

1994

PRESIDENTS REPORT

On the 24th October 1994 The Pirate Club set sail & aboard "The Good Ship Venus", was an enthusiastic crew comprising some new & old deck hands. The new captain of the ship was very excited & pleased with his recruitments & immediately began the task of rebuilding his ships rugby team. It was important to firstly identify the areas of concern & devise a positive plan of attack that \Uuld eventually lift this great Club to a competitive unit. A special meeting was held in the cabin of our newly appointed first grade coach & many ideas ~re thrown into the Pirate's treasure chest. The Club subsequently came up with three main areas to attack.

We needed more crew members aboard so that ~ could run on three full teams each week when we pulled into port to play our weekly games. Publicity Petty Officer Doc printed sane amazing flyers that were scattered all over the city. Along with Fras! & Newlo! from the Northern D3ily Leader & our new & popular 92.9FM radio supporter "Mailey In The Morning" the Club began a professional publicity campaign to attract new players. Thanks to Doc we attracted sane new & exciting young players. I take this opportunity to thank all those club members in the media for their great support in 1994.

The second task was to make our sides competitive on the paddock. We had no illusion that this was going to be easy. We began a pre-season train-on programme, while not being the huge success we hoped it would be, it did show the city that we were getting very serious about rugby in '94. It had the desired effect of getting players together much earlier & building Club spirit. It also meant that. our early training sessions were well attended and many new club members were registered at this time.

The Club had a few early season setbacks. The news of Peter McHattan's (life member) fight with cancer came as a huge blow to all club members especially as Pete was at the time coming to training in preparation for the '94 season. I have been associated with this club in one way or another for 25 years & it's at times like this that the true spirit of Pirates is seen. Pete lost the fight on the 8th July this year, the club will always remember 'Grandad'.

Team training was set to start when appointed first grade coach Dave Bettington was forced to resign due to business commitments in Sydney, while John Bevan also resigned after only three or four rounds. Thanks to Gordon Baa Baa! our long time stalwart & junior coach who reluctantly took over the first grade job. Gordo worked his tail off to make Pirates First Grade competitive this year. We finished the season on a proud & positive note. We only won one game in first grade, but were close to winning at least four or five other games during the season. Did we achieve our second goal to become competitive? On reflection I believe we did. Remember the first round ~~ against Inverell when the referee requested the opposition to back off our scrum, This didn't happen in the second round. As well as being comprehensively flogged by Tamworth in the first round (eventual competition winners) we held them to an eleven six score line at half time in round two & frightened the life out of the magpie camp.

The reserve grade finished in the middle of the field thanks mainly to the hard work of coach Kep who found the job of keeping a settled team on the field difficult. I believe reserve grade is probably the hardest team to coach, coping with your own team injuries & losing players to first grade when a top grader is injured, great job Kep. The big highlight of the year was the mighty juniors making the semi-finals for the first time in. the history of the club. This was an absolute fantastic effort, with many good zone rugby judges saying that we should have made it through to the grand final. Thanks to Gordo, Andrew O'H, Bathy & all other club members for the great support given to the juniors this year. I believe the future strength of the club will depend on us maintaining & building an even stronger team over the next 2 or 3 years.

The third aim was to become more professional on & off the field. The committee put into place practices that have raised the image of the club within the community, players, sponsors, members, referees & The Central North Zone. Being a successful club not only depends on player attitude but also support & image off the field.

I would like to thank all our sponsors, especially our major sponsor "The Tudor Hotel" for their support in '94 & look forward to your help in '95.

I would like to thank all the members of the committee, players, & all social members who have supported me this season. I make special mention to the ship's purser Yeo-ee, navigator Sandra, !he Good Ship's Social President Carolyn, Club Captain Doc & the Ship's Cockatoo T.C. for all the support & guidance & for making sure the ship's captain stuck to the club's plan for the season. As the Pirate flag canes down from the mast for another season I can honestly say that I am proud of the progress the Club has made this year. The voyage was a little rough at times & difficult but then again it was also enjoyable. I am aware that there is still much more work to be done.

We have already begun planning for the new season & would like to see more support from former club players in 1995. This Club is on the move so become more involved & feel !he Pirate Spirit at closer quarters.

PIP McCANN

FIRST GRADE COACHES REPORT

The 1994 Pirates first grade rugby side was a team that literally had its share of highs & lows. The season began most promisingly with innovative advertising attracting new players to the club. New players to join the first grade ranks were Warren Perry, Peter Brazel, Mark Bennic, Gary Littlejohn, Andrew Watson & Paul Van Wel.

A successful pre season Newcastle trip showed a first grade side which would be very competitive barring injuries & Saturday work commitments.

The lack of depth of experienced quality players was to be a telling factor as the season regressed - oh how we yearned for 3 or 4 more of these players for first grade. Our opening central North competition game away to Inverell saw us very under prepared to compete with red hot Inverell outfit which was having its 7th or 8th game to our second. It was in this game that we lost our number one halfback Peter Newell for the remainder of the season. We ever quite recovered from that 53-0 loss as we struggled to find the right combinations, halfbacks in particular. Our other top halfback Andrew O' Halloran was himself recovering from injury - full knee reconstruction.

At the completion of round four Gordon Barbara became the first grade coach due to John Bevans resignation. First grade then settled down to concentrate on one of the goals set for the season which was to win some first grade games. This became a reality in round 8 V Barraba whom we comprehensively beat 30-15. This was to be the first & only win for the season. This was certainly a high, something we didn't really achieve again till the last two games of the season, Barraba (lost 24-19) & Tamworth (lost 39-9) - 11-6 halftime & 18-6 20 mins to go. That proved as mentioned earlier our best side on the field barring injuries or work commitments was very competitive.

During the second round of competition we certainly suffered some heavy defeats these were real low points. So one may ponder why was this all so? This I believe was due to a number of factors; The way Rugby is played today is very different ie; faster, quicker, more open-more attractive!!

Today's game requires particular skills needed to be known & carried out by forwards & backs as ripping, mauling, setting up, laying back.

FITNESS is more pertinent to the modern game (this is always a prerequisite for any rugby layer) - We clearly lacked fitness in the second half of all games - resulting in other teams posting a lot of points in the latter stages of all our games ie; Tamworth 18-6 20 mins to) final score 39-9! We couldn't field our strongest team consistently enough due to injuries, work commitments holiday requirements in rugby season an old foe of mine for years) We needed the services of a halfback. We needed more quality players in key positions. We had inexperienced players in their first season of rugby.

These may all seem lows but on the high side is; Our skills levels are much higher. We have abundant talent as ardent rugby fans & coaches have indicated & voiced!! We proved that we are competitive. We proved that we are going to be a Rugby force in the Central North Competition. There is a quiet determination in the first grade - Club ranks to make the 1995 season a good one. Players are now recruiting new players more vigorously than in the past. Players are now getting behind what I think is a wonderfully strong & committed Committee President. The Pirate spirit is alive & well !!

These are my reflections about the 1994 first grade season, a season which everyone shared absolute highs & lows but one can honestly say the Camaraderie, Spirit & Commitment shown to me this year was rather special.

A special thank you to Steve Mazengarb, Pip McCann, Kep Mariu & Barry Everingham for their contributions throughout the season

GORDON BARBARA

2ND GRADE COACHES REPORT

1997 was a case of the year that was. After the great effort of the Committee through advertising & arranging pre-season fitness routines through Fitness Plus, the expected on field results failed to materialise.

Fitness it seems does not appear to be high on the agenda for most & whether you love it or not, it still remains an important part in one's preparation to give yourself a head start on the opposition.

Hopefully this was a lesson learnt & 1995 will see a more disciplined & dedicated approach by all.

A BIG THANK YOU to the Committee members who gave their time so unselfishly throughout the season. Your input cannot be measured in a single beat but your efforts especially on match days were much appreciated.

To be so near & yet so far was probably the cliché of the year. With the shortage of numbers earlier in the season & not knowing until match day if ample numbers allowed a side to take the paddock my utmost respect goes out to all players for their contributions throughout the season.

Pirates Rugby Club as a whole have players of immense skill & talent. Had the coaches have had the opportunity of being able to harness this talent together on training nights instead of half the team turning up on Tuesday & the other half on Thursday it is without doubt 1994 could have seen 2nd Grade make the finals along with Under 19's.

Just missing out on a place in the final 4 was disheartening taking into account some of the hard earned victories which came about with the Pirates never day die attitude. Perhaps the highlight of the year was knocking off last years Premiers, & on their HOME GROUND too!!!

It is this attitude which will win Pirates many a game to come & whatever highs or lows are experienced by some players throughout the '94 season it is a case of remembering: - a fellows test of strength & character is not whether he scores all the points or gets the man of the match award each week but knowing deep down inside he has given 110% & more to his team mates.

This is what Rugby is all about - mateship, camaraderie, & always giving your best.

I guess it's why they call it "The game they play in heaven".

Looking to jive in '95

KEP MARIO

U 19 COACHES REPORT

The 1994 Rugby season will be a season which will hold great memories for all those members of the team. Certainly, from a coaches perspective, I derived a great deal of satisfaction being associated with a team which had obtained a place in the Semi Finals for the first time in 34 years. This fact in itself, will now be included within the history of the Club & represents something of a watershed of recent times for the Under Nineteens division of Pirates Rugby. The goal achieved during the course of the season" will optimistically witness the return of success for the senior teams, with the elevation of members of the existing juniors team into grade over the next 2-3 years.

The most encouraging aspect of the 1994 season with respect to my involvement with the side, was the fact, that throughout the course of the season we were for the first time that I can remember, obtaining a full compliment of players regularly on a Tuesday & Thursday night.. The full compliment of players which were able to snare, was a credit to the enthusiastic, persistent." & conscientious approach that Gordon Barbara has displayed over many years for this Club. The full compliment of players enabled the side to develop a certain structure to our style of Rugby. That structure which we(initiated very early in the season, & developed throughout the course of the season, ultimately brought about success on the paddock.

The Under Nineteen team was fortunate this year to have the services of a number of new & talented individuals. There was a broad spectrum of ability throughout the entire team. There was a strong front row which was well supported via a committed back-row & energetic loose forwards. In the backs, the side was competently led by Andrew Yeo who provided good service to his outside backs. Generally the back line was blessed with speed & illusiveness, & towards the end of the season members of the back line obtained sane skill with respect to presenting the ball to enable phase rugby.

All members of the side were able to interact well amongst themselves, & that harmony & unity in the team was displayed during game & at post match functions.

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation to all those Senior players & supporters of the Club who assisted the side in any manner during the season. Rugby is a game whereby friends are acquired for life & memories accrue. This season was no exception.

Unequivocally, our common goal over the next couple of season will be striving to ensure that the First grade side experience success - no doubt with assistance of a strong nucleus of younger players which the Club have fostered. Let us strive for better things.

ANDREW O' HALLORAN