

## **2020 - THE YEAR OF THE VIRUS**

What a disastrous year! Not just on the rugby field but throughout all aspects of life all over the world. The Covid 19 pandemic resulted in millions of people losing their lives, millions more suffering serious health issues, whole countries in lock down, jobless people striving to survive any way they could and the development of the new 'Normal' where social contact of any kind was very rare.

Of course rugby in the Illawarra was no different but thanks to a lot of hard yards by lots of people a limited competition did get underway and I think everyone welcomed the opportunity to get out and do something that they loved – Play Rugby.

### **COMMITTEE**

University Rugby club was blessed in having a dedicated bunch of volunteers continue to ensure the club stayed afloat in a different and very difficult environment.

'Big Hearted Bob' Wheway was again President and he was able to call on the usual suspects in 'Sproggy' McGuinness, Glenda Heggen, Andrew Newhouse, Iain Lamb, Dion Miller and Canio Fierravanti to guide the club through the minefield that was the new normal.

Bob Nowotny, Max Heggen and Lusii Tanevesi with their helpers were the saviours of the club by working miracles and getting a canteen operating at Senior and Junior games. Their efforts ensured that the club had sufficient funds to survive.

### **SPONSORS**

Lots of businesses felt the impact of the recession caused by this virus and the Illawarra community was no exception. All of our sponsors wanted to help but most were not in the position to do so.

There were two shining lights for the club. One was the University who covered the costs of the ground hire and we were also able to use the grant provided by the Vice Chancellor for the Touch 7's competition to meet our commitments to our suppliers.

The other sponsor who really assisted us was U Physio with Tim Grey doing a fantastic job getting our senior and junior players on the field and looking after all their injuries.

### **THE COACHING STAFF**

The season began with Shaun McCreedy again taking on the club coaching role and he was joined by Dion Miller as the first-grade coach. In Seconds Greg Bourne was eagerly looking at continuing on as coach and he was joined by new guy, Rob Heritage. Rob was a successful schoolboy coach at Scotts College in Sydney and had also helped out in our juniors for a few seasons.

Matthias Wann was keen to lead third grade and Shaun was going to take on the Colts in the Radcliff Shield but the best laid plans went astray when the Corona 19 Virus raised its head.

When the competition was postponed there was a degree of uncertainty about what the season would end up being and as a result not only were players lacking in direction but so were the coaches and as it turned out Matthias and Dion were unable to commit due to family concerns.

Greg and Rob then put their hands up and took control of the second-grade side and did a remarkable job moulding it into a very competitive unit. Shaun and Evan Paota-Smith moved heaven and earth to get enough players to enter a team in the Sydney u/18 competition.

Thankfully, Christo Crous stepped up to take on the managerial duties in seconds along with Glenda Heggen while Mat 'Trout' Tahana came down from Campbelltown to assist Shaun and Evan with the u/18's.

## **THE PLAYERS**

The preseason was a little disjointed but we did manage to get in a trial against Goulburn before the full impact of Covid 19 hit. Obviously training and all rugby related activities ceased and the University closed its door with all classes being held online.

When it was decided that a shortened competition could be run, we found it very challenging to get players to commit and even getting enough players for one grade was daunting.

In the end we did manage to assemble enough bodies to bring together a team thanks to a lot of chasing by Rob Heritage within his Fijian community connections and Lachlan Conyers who was the driving force to getting players to come back and play. In the final analysis thirty players did take the field in the seven games we played and the club owes them a debt of gratitude for the performances.

Our squad was an interesting mix of what we shall call veterans, including 46 years old Tom Fenualelei who was the elder statesman, mixing with youngsters, such as Zini Makene, who was the baby of the group at seventeen.

Players who were returning for another season were again a mix of first graders, lower graders and Colts. Lachlan and Jarrad Conyers, Ian Leota and Brayden Grehan displayed their ability in a much lower standard than they were accustomed to and were a step above most opposition players.

Some old stagers also came back on board to help with Mitch Bell, Robbie Mardus-Hall and Pat Perillo showing they still had the ability to dominate games.

It was also a real plus to have Will Lamb, Rhys Bourne, Paddy Byrnes, Neth Makaafi and Jackson Rice, link up with some Colts from last season in Jack Scott and Jack Thurtell.

Some new students did hang around while the University shut with Nick Halliday being a shining light in the forward pack and Oscar Scott getting a good grounding in how to play running rugby.

We were lucky to be able to call on the services of a number of Fijians who were great value on and off the field. Some of these guys were very experienced rugby players who loved being a part of the club. Maciu Waqabaca, Romu Malumu-Rabua were great role models and with Etuate Nagulu and Lemeki Tuiniyavou played key parts in the team's success.

Another group of players who were welcome additions were guys from the Southern Crushers who were unable to field a side. Harry Edwards, who played Colts for us a few seasons ago, led the charge and he was joined by Rhett Doherty, Vince Piston and Adrian Velasco.

A further addition to the club was Will Halaufia who was a navy guy who travelled from Nowra just to be part of the Uni setup.

The squad developed a unique culture as the season progressed and they certainly enjoyed each other's company along the way.

## Second Grade 2020



<b>Back Row:</b>	Lemeki Qesa	Greg Bourne (coach)	Oscar Scott	Stuart McAllan
	Adrian Velasco	Jarrad Conyers	Rob Mardus	Brayden Grehan (vc)
	Pat Perillo	Jack Thurtell	Christo Crous	Tom Fenualei
	Rob Buzzato (physio)	Rob Heritage (coach)		
<b>Middle Row:</b>	Opeti Taufahema	Trent Bourne	Nick Halliday	Will Lamb
	Mitch Bell (c)	Will Halifulia	Ian Leota	Jack Scott
	Maciu Waqabaca			
<b>Front Row:</b>	Rhys Bourne	Dexter Anderson	Lachlan Conyers	Glenda Heggen (manager)
	Pat Byrnes	Eddie Vuniwawa	Zini Makene	

### THE COMPETITION.

The threat of the Covid 19 pandemic didn't hit home until January/February and its effect was to see the cancellation of all sport including the IDRU competition. There was a proposal to play 10 a side competition when restrictions were lifted but this never eventuated.

Things started to improve as the rate of infection dropped dramatically and by August it was decided that sport could resume with very strict protocols needing to be followed.

After a great deal of discussion with lots of chopping and changing a nine-week competition was able to be organised and thanks to the cooperation of all clubs it ran smoothly. There was a great deal of pressure on all clubs to ensure that procedures were strictly adhered to because one slipup would have been catastrophic.

It was obvious that numbers were lower than in previous years and so only two grades were contested. Bowral decided not to field any teams and as we were struggling we could only get enough players for one side which we entered in the second-grade comp. This was not well accepted by some of the clubs but it certainly was the best solution for our club.

This meant that the first-grade comp, the Peter Woods Challenge Cup, was contested by eight clubs - Avondale, Camden, Kiama, Campbelltown, Tech Waratahs, Shamrocks, Vikings and Shoalhaven. The second-grade teams played for the Talk to me Bro Challenge Cup and there were nine teams involved with the eight first grade teams joined by Uni.

### Second Grade Points Table 2020

Pos	Team	Played	Won	Draw	Loss	-/+	Points	Bonus	Total
1	Vikings	8	6	2	0	124	28	4	32
2	University	8	5	3	0	137	26	5	31
3	Avondale	8	5	1	2	52	22	5	27
4	Shamrocks	8	4	2	2	56	20	5	25
5	Tech Waratahs	8	4	1	3	32	18	5	23
6	Shoalhaven	8	3	0	5	-12	12	4	16
7	Camden	8	2	0	6	-114	8	3	11
8	Campbelltown	8	1	0	7	-126	4	3	7
9	Kiama	8	1	1	6	-149	6	0	6

#### The Season

##### Rd 1 – Campbelltown at University Oval

The season started with a home game and everyone was unsure of how the game against Campbelltown was going to go as there was a lot of conjecture as Campbelltown was identified as hotspot for the Corona Virus. It was all hands-on deck to make sure that we followed the Covid guidelines to the letter and thankfully we managed quite well.

We were also unsure of just how competitive we were going to be as Campbelltown were quite a big team. Our fears were soon dispelled as we attacked brilliantly with our backs running amuck to set up a 33-5 half time lead.

Things continued in the same vein after the break as Campbelltown began to feel the pinch but in the final washup we eased off and let in some easy tries but ended up winning convincingly 52-19

Rd 1 – 1/8/20	University Oval	University 52	Campbelltown 19
<b>Tries:</b>	Lachlan Conyers (2) Will Lamb	Mitch Bell Vince Picton	Ian Leota Will Halaufia
<b>Goals:</b>	Lemeki Tuiniyavou (3)	Zini Makene (2)	Lachlan Conyers (1)
<b>Players Player:</b>	Ian Leota		
<b>B &amp; F Points:</b>	<b>(3 points)</b>	<b>(2 points)</b>	<b>(1 point)</b>
	Will Halaufia	Dexter Anderson	Ian Leota

##### Rd 2 – Shamrocks at Shamrocks

Game washed out.

##### Rd 3 – BYE

##### Rd 4 – Avondale at Gerry Cappetta Oval

After a couple of weeks off we travelled down the M6 to do battle with Avondale. The fact that we were able to stay in the contest for long periods was a testimony to how we were developing as a side.

We started the scoring with a try to young gun Nick Halliday but the lead changed a number of times during the game until we were able to call on Ian Leota's aggressive running style which led to a

converted try. This allowed us to hit the front but then Avondale squared the game and with not long to go in the game turned down an easy penalty attempt which would have won the game and then lost the ball. The Wombat's coach was not a happy individual as the ref called full time.

Rd 4– 22/8/20	Gerry Cappetta Oval	University 14	Avondale 14
<b>Tries:</b>	Ian Leota	Nick Halliday	
<b>Goals:</b>	Lachlan Conyers (1)	Pat Perillo (1)	
<b>Players Player:</b>			
<b>B &amp; F Points:</b>	<b>(3 points)</b>	<b>(2 points)</b>	<b>(1 point)</b>

### Rd 5 – Vikings at Vikings Oval

Vikings were also undefeated as we took them on at their home ground. It was not a game of great running rugby but it was a close affair as the scores were nil all at half time.

It was much the same in the second half but after some powerful running by Romu Rabua we saw the 'old man' Tom Fenelelui crash over and get us on the board. 'Coll Hand' Perillo knocked over the conversion and we were looking like winners.

At this stage, some indiscipline crept in as we lost a guy to the bin and found ourselves defending for long periods. Our tackling was solid but eventually Vikings got across the line and a try was awarded. There was a great deal of angst as the ref originally ruled no try but the linesman gave the ref a call to say the try was good. This was not well received as he was a Vikings player and not an accredited official who was not even asked for his opinion by the ref.

Anyway the game carried on and the final result was a seven all draw and we were still undefeated.

Rd 5– 29/8/20	Vikings Oval	University 7	Vikings 7
<b>Tries:</b>	Tom Fenelelui		
<b>Goals:</b>	Pat Perillo (1)		
<b>Players Player:</b>	Romu Rabua		
<b>B &amp; F Points:</b>	<b>(3 points)</b>	<b>(2 points)</b>	<b>(1 point)</b>
	Romu Rabua	Nick Halliday	Will Halafia

### Rd 6 – Camden at University Oval

Camden were struggling and it was obvious that we were too good for them on the day as was emphasised by a 26 – nil halftime lead.

The pleasing thing was that we maintained our focus in the second half and won easily 45- nil.

Rd 6– 5/9/20	University Oval	University 45	Camden 0
<b>Tries:</b>	Lachlan Conyers (3) Will Lamb	Nick Halliday	Brayden Grehan Tom Fenelelui
<b>Goals:</b>	Lemeki Tuiniyavou (3)	Pat Perillo (2)	
<b>Players Player:</b>	Brayden Grehan		
<b>B &amp; F Points:</b>	<b>(3 points)</b>	<b>(2 points)</b>	<b>(1 point)</b>
	Brayden Grehan	Nick Halliday	Jack Thurtell Lachlan Conyers

### Rd 7 – Tech Waratahs at University Oval

It was a typical local derby as we took on our neighbours, Tech, with lots of passion and a physicality that was not always there in other games.

Jarrad Conyers was not going to take a backward step and he was a marked man as he led the way for our forwards.

The game was a tight affair but we skipped away to lead by 15 -5 at half time. As the second half got underway, we maintained pressure and were soon in control. Pat Perillo even made club history by being one of the few guys to actually kick a field goal. It was then that things began to unravel as Tech narrowed the difference and we were only in front 30-26 with time running out. However Tech wouldn't go away and we had a struggle on our hands to keep them at bay. Finally the whistle sounded and we had done enough to emerge winners 30-26 in what would have been our hardest game to date.

Rd 7-12/9/20	University Oval	University 30	Tech Waratahs 26
<b>Tries:</b>	Lachlan Conyers (2) Pat Perillo	Jack Thurtell	
<b>Goals:</b>	Lemeki Tuiniyavou (1) Pat Perillo (1)	<b>Pen Goal:</b>	Lemeki Tuiniyavou (1)
		<b>Field Goal:</b>	Pat Perillo (1)
<b>Players Player:</b>	Jarrad Conyers		
<b>B &amp; F Points:</b>	<b>(3 points)</b>	<b>(2 points)</b>	<b>(1 point)</b>
	Jarrad Conyers	Pat Perillo	Dexter Anderson

### Rd 8 – Shoalhaven at University Oval

Shoalhaven were light on in the forwards and so we played non contested scrums with the ref not enforcing the rule that required them to drop one player off. This was not a big deal but it did mean that the game was a lot closer than what may have occurred if the rule was followed.

Once again, our defense was solid and with Brayden Grehan showing the way we scored two tries in each half and won 24-7.

In the forwards Dexter Anderson produced his best performance, constantly being a presence at the breakdown. The crowd also went wild when ageless prop Maciu Waqabaca 'sprinted across the line to score his first try for the club.

All in all it was a pleasing performance.

Rd 8-19/9/20	University Oval	University 24	Shoalhaven 7
<b>Tries:</b>	Maciu Waqabaca Nick Halliday	Brayden Grehan	Will Lamb
<b>Goals:</b>	Pat Perillo (2)		
<b>Players Player:</b>	Brayden Grehan		
<b>B &amp; F Points:</b>	<b>(3 points)</b>	<b>(2 points)</b>	<b>(1 point)</b>
	Brayden Grehan	Dexter Anderson	Pat Perillo

### Rd 9 – Kiama at Kiama Showground

The last round saw us take on Kiama at their home ground and we were very confident that we would win the match as Kiama were struggling and we were in good form.

The real pressure was that we had to win with a bonus point to have any chance of catching Viking who were a point in front of us.

With this in mind we got away to solid start with our backs running strongly and making ground easily. The star of the show was Lachlan Conyers who chimed in beautifully from full back and he crossed for a hat trick of tries. The other backs also enjoyed running the ball against limited opposition and with a 22-5 half time lead we had secured the bonus point we required.

The second half began in the same manner and it was great to see Oscar Scott and Adrian Velasco score their first try for the club.

It became a willing affair with lots of verbal abuse from their bench and sideline but we maintained our composure and ended up scoring 50 points which was a good way to quieten the crowd.

At the completion of the match we waited impatiently to hear how Vikings had performed and we were disappointed to find out they also had won with a bonus point thus securing the 'Talk to Me Bro' Challenge Cup.

In the aftermath of a few beers and a lot of good cheer the boys settled in and basked in the fact that we had completed the season undefeated and in good spirits. The group had become a close-knit outfit who had played some attractive rugby in what was a very difficult situation.

Rd 9–26/9/20	Kiama Showground	University 50	Kiama 12
<b>Tries:</b>	Lachlan Conyers (3) Adrian Velasco	Eddy Nagalu (2) Oscar Scott	Will Halaufia Brayden Grehan
<b>Goals:</b>	Zini Makene (3)	Lachlan Conyers (1)	
<b>Players Player:</b>	Lachlan Conyers		
<b>B &amp; F Points:</b>	<b>(3 points)</b>	<b>(2 points)</b>	<b>(1 point)</b>
	Lachlan Conyers	Will Halaufia	Jarrad Conyers

The season finished with a quiet celebration at Coach Bourne's abode and everyone involved can take a great deal of pride as they achieved a splendid result under extraordinary circumstances that hopefully will never have to be encountered again.

#### Games Played 2020.

Player	2nds	Player	2nds
Dexter ANDERSON	7	Mitch BELL	5
Rhys BOURNE	7	Patrick BYRNES	7
Jarrad CONYERS	6	Lachlan CONYERS	7
Rhett DOHERTY	1	Harry EDWARDS	1
Tom FENUALELEI	6	Brayden GREHAN	4
Will HALAUFIA	6	Nick HALLIDAY	7
Oscar JONES	2	Will LAMB	7
Ian LEOTA	4	Neth MAKAAFI	4
Zintori MAKENE	2	Romu MALUMU-RABUA	3
Rob MARDUS-HALL	6	Stuart McALLAN	1
Etuate NAGALU	5	Pat PERILLO	6
Vince PICTON	3	Jackson RICE	6
Jack SCOTT	7	Oscar SCITT	5
Opeti TAUFAHEMA	1	Jack THURTELL	5
Lemeku TUINIYAVOU	4	Adrian VELASCO	3
Maciu WAQABACA	6		

## Points Scored 2020

Player	Total	Tries	G	PG	FG	Player	Total	Tries	G	PG	FG
<i>Second Grade</i>											
Lachlan CONYERS	48	8	4	0	0	Will LAMB	25	5	0	0	0
Pat PERILLO	22	1	7	0	1	Lemeki TUINIYAVOU	17	0	7	1	0
Nick HALLIDAY	15	3	0	0	0	Tom FENUALELEI	10	2	0	0	0
Will HALAUFIA	10	2	0	0	0	Ian LEOTA	10	2	0	0	0
Zintori MAKENE	10	0	5	0	0	Etuate NAGALU	5	1	0	0	0
Mitch BELL	5	1	0	0	0	Brayden GREHAN	5	1	0	0	0
Vince PICTON	5	1	0	0	0	Jackson RICE	5	1	0	0	0
Oscar SCOTT	5	1	0	0	0	Jack THURTELL	5	1	0	0	0
Adrian VELASCO	5	1	0	0	0	Maciu WAQABACA	5	1	0	0	0