

Saracens Supporters Association

Chairman's Report 2018/19

16th July 2019

It's 10 years since the SSA, in its current format, was set up as Limited Company, in response to a proposal from the club for an 'official, but independent supporters' club. The SSA is established as a company limited by guarantee, i.e. it is owned by its members, has a board of directors, and is run by an elected management committee. Over the past few seasons have seen a significant growth in membership from the 300 or so in the early days, with the prospect of reaching 1000 paid-up members becoming increasingly realistic. This level of success is testament to the remarkable energy and commitment of our committee members, who, it is important to remember, are all volunteers. The primary objective of the SSA is to support the club; this includes all of our men's and women's teams, and we're working on the Mavericks as well, and it also includes the Saracens Sport Foundation, for whom we serve as a patron, and for whom we raise funds. We also sponsor players from the men's and women's squads. We adopt the same core values as the club, and cooperate with, and work alongside other supporter groups, including the First XV, the Fez Boys, the Fans Forum, etc., many of whom are SSA members. We also build enduring relationships with supporter groups from other clubs in the traditional spirit of rugby.

The growth we have experienced recently has some specific consequences, since we have a statutory requirement to comply with Companies House regulations, as well as protecting our members interests. In other words, there is an increasing amount of back-office work going on to ensure that we can successfully deliver the increased scope and scale of our activities. Over this past season, we have put in a considerable effort to ensure that we have the appropriate levels of governance in place, to guarantee that our financial management, liabilities, and data protection processes are fully compliant and in good order. In addition, extra effort has been made to ensure that our operations, record keeping, and data management are sustainable, transparent and robust, and that our members can be confident that our financial and communication processes are designed to protect their interests. It's not the exciting side of the SSA, but having a robust and sustainable infrastructure, with a hard-working committee that is accountable to its members, gives us the platform to deliver the exciting stuff.

Our ticketing service has consistently delivered opportunities for our members to be seated in the same blocks at away games, to enhance the support and noise levels at away games. Pre-match gatherings have become the norm, varying in attendance levels according to the venue (and opposition!). The gatherings at away trips this season in Lyon; The Mushroom in Newcastle; Waxy O'Connors in Glasgow and The Crate Brewery have all been extremely successful. The club now requests our assistance at gatherings at high profile games such as the European semi-final at The Ricoh, and at Twickenham ahead of the Premiership Final.

At home games, we are based on #TheOasis, working closely with the Match Day Operations team, to help make this the go-to, pre-match fan zone for home and visiting supporters.

We have continued to target high profile events that appeal to our members, with opportunities to meet and hear from players, ex-players and/or referees – an evening with Glen Jackson, proved to be a memorable night, and having Kelly Brown join one of our evenings with the XVth Warrior was another great success. Our fundraising for the Sport Foundation is focussed on our annual Quiz Night, and our participation in Foundation Match Days, not to mention the heroic, personal efforts of our members who get involved in some of the Foundation's fund-raising events. The SSA has now raised a total of over £20,000 for the Foundation.

One of the features of the past season has been the growing level of respect, cooperation and collaboration with the club, and although we will always jealously guard our independence, the relationship with the Saracens Executive Committee, Supporter Services, Match Day Operations and the Training Ground is giving us a stronger and stronger platform to deliver a first class programme for our members.

The other feature, for which I, and I'm sure all SSA members fully acknowledge and appreciate, is the outstanding effort put in by all of our committee members, who give up a significant proportion of their personal time to deliver our programme of events, our communications, and our member services, as well as managing our unseen, back-office processes. It would be wrong to pretend that this is easy. Running a Limited Company as a group of volunteers is demanding, and it is the dedication and enthusiasm of the committee members that has been the backbone of the success that we have been experiencing.

I also wish to acknowledge and thank all of our growing number of members; whose support and enthusiasm provides the incentive for us to continue to deliver to the highest standards. Thank you all for being SSA members, and since our annual membership fee of £10 is our only source of income, the more members we have, the more we can do. I'll leave you with two ways in which you can help us; firstly, if you have not already provided us with a direct debit mandate for annual membership, please do so if you can – it eases the administrative burden for us considerably. Secondly, please encourage other supporters to join if they have not done so already – the more we have, the more we can do.

#TogetherSaracens

John Trigg
Chairman SSA