow it to go from strength to strength. Another area is the social media and the work I have done in terms of our profile as well as growing our fan base, both at home and abroad.

For all their support throughout my two seasons as President with anything and everything I needed assistance on, my thanks to Anouk, Claire, Eamon, Helen, Marcus, Paul, Rob, Sinead & Shane and all the team in LR.

From an everyday perspective and for pointing me in the right direction, thanks to Matthew Dowling, Gary Nolan and Kevin Beirne as Kevin was my day-to-day contact in LR for all things social.

Finally, my thanks to Aaron, Antoinette, Audrey, Bebhinn, John, Mary and Shay for their invaluable input and assistance over the last season. I hope the new committee can hit the ground running as quickly as last years because there are exciting times ahead for all of us within the OLSC and the wider LR family. I wish my successor the very best of luck and hope that I can be in a position to support them where needed.

Thank You,

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Alan Mooney

OLSC President 2024/25