

Central Northern Rugby Union Inc
Annual General Meeting
November 6, 2016
President's Report

Congratulations to Major Premiership winners in all grades. An outstanding Grand Final hosted by Pirates. Grand in many ways with a true community rugby atmosphere demonstrated by four quality games; a good crowd, despite the weather and great refereeing.

No silverware this year for our representative teams but the seniors managed to claw its way up a point in the Caldwell Cup rankings. Unfortunately it was the reverse for the 20's being relegated to the bottom tier. Thanks to the coaches, team managers, strappers, water runners and everyone else who contributed to a well organised and run campaign. Not forgetting the players who committed to the cause and put their bodies on the line.

Plenty of drama early in the season when forfeits were the order however all Clubs worked hard to put two senior teams on the paddock each week and in the main succeeded.

Plenty to do in the Colts area and it is hoped some work is done before the 2017 season to improve this situation. We cannot ignore the fact that a strong Junior and Colts program reflects the success or otherwise of the senior grades down the track. I refer you to the paragraph above to remind us all of this need.

Once again, thanks to Farrer Agricultural High School for contributing teams to our Colts competition and we look forward to a continuation of this relationship.

Congratulations to the Magpies in hosting the NSW Country Eagles in round three of the National Rugby Championships. A great day with the usual NRC style of rugby; played at great pace and thrilling to watch.

To top it off the Eagles chose Tamworth as their home ground for the Final of the NRC against the Perth Spirit with the Spirit winning that encounter in a tough game in which defence was the difference.

The game was held at the new Scully Park Sporting Precinct and has impressed both the Eagles and NSW Rugby so much that there are discussions occurring to bring more major rugby events to Tamworth in 2017.

I considered it an honour to work with all Clubs and affiliates throughout the year and I think we have a good 'team' to advance rugby in Central North. The Vision 2020 planning day held post competition I thought consolidated many views into a number of strategies to take us through the next four years and beyond.

We need to be open minded about how we can improve our competition and to look at ways of growing our Zone both in participation and Club numbers.

Thanks to the referees for again making our game possible and they were always up to any challenge we could throw at them. I look forward to a developing relationship through 2017.

As a Zone we need to work closely with CNRRA to improve recruitment and retention of referees.

Congratulations to Kath Little in taking out the Zone 2016 NSW Rugby Referee medal and I must acknowledge the outstanding contribution by Jim McBride who leaves his position as Chairperson of the Appointments Board to take life a bit easier. He will be a hard act to follow. Last I heard he was two wheeling around the countryside catching bugs on his windshield chasing the Easy Rider dream.

Santos again has been quick to confirm a continuation of its sponsorship of the Zone for 2017 and we hope to continue this great relationship. Our thanks must go to Santos for providing a level of support, without which the Zone would struggle to meet all of its commitments.

So, the two tier structure; how did it go? It is on the agenda for mention but from my perspective I have to say it worked well under the new format. We do not enjoy the luxury of enough Clubs to have a permanent two division competition but the arrangement this year provided an opportunity for any of the top 6 Clubs to have a second crack at the silverware. Both Quirindi first grade and Barraba reserve grade proved this to be so.

I thought the Judiciary was a little quieter this year which is always good and reflects the nature of our game. The Judiciary Chairman was always fair in trying to balance the scales of justice. However, we need always to be very conscious of the need to discourage all elements of un-sportsmanship behaviour both on and off the field.

NSW Rugby Development Manager Garry Walsh was as always like a whirlwind and to keep up with him was a challenge. His enthusiasm is astonishing but I did enjoy our few 'meetings' with him during the year. He has been a great source of information and support on all things Rugby.

I can't get away without mentioning the work of the Executive during the year. I received tremendous support from all of them and would like to thank them for this particularly on the odd occasion where I may have ventured along a shaky branch once or twice. They were my safety net.

I have to admit, still no new Constitution but failing action within the next month or so, we'll need to go elsewhere to get this job done.

So, where to from here? Later this morning I hope to again have the honour of being President of Central North Rugby Union Inc and what do I say but 'come away with me' on a new journey as we travel through 2017 together and boldly forge our own future.

Viva Le Rugby.

Tony Byrnes
President
Central Northern Rugby Union Inc