

## OWRFC – 2019-20 Season Report

Despite being cut short for obvious reasons, the OWRFC 2019-20 league campaign was hugely successful, with the club posting its highest league finish for several years. Had the remaining fixtures not been scrubbed, we could even have been knocking on the door of promotion.

Much like a fine wine or a front row forward, it's fair to say that our performances improve with age. After shrugging off a sluggish start we lost just three games after October, only to have our winning form halted in its tracks by the premature ending of the season in late March.

Up until that point however, we played some sublime rugby, registering 70 tries in 15 games. Our best form came after the Christmas break, with big wins over Worth Old Boys (59 – 17) and Old Wimbledonians (56 – 3) seeing us operate at our clinical best.

Up front, tighthead Chris Parish (T '13) was the anchor of a pack that often punched well above its weight. With Andrew Robertson (Pn '04) and Dan Campling both able to play prop and hooker, a trimmed down Hamish Fletcher (C '09) rounded out a very competitive set of front row options.

Unfortunately, we lost Eddie Jones' favourite statistician, James Tozer, to a knee ligament injury in October, but welcomed the addition of Phil Price. The new second rower offered significant bulk and further options to a lineout that grew slicker and more reliable each game. In the back row, George Byrd (Bn '08), Nick Holding-Parsons, Andrew Watters (S '14), and the tireless engine of Jack England gave us fire at the breakdown, and a solid barrier in defence.

Outside the Gwynne brothers at 9 and 10 were destructive options in the centres, with Cam Brown (S '11), Tim Salmon, and Matt Barker punching holes at will. Newcomer Shay Smith proved to be an electric runner in broken field and the wider channels, while the returning Charlie Barrow (Bn '13), Charlie Gordon (Bl '11) and Leander Cadbury added pace and deft touches to a backline bubbling with talent. Keeping us safe at full-back was Will Miller (S '11), who took on the added responsibility of captaincy naturally in his stride.

In a highly competitive RFU league structure, we are one of the few old boys' clubs that fields such a high proportion of genuine alumni each game, and it's always special seeing OWs spanning several generations of school intakes playing together. December's game at Old Rutlishians even saw two sets of OW brothers on the field, with Charlie and George Barrow (S '18), and Cam and Andrew Brown (Bl '14) all featuring.

It was a year of tremendous growth and development within the side, all helped along by some cracking clubhouse socials and SW London jaunts organised by Hamish Fletcher. As for the coming season, our eyes are now squarely focused on promotion.

Once again, we owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to our sponsor Jules Benkert at Canmoor, and to Karen Brown (or "Mum!" as Cam cried while beckoning her onto the pitch after hurting his ankle) for strapping, icing, and tending our wounds all season. Finally, we must also thank the diehards who, come rain or shine, were there to support at every game (and indeed Tim Salmon's red card disciplinary hearing) – you know you are!

We look forward to seeing you all again once rugby returns to the fray.