MEN’S RUGBY CLUB 2016/2017

The 2016-17 season got off to the most promising of starts with record attendance at the first training session following on from two hard weeks of pre-season. To support the numerical expansion of the club the coaching staff were bolstered by the arrival of Argentinian forwards coach Luis Arola, and backs coach Chris Martin. Immediately their impact was felt with successive pre-season victories over Bishop’s Burton and Durham, the former currently playing in the league above the Saints. Add in a superb leadership programme from the erstwhile Director of Operations for the British and Irish Lions, and the club looked set for one of their best seasons to date across the board.

In what was surely the club’s proudest accolade to date, the Men’s 1st XV completed a record fourth successive victory over chief rivals Edinburgh in the Scottish Varsity match. Despite a slow start the team, led by fly half Scott Docherty, looked commanding in their 24-12 triumph. This achievement was made all the more remarkable by a student body three times smaller than Edinburgh’s.

October saw the start of the BUCS leagues, with all three teams in action. In what could perhaps be viewed as a Varsity hangover, the 1st XV went down to a resilient Edinburgh side. However, in the standout fixture of the month, the 2nd XV fought to secure a 22-24 away win to Dundee, the gutsy team containing 11 Freshers.

Last year’s tough season in BUCS Premier North B seemed a thing of the past. We had massive victories over Worcester, a team we lost twice to last season, a notable first ever victory for the club over Loughborough away from home and with a young team, following that up later in the season with a 50 point victory again them. We unfortunately lost twice to Edinburgh, which has highlighted our need to be able to perform every match. There was a good home victory over Strathclyde, who we unfortunately lost to in the return fixture, and the season was closed out with an extremely exciting 59-45 victory away in Manchester, who have recently had installed the largest 4G pitch in the country, which made for some amazing champagne rugby.
Our 2nd and 3rd teams have performed well, with both teams being filled with very young players, and while neither kicked on in the second half of the season to get the promotions we hoped for, the entire club will be targeting top of the table finishes for each team.

Next year will see the club enter a 4th team into BUCS, to aid our strength in depth, and we hope that this will push up the performances of all the teams above it.

As the XVIs season drew to a close, we had an extremely successful 7s season. The 1st team competed at several tournaments, running out winners in the Kirkcaldy 7s Plate. Our own tournament continued to extend it lead at the top of the biggest student 7s tournaments in the UK, growing to a massive 49 teams. The highlight of the 7s season was playing in an exhibition match before the final of the Melrose 7s, and in a shortened match we ran out unfortunate losers by one try.

We also had 6 Saints represented in the Scottish Student Sport XVIs team which beat Scotland U19s and 4 in the XIIIs team which performed well in the Home Nations tournament.

To supplement the on the pitch success, the club has thrived off it. Socials have been as emphatically attended as ever. Whilst obviously highly enjoyable to all involved, the key social events of the calendar, namely Movember Ball and Wednesday Night Lights attracted hundreds of onlookers between them and generated in excess of £4,000 for the club’s designated charities.
WOMEN’S RUGBY CLUB 2016/2017

Women’s Captain’s Report

The start of the season saw Saint’s WRFC take on Edinburgh in the national stadium at the 3rd Women’s Varsity fixture. The atmosphere fuelled by the roaring crowd of over 10,000 is unlike any other, but one quite familiar for the various international players brought forth by the Edinburgh side. Edinburgh remained victorious, by playing hard and running rugby. Nonetheless, the Saints persisted, phase after phase. Though the scoreboard may not have reflected the hard work put in over the summer and during pre-season, we undoubtedly proved ourselves as a worthwhile opposition.

A large recruitment drive saw many Freshers join the team and play for the Saints (and rugby) for the first time ever. The new recruits were quickly integrated into the team; however, it was during the BUCS league games that the departure of many of our most experienced players was most felt. A relatively inexperienced pack as well as a new back line meant an adjustment period was definitely felt as the team learnt to play together. It was only in the second semester that the strengths of the team started to shine through, and the Saints started playing some of their best games, most notably against Durham which saw us advance higher than ever before in the BUCS Cup.

This year’s Sevens Tournament was the biggest ever, with 9 teams in attendance, a record 3 of which were St Andrews teams. This was reflected in the quality of rugby played, featuring class sides such as Durham 1st’s and a final on University Park that made a great showcase for women’s rugby.
Off the pith, the Saints hosted our most successful social event: a ‘Back To School’ themed night in 601; all the better as part of the profits was donated to Teenage Cancer Trust. Additionally, the Saints broke new ground for our outreach, organising an event for RAG week for the first time. Our charity 6’s tournament took place in high spirit and attracted society and external teams. An exciting outreach program has also been established ready to launch next semester, featuring a return of coaching rugby in primary schools across Fife and a new plan to organise monthly coffee afternoons for our elderly community here in St Andrews.

All in all, it has been an eventful year and we’d like to thank Sandy’s Bar and the St Andrews Dental Care for their continued sponsorship. Prospects for next year are looking bright, with increased competition for spots as the team gets larger prompting the creation of a development squad. Excitement for Varsity has already begun and the Saints have pledged to challenge their fitness over summer. Keep an eye on our social media to see what we will be getting up to!

Website: [http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/sport/performance/programmes/rugby/](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/sport/performance/programmes/rugby/)
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