

John Dixon is fan's favourite with RL readers
January 5th, 2009

Celtic Crusaders' coach John Dixon has been named National League One Coach of the Year by the readers of Rugby Leaguer and League Express newspaper.

Dixon attracted a whopping 40% of votes from readers all around the world and this award, which compliments the Coach of the Year crown he was given by experts and coaches via Rugby League World magazine, is a just prize for leading the Welsh club to within 30 seconds of winning the NL1 title.

He has been coach of the Crusaders since the club's formation three years ago and his record has been first class throughout. He led the side to a play-off semi-final in their first season and a National League Two title in the second.

The club now embarking on its first attack at engage Super League with the season kicking off on Friday 6 February with an away game at Leeds Rhinos.

Papua New Guinea international signs for Crusaders
January 8th, 2008

New engage Super League side, Celtic Crusaders have completed the signing of Papua New Guinean international Jason Chan.

The second row forward starred in all three of the Kumuls' World Cup matches last year, scoring a try against England that helped to lead them close to what would have been a deserved win.

The 24 year old has been playing his club rugby league with Windsor Wolves, the feeder club to the NRL's Penrith Panthers, in the New South Wales Premier League in Australia.

There he scored 16 tries and kicked 64 goals in 47 appearances, helping the Wolves lift the Jim Beam Cup last season.

Chan has been training with Celtic Crusaders in their three-week Australian camp and Crusaders' coach John Dixon has been impressed with his progress.

"Jason is a welcome addition to our squad," Dixon said. "He had an outstanding World Cup and is performing very well at our pre-season camp in Brisbane. He will add speed and power to our forward pack."

Papua New Guinea captain John Wilshire thinks that this move will be good for Chan.

"I think he was probably our best forward in the World Cup," Wilshire told Rugby League Express newspaper. "He played really well against all three of our opponents, and he impressed our coach Adrian Lam throughout the tournament. He did really well coming from the Jim Beam Cup to play so well in the World Cup. I'm sure he will do very well for the Crusaders."

Cheap accommodation found for Magic Weekend January 9th, 2009

The Rugby Football League have sourced some really good accommodation in Edinburgh that will not break the bank for most visitors to the Magic weekend.

They have personally visited Heriot Watt University and they can confirm that the accommodation is excellent. The university can offer single and twin bedded rooms.

Heriot Watt University sits south of the city and is only five minutes away from Murrayfield stadium.

The Heriot Watt University Campus can offer over 900 rooms all set within a secure environment. With special rates of around £33 per person per night on a bed and full Scottish breakfast

To book, contact Lynne Geary on telephone number 0131 451 3666 or via email at l.geary@hw.ac.uk

Rugby league is the UK's best value sport January 19th 2009

Rugby League is the best value major spectator sport in the country.

That's according to the findings of a new survey commissioned by The Co-operative which looked at ticket prices in Football, Rugby Union and the 13-a-side code.

The survey - which examined prices for various types of tickets for different age groups in each sport's elite competition - aimed to discover the cost faced by consumers wishing to attend these premium sporting Leagues on a one off or regular basis.

Researchers made customer enquiries at the ticket offices of every club in each relevant competition. In the soccer's Premier League the average cheapest match day admission price for Under 16s is £13.35.

The same figure for Rugby Union's Premiership is £9.40 and the average price in Rugby League's Super League in this category is £8.60.

The average price for the cheapest Premier League Season ticket for children is £151.95. In the Union's Premiership,

the average price is £83.17 for the same type of ticket and in Super League the figure is £55.15. This pattern is also repeated when it comes to average prices for adult tickets.

In this category, the average cheapest match day admission price for the Premier League is £29.75. In Rugby Union's Premiership it is £20 and the price for Super League is £17.34.

Average prices for the cheapest adult season tickets are as follows; Premier League £436.22, Premiership £212.42 and Super League £193.85.

In addition research by leading sports statistics company Opta shows that Rugby League's Super League provides the best value for money of the three sports surveyed in another way.

In Rugby League, the ball stays in play for an average of 50 to 55 minutes during a 80 minute match. That is the longest period of the three sports. In Rugby Union it is in play between 30 to 35 minutes during a 80 minute match and in Football it remains in play for 50 minutes during a 90 minute match (all figures are approximate).

Commenting on the results of the survey, Liz Matkin, The Co-operative's sponsorship manager, said, "At a time when every pound in a consumer's pocket counts, the statistics show that Rugby League is the best value for money out of these three major spectator sports.

"The affordability of the match day and season tickets for children and adults is clear to see and that combined with the action on the field make it the best sporting choice in our opinion.

"If you compare the average price of an engage Super League adult season ticket with the price for the equivalent Barclays Premier League season ticket you will see that the Rugby League is over £240 cheaper. "In the case of the equivalent tickets for children, any supporter choosing the Rugby League option would be almost £97 better off".

Liz Matkin added, "As a community retailer we understand the need to offer great quality at great value prices and we know that Rugby League clubs offer this to their supporters when they put their season tickets on sale.

"The research does highlight that Rugby League - and indeed the other two sports - offer better overall value to consumers who purchase season tickets and so the message would also seem to be commit for the long haul when supporting your team".

The Co-operative survey also found that the best value for money major sporting event out of the three sports was also found in Rugby League.

In May the sport holds its annual Magic Weekend where seven engage Super League fixtures take place in one stadium - Edinburgh's Murrayfield - over one weekend. Weekend tickets for all seven games start from £25 for adults (£3.57 per game) and £10 for under 16's (£1.43 per game).

Click here to see the comparison charts - <http://www.crusadersrfl.com/media/survey.xls>

Shirts and season tickets to be dispatched soon January 20th 2008

Each season we send out our season tickets approximately one month before the start of the season. Anyone who has ordered a season ticket should be in receipt by the end of this week.

The jerseys were sold on a pre-order basis to enable supporters to have the opportunity to offer proof of purchase for Christmas. We have been informed by Kooga that the jerseys will be at the club for dispatch on the 27th January. For those who have requested to have their shirts presented to them at a training session, we

will look to present the jerseys around the same time subject to training schedule.

The future for Wales looks bright, says Lewis **January 29th 2009**

The future of Rugby League in Wales is very bright - according to RFL Executive Chairman Richard Lewis. Lewis – who on Tuesday night attended the Welsh Assembly’s inaugural Rugby League dinner at the Millennium Centre – has spoken of the excellent prospects for the sport in the Principality.

The dinner was staged to celebrate the Celtic Crusaders entry into engage Super League and wish them all the best for their debut season. Richard Lewis was among the invited guests. Also among the attendees were Welsh Heritage and Sports Minister Alun Ffred-Jones AM and Leader of the House Carwyn Jones AM. Dual-code Welsh rugby legend David Watkins also attended the event along with fellow Wales Rugby League Patron and Falklands War hero Simon Weston, OBE as well as Celtic Crusaders head coach John Dixon.

Commenting Richard Lewis said, “I was delighted to attend the inaugural Welsh Assembly Rugby League dinner and meet so many people who are such strong supporters of the sport in Wales.

“The event provided an opportunity to outline how Welsh Rugby League enjoyed a very successful 2008 on many fronts and the share the excitement for the season to come”.

Lewis added, “Last season we saw another successful campaign for the Welsh Conference League and a successful junior League campaign with record numbers of youngsters playing.

“In total there were 150 teams at primary and senior school level playing the sport in Wales during 2008. That represented a 60% increase. There was also a record Welsh representation in the Carnegie Champion Schools tournament.

“In addition to this, the Wales A team won the Four nations competition, Wales Under 18’s won the European Championships, the Welsh team reached the semi-finals of the Student Rugby League World Cup and the Crusaders Colts won the Co-operative Rugby League Conference National in their first season.

“2008 was certainly a vintage year for Welsh Rugby League and 2009 has every chance of being just as successful.

“It says a great deal about the growing importance of sport in Wales that such a tremendously successful, well attended dinner was staged and it surely is set to be the first of many such occasions”.

And Welsh Heritage and Sports Minister Alun Ffred-Jones AM also added his support.

“2009 holds much promise for Rugby League in Wales with the Celtic Crusaders beginning their first season in the engage Super League”, he said.

“I would like to take this opportunity to wish the Crusaders all the best of luck for the coming season and hope they can bring some Welsh fire to the competition.”

The Mirror to publish eight page Super League special January 29th 2009

To mark the launch of engage Super League XIV, the Daily Mirror newspaper will be printing a special guide to the season on Wednesday 4 February.

The eight page supplement, which will be printed nationwide, will be packed with exclusive interviews with key players, coaches, all-time greats and personalities.

England captain Jamie Peacock will explain why he thinks Leeds Rhinos could win all before them in 2009, whilst New Zealand's World Cup winning coach Stephen Kearney confesses that one day he would like to manage an engage Super League club.

Bradford Bulls' new signing Steve Menzies looks ahead to March's Carnegie World Club Challenge involving his old team Manly Sea Eagles, Clare Balding tells all who will listen why she is such a big Rugby League fan and Wigan hero Ellery Hanley takes time out from Dancing on Ice to talk engage Super League. In addition England and St Helens star, Jon Wilkin will be giving his views on all of the 14 teams taking part in this year's competition and BBC Radio 1's Mark 'Chappers' Chapman talks openly about why he thinks Rugby League is played by the fittest, hardest and fastest players on the planet.

Craig Spence, RFL Communications Manager, said: "We're delighted that The Mirror is running a special nationwide supplement to mark the start of what will be a landmark season for engage Super League featuring a number of firsts.

"Games will be played in five different countries for the first time ever, Super League will have its first Welsh side in the Celtic Crusaders and Edinburgh will stage its first Magic Weekend. Throw into this a first year under licensing and an innovative new eight team playoff system and you have a whole host of talking points to fill the year, never mind an eight page supplement.

"It underlines the interest in this year's competition that one of the biggest newspapers in the country is dedicating eight pages to the start of the new season. Hopefully all Rugby League fans will go out and buy a copy, and The Mirror will see that more Rugby League coverage will produce more readers."

Nigel Wiskar, from the editorial staff at The Mirror, said: "This year's engage Super League promises to be one of the biggest and best yet and that is why we are so keen at The Mirror to give it a good spread to kick off the season.

"Interest in Rugby League is no longer confined to the north of England, that's an archaic stereotype of a game that is now played and enjoyed all over the country. We're sure this supplement will be a big hit with our readers."

As part of the supplement, readers will also have the chance to win a superb VIP weekend for two at May's Magic Weekend in Edinburgh where all 14 engage Super League clubs will be in action.

The prize includes hotel accommodation at the new four star Apex Waterloo Place Hotel, weekend passes to Murrayfield, first class travel courtesy of CrossCountry trains and two Edinburgh passes which give visitors

entry to more than 30 super attractions.

The Mirror's engage Super League special will feature on Wednesday 4 February.

engage Super League kicks off on Friday 6 February when champions Leeds Rhinos host Celtic Crusaders.

Hold the Back Page - Missing Crusaders returning January 30th 2009

Celtic Crusaders' eight missing players have all been granted visas within the last 24 hours and will be arriving in Wales from Australia by Sunday morning.

They should all be resuming training by Tuesday and if fit, will be available for selection for the Crusaders' opening fixture away at Leeds Rhinos on Friday night (kick-off 8pm).

Assistant coach / football manager Anthony Seibold said: "We're delighted that all the players will be over and ready for the first match. They've all been training hard in Australia with selected clubs so there will be no problems with their fitness. And as all but two are part of the squad who helped us get to the National League One Grand Final last year, they will have few problems fitting into our training routines. This is the best news that we could have ever had and now we can seriously concentrate on our first historic Super League season. It's going to be an exciting time for us."

The players involved are existing squad members Tony Duggan (pictured above), Josh Hannay, Mark Dalle Cort, Damien Quinn, Jace Van Dijk and Darren Mapp along with new signings Ryan O'Hara and Papua New Guinea World Cup star Jason Chan.

This means that fan favourite Tony Duggan, with 98 tries to his name in the last three seasons for the Crusaders, will now have the opportunity to test his skills at the highest level.

"I'm really pleased to be coming back and now I want to cement a starting spot," he said. "With the guys we kept from last year and the new talent we have brought in, the competition for spots will be like never before so hopefully that will inspire us all to bigger and better deeds. After that I want to show I can compete and be successful in a great competition."

"I missed the Challenge Cup game against Leeds last year so I haven't played a competition game against a Super League team. Leeds at Headingley in our first Super League game is a dream come true and will be great for the team and the fans."

The club's record points scorer, Damien Quinn, who has scored 54 tries and kicked 178 goals for the Crusaders in the last three years, is also looking forward to returning and beginning the challenge that is engage Super League.

"I see it as more of an opportunity than a challenge and one that I am very excited about," he said. "We have a strong squad and good off field staff to make a real go of it. The structures are in place for the future of Welsh Rugby League and it's up to the players this year to begin the start of something fantastic."

“I am confident in my ability and my ability to play at a Super League level. I am looking forward to testing myself at the top level and know that I can and will improve over the year. A lot of people are writing us off but we have a lot of confidence in our playing roster and feel we will equip ourselves well.”