

Crusaders recognised in Welsh awards ceremony

Dec 2, 2007

The great progress of Welsh rugby league trailblazers Celtic Crusaders was recognised tonight when they were nominated for the BBC Wales Sports Team of the Year.

The nomination, part of the BBC Welsh Sports Personality of the Year Awards which was televised live on BBC Wales, came after the Crusaders won this year's Co-operative National League Two title in only their second season.

The award was won by The New Saints, treble winners in Welsh football in 2007, but Crusaders' chief executive David Thompson said it was great to get such mainstream recognition – not only of the club's achievements but also of the impact rugby league is making in South Wales.

“It's been a magnificent season for us and this accolade shows what tremendous progress the Crusaders have made both on and off the field,” Thompson said. “We've seen interest among fans, the media and the business community across South Wales snowball this year. Having won promotion, we've been working hard in the closed season to make sure the Celtic Crusaders and rugby league are more prominent than ever on the Welsh sporting map in 2008.”

“We now have the sort of set-up in place to mount a serious and sustained challenge next season to take us where our ambitions ultimately lie.

“Rugby League has such tremendous potential in South Wales. Putting the Crusaders alongside teams from the sports traditionally popular here, like rugby union and football, shows we're quickly winning the public over.”

New look for the Crusaders

Dec 3, 2007

Promotion-winning Celtic Crusaders have undergone a makeover to give their new kit and the club itself a more progressive image. The previous Celtic Crusaders logo has been replaced by a more modern one which is already proudly in place on the 2008 home kit as well as acting as the masthead of this, the official website www.crusadersrfl.com.

Chief executive David Thompson explained, “The reason for the rebranding was simply that we wanted to make sure our image was in line with what we are all striving to achieve.

“Interest in Celtic Crusaders from fans, sponsors and the media snowballed last season. It culminated in us winning promotion to Division One and it's important now for the club to capitalise on that to keep the valuable momentum growing.

“The new badge is modern, progressive and business-friendly. Our Welsh identity is prominent as ever through the gold and black Flag of St David which still provides the colours of our home strip.

“The new brand is now being rolled out throughout the club. As part of the bigger picture, it will provide us

with the identity we need to help us reach the very highest level of rugby league, which is where our ambitions lie.”

The new replica home shirt is on sale now at www.crusadersrfl.com/2008shirt.htm in time for Christmas shoppers and the brand new away strip for the 2008 season will be launched in the new year.

Seibold returns to the Crusaders

Dec 4, 2007

Former Celtic Crusaders player Anthony Seibold has returned to Wales in a brand new role for the progressive National League One club.

The former Brisbane Broncos, Canberra Raiders, Hull Kingston Rovers and London Broncos forward has been appointed as Football Manager / Assistant Coach for the Crusaders' 2008 National League One season and is very excited about the year ahead as the Crusaders apply for a 2009 Super League franchise.

“With the ambitions of the Celtic Crusaders and the up coming granting of Super League licenses, it's exciting times for rugby league in the U.K.,” Seibold said. “Having previously worked and played for the club, it was an easy decision for me to return.”

Assistant coach in the Crusaders' inaugural season in 2006, Seibold also scored four tries in 11 appearances for the club. He has spent the last year working as a Physical Education lecturer at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia.

“I was offered a university lecturing position at the end of 2006,” he said. “I felt this role was too good an opportunity not to take up. It was a wonderful experience working as an academic, but my heart was still with professional rugby league and the day to day involvement of professional sport so when John offered me the position of football manager, I felt it was a role that I would be very comfortable with and competent in performing.

“I've always been in contact with John and I'm still close to some of the players. I followed their progress very closely last year, and I understand that the supporter base and the general awareness of the club in the community has grown immensely in the past 12 months.”

Seibold brings a wealth of experience with him. In addition to his playing background and university role, he also spent last year scouting for Sydney Roosters in Queensland and assisted Brisbane Broncos with their elite player programme by coaching their younger contracted players in the Toowoomba area of Queensland. The 33-year old is now keen on using that Broncos experience to bring in a home-grown development squad as part of the Celtic Crusaders programme, where the focus is to identify, monitor and develop Welsh players in both rugby union and rugby league between the ages of 12 and 16.

“I learned a lot from when I played at Hull Kingston Rovers,” he adds, “They were in a similar position to the Crusaders at the time, an NL1 club with big Super League ambitions. I was community manager and captain of the club at the time and I learned some valuable lessons which I hope to bring to Wales to help build a club for the future.”

Ellis dreams of League and Union crossover

Dec 7, 2007

From the Glamorgan Gazette, 06/12/2007

THE once unthinkable prospect of rugby's rival codes lending players to each other could soon become reality, according to a former Great Britain star.

Warrington hero and Celtic Crusaders assistant coach, Kevin Ellis, said he hoped to see top players spending time and learning skills in both camps to better their game.

And Ellis hopes to strengthen links with Magners League region, Newport Gwent Dragons, as his side pushes for a Super League place.

The two sides have already swapped tactical tips at joint training sessions, and cross-code favourite Ellis hopes that the gap between League and Union can be reduced even more if the Crusaders gain a Super League spot for 2009.

"I see no reason why we couldn't look at player exchanges if we get into the Super League," he said. "It would give players extra experience of playing both codes and expose them to difference skills and ways to play.

"And both codes in Wales could benefit from looking at how things are done by the other."

Crusaders' fitness guru, Thibault Giroud, and the Dragons' conditioning team have been in contact since the summer, and the region's head coach, Paul Turner, is keen to build stronger links.

"Paul's a big fan of rugby league and has phoned me a few times asking when we're back in pre-season training so he can come down to us again," said Ellis.

"We've exchanged e-mails about different training ideas and we want to build on that.

"I know Blues coach, Dai Young, and Phil Davies, at the Scarlets, are both rugby league fans too and we would be happy to work with anyone.

"It's been proved that both codes can live together, with the success of Leeds Tykes and Leeds Rhinos sharing a ground.

"And I think both codes can learn from each other to make a better product for the fans."

Crusaders to face Super League side in Bridgend

Dec 12, 2007

Newly promoted Celtic Crusaders will face Super League giants Harlequins in a prestigious friendly at the Brewery Field in Bridgend on Saturday 26th January (kick-off 5.30pm).

This will be Harlequins' second visit to Wales in January as their rugby union side travels to Cardiff Blues

for a European Cup match two weeks earlier.

The Quins were the first team to ever face the Crusaders back in 2006 when their two academy sides fought out a creditable 22-all draw at the Brewery Field.

However, the 2008 fixture will feature each club's first choice squads, with Quins expecting to field top class internationals like Henry Paul, who has previously turned out for Wigan, Bradford and Gloucester RU, and French national captain Julien Rinaldi.

This match will give the Crusaders fans their first chance to see some of their new signings, including Welsh internationals Jordan James, Mark Lennon, Ian Webster, Aaron Summers and Luke Dyer.

The Crusaders line-up will also feature two former London players, in hooker Neil Budworth and assistant coach Anthony Seibold.

The match will be played in four 15-minute quarters to allow the fans to see more players and for both teams to use the friendly to their advantage and to test out their various formations before the season kicks off in February.

Crusaders start their competitive season when they travel to Sheffield Eagles in the Northern Rail Cup on Friday 1st February, while Harlequins host Wigan in their engage Super League opener at The Twickenham Stoop on Saturday 9th.

Crusaders coach John Dixon said: "This game will be a quality trial against quality opposition and this is what we're looking for, as it will help us prepare our players for the season ahead. The match is structured to allow both teams to play at the maximum intensity, which is appropriate at this stage of season. Our whole squad of 25 will be involved, and all players will take the field."

Harlequins coach Brian McDermott said: "We are playing this game to create a bit of a link with Celtic, as they are one of our fellow teams in the south, and so that we come up against some credible opposition in the build up to what is going to be a very competitive Super League season. Celtic have proven that they can provide this by winning promotion to National League One, and signing some good players. I'll be fielding my top squad in this game, as well as blooding some youngsters."

Admission prices for this fixture are only £12 for adults and £3 for children and can be bought now from www.crusadersrfl.com/tickets.htm.

The Crusaders' first ever Co-operative National League One season starts on Good Friday with a home match against Dewsbury Rams (kick-off 5.30pm).