



PRESS PACK 2011

RUGBY LEAGUE
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FAST TRACK TO GLORY

At the end of the month Co-operative Rugby League Conference XIV, launched at Donnington Park, gets into gear with around 190 teams on the fast track to glory.

Formed in 1998 with 14 clubs, the competition is the largest and fastest growing in rugby league worldwide, encompassing England, Scotland and Wales, three tiers, both sexes and merit leagues for aspiring clubs. Last year a total of 168 clubs were on the starting grid. For 2011, 115 teams from 110 clubs will contest the RLC, with 10 in Co-operative Rugby League Conference National, 50 in RLC Premier across eight divisions and 55 in RLC Regional which will have nine divisions. RLC Women's has taken a huge step forward for the 2011 season, with 28 teams signed up to take part, making it now the largest women's rugby league competition in the world. So far, at Merit League level, underpinning the RLC, the four regional competitions will see 12 clubs drawn from Yorkshire, 10 in the North West, 13 covering the Midlands and 10 in London and the South East although late entrants are still being accommodated. CO-OPERATIVE RUGBY LEAGUE CONFERENCE NATIONAL, the elite division of the summer community game and the level below the Championship, will have two new sides in 2011 which will see the competition truly live up to its name.

Current Champions Warrington Wizards – who defeated Huddersfield Underbank Rangers 23-18 in a thrilling Grand Final at the Halliwell Jones Stadium last September – will face stiff challenges from Coventry Bears and Welsh Conference champions Valley Cougars. Dan Steel, RFL Regional Manager for London & the South East, who is the competition's lead officer commented, "The Conference pyramid is getting stronger by the season as the competition as a whole continues to go from strength to strength."

"Each of the newcomers knows exactly what to expect from stepping up a level and, after a rigorous vetting process, have had their excellent applications accepted."

"Last season was rated by many as the best ever on the field," he continued, "and the management group are confident that the inclusion of the duo will maintain that. These continue to be exciting times for the Co-operative Rugby League Conference." Liz Matkin, The Co-operative's Head of Sponsorship, said, "We're delighted that The Co-operative Conference is getting stronger both in the women's and men's competition. The Co-operative is committed to grassroots rugby and fully supports the continued growth of the sport in the heart of communities across the UK. Best of luck to all teams taking part this season."

It is not quite a voyage into the unknown for the incomers. When the competition was



CO-OPERATIVE RUGBY LEAGUE CONFERENCE NATIONAL 2011
Bramley Buffaloes, Coventry Bears, Dewsbury Celtic, Featherstone Lions, Hemel Stags, Huddersfield Underbank Rangers, Kippax Knights, Nottingham Outlaws, Valley Cougars, Warrington Wizards

known as National League Three, before the advent of Conference Premier Divisions, COVENTRY BEARS tasted glory in what was their finest hour, taking the title in 2004. They are hoping to emulate that success by renewing their association with Coventry RFC which will see the Bears returning to play their home fixtures at the Butts Park Arena, the site of the original Coventry Northern Union side that played prior to the First World War. Harry Jepson Trophy runners-up for the past two seasons, the Midlands champions see their return to the national stage as an opportunity to once again showcase rugby league to the many oval ball fans in Coventry and the West Midlands.

Head Coach Alan Robinson said, "Playing at

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The Butts Arena will offer a new, high profile game day experience while also helping us attract new sponsors and players. It is a move which shows that both codes of rugby can work together. Returning to The Butts is a really exciting prospect for everyone involved in the club."

Nelson-based VALLEY COUGARS will celebrate their tenth season in existence with promotion to the national tier and will be hoping to follow in the footsteps of the then Celtic Crusaders Colts, who in their sole campaign won the title in 2008.

Cougars' president and Wales Rugby League executive chairman Mark Rowley said, "We are delighted that the Rugby Football League has accepted our application to be promoted into the Conference National. It means that up and coming Rugby League players in Wales will have another step on the ladder to professional Rugby League."

"The Cougars will play in the division below South Wales Scorpions now and the two sides will have a strong link. With the Scorpions having a similar arrangement of sorts with the Crusaders on the dual registration rule, we feel that a pathway for Rugby League players in the Principality is looking more and more complete by the year."

"At the other end of the spectrum, if players at Welsh Conference Premier clubs have the ability to step up a level, the Cougars will give them that opportunity. It's all exciting times for the code in Wales."

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DEVELOPING FAST

The expansion of the womens competition comes on the back of increased investment by the RFL in development staff which has seen the birth of a number of new clubs particularly in the North West of England where seven – Leigh East, Leigh Miners Rangers, Macclesfield, Crossfields, Mancunians RL, West Craven Warriors and Widnes Moorfield Angels - have come into existence.

The new campaign will also see the inclusion of the three armed services – The Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy. Playing in the South of England group, the RLC will provide competitive opposition against community clubs for serving females for the first time in Rugby League's history and regular fixtures ahead of the annual inter-services competition in the autumn. In line with the expansion brief of the RLC, the women's competition is reaching across the UK, with teams included from six of the nine English sporting regions.

SOUTH

West London Sharks, Nottingham Outlaws, Coventry Bears, Royal Air Force, Royal Navy, The Army

NORTH EAST

Featherstone Rovers, Hunslet Hawks, Peterlee Pumas, Leeds Akkies, Stanningley, Whinmoor

CENTRAL

Keighley Cats, Dudley Hill Diamonds, Bradford Thunderbirds, Brighouse Ladies, West Craven Warriors

NORTH WEST

Leigh East, Leigh Minders Rangers, Mancunians RL, Wigan Ladies, Chorley Panthers

WEST

Warrington, Widnes Moorfield, Macclesfield, Halton, Crossfields



MAKING PROGRESS

In a new innovation in CO-OPERATIVE RUGBY LEAGUE CONFERENCE PREMIER and REGIONAL, the first six weeks of Midlands competition will be a grading phase with a split coming at the half way stage of the campaign.

All Premier and Regional champions will progress to the quarter finals of the national play offs with the exception of the Scottish Regional winners.

In the Premier, Yorkshire, like the Midlands, will have East and West divisions and there will be a new West of England Regional competition. While the avowed aim of the RLC from its inception has been participation, the number of players coming through into the professional ranks - and reaching international standard - allied with an ever increasing schools and junior programme, has started to achieve a genuine "widening of the talent pool" which England Head Coach Steve McNamara is keen to recognise. "It gives me great pleasure to see the progress that the sport has made," he said. "It is testament to the hard work put in over the past couple of decades by countless volunteers and everyone who has played a part in establishing rugby league as a national game should be immensely proud of their achievements." "Such expansion and the increase of players coming into our game not only increases the profile and standing of the sport but raises playing standards across the board and giving coaches, including myself, more quality players to choose from for the top levels of the sport."

CO-OPERATIVE RUGBY LEAGUE CONFERENCE PREMIER 2011 – Harry Jepson Trophy

YORKSHIRE (WEST)PREMIER

Lindley Swifts
Shaw Cross Sharks
East Leeds
Parkside Hawks
Guiseley
Doncaster Toll Barr
Leeds Akkies
Prospect Pirates

YORKSHIRE (EAST)PREMIER

York Lokomotive
Scarborough Pirates
Rotherham Giants
Cutsyke Raiders
Knottingley Stozle Rockware
Moorends-Thorne Marauders
Walton Warriors
Barnsley Broncos

RLC NORTH WEST PREMIER

Liverpool Buccaneers
Mancunians
Wigan Riversiders
Widnes West Bank Bears
East Lancs Vikings
Leyland & Accrington

NORTH EAST PREMIER

Wallsend Eagles
Jarrow Vikings
Peterlee Pumas
Sunderland Nissan
Gateshead Spartans
Gateshead Storm

SCOTLAND PREMIER

Carlisle Tigers
Ayrshire Storm
Fife Lions
Edinburgh Eagles
Moray Eels
Easterhouse Panthers

SOUTH PREMIER

Hainault Bulldogs
Hammersmith Hill Hoists
West London Sharks
South London Storm
St Albans Centurions
Eastern Rhinos

RLC WALES PREMIER

Torfaen Tigers
Brigend Blue Bulls
Cardiff Demons
CPC Bears
Valley Cougars A
Titans

RLC MIDLANDS EAST

Leicester Storm
Birmingham Bulldogs A
Northampton Demons
Nottingham Outlaws A

RLC MIDLANDS WEST

Birmingham Bulldogs
Bristol Sonics
Leamington Royals
Telford Raiders

CO-OPERATIVE RUGBY LEAGUE CONFERENCE REGIONAL 2011

RLC SOUTH EAST
Guildford Giants
Southampton Spitfires
Sussex Merlins
Elmbridge Eagles
Greenwich Admirals
Portsmouth Navy Seahawks
Medway Dragons

RLC EAST

Norwich Saxons
St Ives Roosters
Bury Titans
Bedford Tigers
Sudbury Gladiators
Northampton Demons A

RLC NORTH WEST

Chester Gladiators
Crewe & Nantwich Steamers
Chorley Panthers
Rochdale Cobras
Blackpool Sea Eagles
Cadishead Rhinos

RLC NORTH EAST

Northallerton Stallions
Peterlee Pumas A
Hartlepool
East Cumbria Crusaders
Cramlington Rockets
Durham Demons
Whitley Bay Barbarians
Winlaton Warriors

RLC SOUTH WEST

South Dorset Giants
South Somerset Warriors
Exeter Centurions
Somerset Vikings
Plymouth Titans
East Devon Eagles
North Devon Raiders
Devon Sharks

RLC WEST OF ENGLAND

Oxford Cavaliers
Swindon St George
Gloucestershire Warriors
Bristol Sonics A
Wiltshire Wyverns

RLC WALES

Blackwood Bulldogs
Bonymaen Broncos
Dyffryn Devils
Neath Port Talbot Steelers
Tydfil Wildcats

RLC SCOTLAND

Falkirk
Cumbernauld
Aberdeen Warriors
Moray Titans
Ayr Knights



KEY DATES

NATIONAL

Sunday 4 September
Final league games

Sunday 11 September
Qualifying semis – 3 v 6 & 4 v 5

Sunday 18 September
Grand Final play off – 1 v 2
Semi Final eliminator – QS1 v QS2

Sunday 25 September
GF eliminator

Sunday 2 October
Grand Final

PREMIER

Saturday 6 August
Scotland Grand Final

Saturday 13 August
West Yorkshire Grand Final
East Yorkshire Grand Final
North West Grand Final
Midlands Grand Final
North East Grand Final
South Grand Final
Wales Grand Final

Sunday 21 August
Game 1 – South v Wales
Game 2 – Midlands v North West
Game 3 – East Yorkshire v West Yorkshire
Game 4 – Scotland v North East

Sunday 4 September
Game 1 v Game 2
Game 3 v Game 4

Sunday 11 October
Grand Final

REGIONAL

Saturday 13 August
West of England Grand Final
South West Grand Final
South East Grand Final
East Grand Final
North West Grand Final
North East Grand Final
Wales Grand Final
Midlands Grand Final

Sunday 21 August
Game 1 – South West v West
Game 2 – South East v Wales
Game 3 – North East v North West
Game 4 – Midlands v East

Sunday 4 October
Game 1 v Game 2
Game 3 v Game 4

Sunday 11 October
Grand Final



ROLL OF HONOUR

NATIONAL LEAGUE THREE / RLC NATIONAL

2010 – Warrington Wizards 23 v 18 Huddersfield Underbank Rangers
2009 - Bramley Buffaloes 38 v 22 Huddersfield Underbank Rangers
2008 - Celtic Crusaders Colts 26 v 4 Bramley Buffaloes
2007 - Featherstone Lions 42 v 30 Bramley Buffaloes
2006 - Bramley Buffaloes 30 v 8 Hemel Stags
2005 - Bradford Dudley Hill Demons 28 v 26 Bramley Buffaloes
2004 - Coventry Bears 48 v 24 Warrington Woolston Rovers
2003 - Warrington Woolston Rovers 42 v 6 Teesside Steelers

DAVID OXLEY MEDAL (Man of the Match in the Grand Final)

2010 - Nathan Chappell (Huddersfield Underbank Rangers)
2009 - Paul Drake (Bramley Buffaloes)
2008 - Lee Williams (Celtic Crusaders Colts)
2007 - Dean Gamble (Featherstone Lions)
2006 - Marc Gibson (Bramley Buffaloes)
2005 - Tony Williams (Bradford Dudley Hill)
2004 - Kurt Johnson (Coventry Bears)
2003 - Liam McCarthy (Warrington Woolston Rovers)

RLCN PLAYER OF THE YEAR

2010 - Jono Smith (Warrington Wizards)
2009 - Adam Millward (Nottingham Outlaws)
2008 - John Richardson (Bramley Buffaloes)
2007 - Bart Thomsen (Featherstone Lions)
2006 - Matt Walton (Hemel Stags)
2005 - Harry Gee (Gateshead Storm)
2004 - Adrian Veamatahau (Coventry Bears)
2003 - Dave Patterson (Warrington Woolston Rovers)

HARRY JEPSON TROPHY

2010 - St Albans Centurions 56 v 4 Coventry Bears
2009 - West London Sharks 24 v 14 Coventry Bears
2008 - Nottingham Outlaws 28 v 8 West London Sharks
2007 - St Albans Centurions 28 v 20 Coventry Bears
2006 - South London Storm 30 v 0 East Lancashire Lions
2005 - Bridgend Blue Bulls 60 v 10 Leeds Akkies
2004 - Widnes Saints 36 v 28 West London Sharks
2003 - Bridgend Blue Bulls 33 v 26 Carlisle Centurions
2002 - Coventry Bears 21 v 14 Hemel Hempstead Stags
2001 - Teesside Steelers 12 v 10 Coventry Bears
2000 - Crawley Jets 38 v 22 Rotherham Giants
1999 - Chester Wolves 26 v 24 Crawley Jets
1998 - Crawley Jets 40 v 12 South Norfolk Saints



BEV RISMAN MEDAL (for the outstanding performance in a Grand Final)

2010 – Adam Kal (St Albans Centurions)
2009 - Ben Moriarty (West London Sharks)
2008 - Paul Calland (Nottingham Outlaws)
2007 - Tom Pritchard (St Albans Centurions)
2006 - Luke Bonner (South London Storm)
2005 - Gareth David (Bridgend Blue Bulls)
2004 - David Bourke (Widnes Saints)
2003- Karl Hocking (Bridgend Blue Bulls)
2002 - James Cathcart (Coventry Bears)

RLC REGIONAL GRAND FINAL

2010 – Northampton Demons 16 v 12 Parkside Hawks
2009 - Northampton Casuals 40 v 14 Jarrow Vikings
2008 - Moorends-Thorne Moor Marauders 38 v 20 Bristol Sonics
2007 - Widnes Saints 27 v 18 Bedford Tigers
2006 - Liverpool Buccaneers 36 v 30 Thorne Moor Marauders
2005 - Wetherby Bulldogs 32 v 16 Gloucestershire Warriors

RLC SHIELD

2005 - Blackpool Sea Eagles 74 v 10 St Ives Roosters
2004 - Cardiff Demons 29 v 20 Thorne Moor Marauders
2003 - Bolton le Moors 28 v 21 Torfaen Tigers
2002 - South London Storm 54 v 2 Bedford Swifts

RLC WOMENS GRAND FINAL

2010 – Keighley Cats 18 v 14 Stanningley Ladies
2009 - Bradford Thunderbirds 44 v 8 Coventry Bears Ladies
2008 - West London Sharks Ladies 44 v 20 Coventry Bears Ladies



The **co-operative**

From community projects to a share of the profits, renewable energy to Fairtrade products, we believe that when the benefits are passed around, it's **good for everyone**

