



10 INFORMATION SYSTEMS

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14.01.2009
England boss Martin Johnson is putting the final touches to his Six Nations squad, with a full-strength list to choose from. The team will be named on Wednesday.
Lock Tom Palmer will miss the entire tournament, flanker Tom Rees at least three games, while Gloucester full-back Ollie Morgan has dislocated his finger.
The experienced Mike Tindall and Mark Cueto could both return, while uncapped Ben Foden is also tipped to be named. Up to five changes to the 32-man elite squad announced in July, and re-jigged in October, are allowed based on form... MORE

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FEATURED PLAYER
Paul Sackey
Paul Henry Sackey (born 8 November 1979 in London) is an English rugby union footballer. He currently plays for the London Wasps in the English Guinness Premiership.
ABOUT THE PLAYERS



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INFORMATION SYSTEMS

OBJECTIVES

Fully establish RugbyFirst as the central game-wide user friendly database for the game in England

555 Our key objective is to establish RugbyFirst as the sole system of choice in the community game through a coordinated programme of activity which supports all users of RugbyFirst and demonstrates the clear administration benefits from using the system. RugbyFirst is a comprehensive and far-reaching system, covering all aspects of game administration on a national basis and, as far as we are aware, is unique in sport in this country. The system developed to date supports all the operational areas of administering rugby football union as well as providing each rugby club with sophisticated, but user friendly, tools to build and maintain their own website.

556 The functionality developed includes recording key club details (contact information, directions, facilities, teams, etc.), membership, fixtures, results, tables, merit tables, disciplinary hearings (including automatically making banned players unavailable for team selection), referee and coaching qualifications, referee allocation to fixtures, CRB processing, team selection and events. All of these areas are underpinned by a role-based security system, restricting users only to those areas of the system they need access to in order to carry out their role.

Ensure that all RFU staff, including field based staff, are fully trained in the use of RugbyFirst by the end of 2009 with refresher courses throughout the Plan period

557 We have been slow in training all our staff, particularly field based staff, in the effective use of RugbyFirst. As a result we have provided less support to the volunteer in the adoption and use of the system. As is set out later in this section, we will now take on a full time contracted training resource to resolve this problem once and for all. In addition the job descriptions of the field based staff will be amended to include a requirement to be fully trained and conversant with RugbyFirst and to provide assistance to volunteers on its use.

Increase the number of clubs using RugbyFirst on a weekly basis from 26% in 2008 to 90% in 2011 and universal usage by 2013

558 Use of RugbyFirst by CBs and clubs to administer the game is now growing well across the country. Our objective is to reach 90% usage on a weekly basis by Section 1 clubs by 2011 and universal use by 2013. The key objective in the short term is to fully establish RugbyFirst as the system of choice throughout the game. In order to achieve this, we will provide a range of incentives to all potential users of the system to try it and thus become convinced of the benefits of the system to them as users.

559 Once the 90% usage rate has been achieved and the system is stable and delivering a user

friendly and reliable service to the game generally then the RFU should consider making use of RugbyFirst mandatory for the key game wide administrative functions.

Provide a single administrative and medical system for the Elite game to support the new RFU/PRL agreement by 2010

- 560** The new RFU/PRL agreement requires the clubs and the RFU to use a single database for medical, administrative and other data needs and provides for a full review of the current EPAS system developed by the RFU and currently in use by the RFU and at most Premiership clubs to varying degrees. The objective is to provide a single, comprehensive medical and player support system by 2010, either through further development of EPAS or from a new system.

Complete a fundamental re-design and re-development of rfu.com to provide a modern, high quality and user friendly digital tool for communicating with the game

- 561** The RFU's web site rfu.com was launched in 2001 and underwent a major development in 2003/04 when it was split into three microsites. Since then a number of additional microsites have been developed and added. It is now widely recognised that the website is out of date and no longer serving our needs adequately, particularly with regards to being user friendly and easy to navigate. We therefore have commenced, under the iRugby project, the complete re-design and re-development of the site in a phased manner in order to produce a new, modern website that meets the following criteria:

- i) Clear and user-focussed navigation;
- ii) Quality content management system;
- iii) Mobile friendly interface;
- iv) Sustainable and supportable technologies;
- v) High quality look and feel;
- vi) Visibility to external search engines;
- vii) Powerful search capabilities;
- viii) Compliance with the latest technical and accessibility standards.

A phased launch of the new website will commence in June 2009.

Provide timely and accurate non-financial management information on the health of the game to all relevant stakeholders by 2010

- 562** Key to the effective management of the RFU is the provision of high quality management information to the departmental heads, directors, the Management Board, Council and the game at large. As is frequently the case with organisations of the size of the RFU, we have well-developed and comprehensive financial information, but much less well developed non-financial information although we have made much progress in recent years. The key area we need to focus on in the near future is participation and activity levels in the community game.

Provide the IT infrastructure and facilities to ensure Twickenham Stadium is one of the most modern sporting stadiums in the world

- 563** We have designed and are installing a high specification IT infrastructure for the new South Stand facilities to enable a sophisticated range of digital applications to be utilised within the new Stadium facilities both at opening and in future years. These applications will cover the

**INFORMATION SYSTEMS
OBJECTIVES**

business areas including the conference and banqueting areas, public food and beverage outlets, signage, shop and ticketing areas along with providing support for the Marriott Hotel and Virgin Active Classic Health and Leisure club. Appropriate elements of this infrastructure can then be rolled out to the East, North and West stands.

Provide a robust, cost-effective and technically sound IT Infrastructure within the RFU to include data storage tools for staff and volunteers

- 564** With the increasing reliance upon IT, it is vital that we maintain an infrastructure to support our IT systems that is robust and reliable but one that is also cost-effective and based upon technical solutions appropriate to an organisation of our size and financial resources.
- 565** The results of the RU In Touch staff surveys have led to a requirement both for a simple method of communicating business (and social) information throughout RFU staff and allowing the sharing and locating of business documents and files such as policies, minutes, brand logos and guidelines. Development of data storage tools will reduce both the current reliance on email with its associated distractions and the duplication of document storage in both hard and soft formats. Although the 'paperless office' will no doubt remain an unattainable ideal, we should seek to rationalise our information distribution and storage processes in order to reduce duplication and improve day-to-day efficiency.

STRATEGIES AND PLANS

Re-launch RugbyFirst in 2009 with full time training resource following completion of the new CRM and re-skinning with the new RFU web site look and feel

- 566** RugbyFirst is a comprehensive system covering all aspects of administering community rugby on a national basis and is unique in sport in this country. The system developed to date supports all the operational areas of administering rugby as well as providing each rugby club with sophisticated (but user friendly) tools to build and maintain their own website. RugbyFirst was designed to replace a range of incompatible and poorly documented systems developed over many years and in use across the RFU. Inevitably there could not be complete similarity between RugbyFirst and the systems it replaced. Some stakeholders, however, did initially have expectations that RugbyFirst would have identical functionality and look and feel to their old systems and this created a feeling amongst some that RugbyFirst was an inferior system in their area of use.
- 567** Use of RugbyFirst continues to grow with the player registration module being used for 98% of all youth registrations and 65% of adult of adult registrations. In other areas take up has been slower and there are issues within the game relating to adequacy of training resource, the bulk uploading of data, the duplication of records and the general transactional speed of the system. Much development work has been going on to address these issues and the progress that has been made together with future roll out plans are as follows:
- i) Provision of an e-learning programme in modules to enable the user to learn about the specific part of the system that their requirements cover;
 - ii) Improvements in the transactional speed of the system have been addressed through the implementation of a revised hardware infrastructure. This will continue to be monitored to ensure system efficiency during peak usage periods;
 - iii) Delivery of a bulk upload tool in early 2009 to enable bulk data from legacy systems to be automatically uploaded centrally using data templates distributed via the user forums and RugbyFirst helpdesk into RugbyFirst;
 - iv) Delivery of a data de-duplication tool enabling users to remove duplicate records automatically;
 - v) Production of a new user friendly CRM interface to significantly improve the ease of use of the system. This will be rolled out in the first half of 2009;
 - vi) Re-skinning RugbyFirst with the new design, look and feel of the new RFU website being developed under the iRugby project. This is expected to be available in autumn 2009.
- 568** Following completion of the above developments we intend to undertake a re-launch of the new RugbyFirst system throughout the game. The re-launch programme will include the following new support elements:
- i) A full time training resource will be contracted to complete a structured and comprehensive training programme for all staff (field and HQ) and all volunteers whose roles require use of RugbyFirst;
 - ii) An effective and controlled communications programme to ensure that the right information gets to the right individuals on time enabling the benefits of a single game wide membership and on-line regulations tool to be fully communicated;
 - iii) The effective implementation of the other strategies and plans as set out detailed in this Plan.

569 To assist in the development of the re-launch programme and to remove any cross-departmental issues slowing progress, the RFU Chief Executive and Finance Director have joined the Project Board which oversees the development of RugbyFirst.

Introduce a range of incentives for member clubs to use RugbyFirst and an effective training programme for staff and Volunteers

570 There is a natural caution in adopting any new software solution, particularly in clubs that have developed particular systems to handle certain aspects of club administration. In order to encourage clubs to migrate to using RugbyFirst we will offer a range of developments and incentives to boost club usage. These will include the following, commencing in season 2008/09:

- i) Funding for the administration of all competitions on RugbyFirst (currently £500 per table);
- ii) Development of a simplified competition 'front end';
- iii) Availability of a de-duplication tool;
- iv) Availability of bulk upload tool;
- v) Availability of new user interface (once developed as part of the iRugby project).

571 Effective training is essential for the quick take up and adoption of any new software system. As set out above, a full time contracted training resource will now be provided to complete a structured training programme which will include compulsory training for all directors, Management Board members, managers and staff throughout the RFU whether office based or field based to be completed in 2009 with RRDs, RDOs, CDOs and Referee Trainers the priorities.

572 In addition to the above programme we intend to extend the full time contracted training facility to club volunteers to improve knowledge and understanding of the functionality of RugbyFirst to enable the maximum club benefit to be achieved from the system. This is an essential element in achieving the target of 90% club usage by 2011.

Continue to develop user friendly functionality for RugbyFirst and improve its transactional speed of operation

573 The new CRM system soon to be installed will enable staff to access the central RugbyFirst database in a Windows friendly environment. This will drive their use of RugbyFirst and, as a result, enable them to more effectively support the volunteer in their use of RugbyFirst. The system will provide an intuitive means of viewing data from any angle, be it top to bottom or across disciplines. It will provide a facility to communicate with all stakeholders whilst maintaining a full history of that communication. Use of the system by staff will ensure that the RugbyFirst database is the sole source of data relating to all rugby bodies.

574 The programme of system improvements has now seen the development and delivery of de-duplication tools. These tools enable clubs, CBs and other groups to remove duplicate entries within their membership lists. Bulk upload tools, which will facilitate swift and easy database transfers to RugbyFirst, will be rolled out to the game shortly enabling clubs, for the first time, to consolidate their membership lists in an easy to operate on-line format. We are also combining elements of the new iRugby design into RugbyFirst to make it appealing and consistent with the new rfu.com site.

Develop tracking facilities within RugbyFirst for players, coaches, referees and Volunteers

- 575** The success of the Go Play project in the community game has emphasised the need to be able to track participants in the game as they progress along the 'rugby journey'. We will develop a number of tracking systems in RugbyFirst for players, coaches, referees and Volunteers as they move between school, college, university and club. This will be a key tool in improving the retention of all participants in the game as they proceed along the rugby journey.
- 576** To support the tracking systems, we will implement a coaching model in RugbyFirst which provides a transparent pathway for coaches to follow, and, through a coach registration and licensing scheme, support and track coaches in their development. Alongside this we will also implement a registration module in RugbyFirst for referees to achieve similar ends.

Extend RugbyFirst functionality across all areas of the Commercial Department

- 577** We will extend the functionality of RugbyFirst across all areas of the Commercial Department to assist in maximising our retail and customer based revenue streams. There are a number of opportunities to develop RugbyFirst as one of the tools in minimising the black market through the implementation of an electronic ticket tracking process in RugbyFirst. With the planned introduction of electronic entry gates at the Stadium this will provide an effective tool against misuse of member tickets. Recording the correct information about ticket distributions on RugbyFirst will be a key element in this process.

Update the RFU Regulations to reflect the need to record relevant data on RugbyFirst

- 578** The regulatory framework of the RFU and the competition rules were developed prior to any form of electronic administration of the game being widely available to clubs. Consequently few of the regulations of the game relate to the use of RugbyFirst. We recommend that a review of the regulations of the RFU is undertaken to provide for electronic administration and the use of RugbyFirst as the principal game administration tool.
- 579** We have started the process of regulating the requirement, where and when appropriate, to enter relevant data on RugbyFirst. The regulations currently require all Youth and Mini players to be registered on Rugby First. As the registration module of RugbyFirst has been widely adopted (club registrars now register 98% of all youth and 65% of adult registrations) we should consider extending the regulations to require all player registrations to be made via RugbyFirst.
- 580** Currently there is no requirement to record CB based competitions, at any level with the RFU. This does not enable the easy and automated administration of competitions nor does it allow for rugby activity to be recorded in the game. We should consider developing regulations requiring all RFU and CB competitions to be administered through RugbyFirst following release of the new version of the competitions module on RugbyFirst.

Develop and implement club development and accreditation tools and integrate RDO and CRC work programmes into RugbyFirst

- 581** In order to link the club development programmes within the Community Rugby Department we intend to develop and implement an on-line club development and accreditation tool in RugbyFirst. This will provide clubs with a user friendly facility containing the tools and

information to develop a short term action plan and/or a longer term strategic development plan and become Club Accredited if appropriate.

- 582** The work programmes of the RDOs and CRCs are currently recorded in a stand alone system which does not allow for the integration and collation of data on the game or the reporting of activity and performance by the field based staff. We therefore intend to integrate the RDO and CRC work programmes and on-line reporting into RugbyFirst.

Management of the RugbyFirst development process

- 583** The continued development of the RugbyFirst system will be progressed through quarterly development work orders containing areas of work prioritised by the RugbyFirst Project Board. This Board is composed of key stakeholders from all relevant areas of the game and the business and has now been joined by the RFU Chief Executive and Finance Director.
- 584** Growth in the user base will be measured by the provision of a data warehouse built outside of the main system to ensure that the heavy reporting requirements do not result in a degradation of the transactional system performance. This data warehouse will also be utilised to provide management reporting.
- 585** The hosting of the RugbyFirst database and application will remain with an external third party. The benefits of this approach are two-fold. Given the nature of the application usage, primarily by volunteers working outside of traditional core hours in the evening and at weekends, external hosting of the system allows for 24/7 support of the core infrastructure and hardware. The core hardware and system availability is monitored on a 24/7 basis and should any hardware failures occur they will be addressed as they happen. It is also planned to continue with the system helpdesk which addresses the "how do I do this?" questions. The helpdesk provides support in the evenings and at weekends.
- 586** Consideration will also be given to the setting up of a regional data entry resource to reduce the administrative data entry burden on volunteers in the game. This would help to ensure that data is entered in a timely manner whilst retaining the accuracy of regionalised entry – the more localised the data entry, the more likely it is to be relevant and accurate.

Elite rugby computer based administrative and medical system

- 587** The agreement between the RFU and PRL requires the clubs and the RFU to utilise a single system for the provision of data required to monitor and progress the Elite game. The existing EPAS system will be reviewed and assessed along with alternative options to ensure that the requirements of both the RFU and the clubs' medical, coaching and administrative teams are met.
- 588** The basis of protocols for the welfare and medical needs of players form part of the agreement and the system will be developed to provide the ability to administer these protocols. This review will be performed by a joint RFU/PRL project board under the chairmanship of the RFU Finance Director. The role of IT in the EPAS review project will be to assist in the choice of option and to project manage the implementation and usage of the chosen solution.

Complete the iRugby project and launch the new RFU website

- 589** The aim of the iRugby project is to deliver a modern, attractive and user friendly website through

a single portal approach which will be consistent across the RFU and will integrate all aspects of the game and the RFU businesses. iRugby will apply proven technologies and the principles of user focussed design to ensure that the site is sustainable, flexible for future needs, and optimised for the needs of the different RFU audiences. The RFU will not be a leader in the adoption of emerging technologies but will adopt a follower position of using the latest in tried and tested technologies that support and benefit the game.

- 590** Linking any developments in rfu.com and other digital platforms to RugbyFirst will create significant improvements to the management of information and will ensure that the look and feel of both systems remains similar for the benefit of users. It will also ensure that the branding and user experience of the various systems is similar.
- 591** Providing guidance and training to executive staff on the use of digital media tools, such as the content management system, will be important to their adoption by users of the system. Effective follow up communication will also be required to educate executive staff when new features and functionality are released.
- 592** Recognising the importance of the quality, currency and accuracy of site content, new editorial processes will be put in place, supported by the new content management system, requiring an annual review of all web content to ensure that all content is relevant and current. Departments will be given additional responsibility in this respect and be held accountable for maintaining content relevancy in their areas of responsibility.
- 593** We will also undertake a review of our e-commerce strategy. Whilst a number of developments are underway within the RFU to maximise the use of e-commerce, completion of the new website will provide new opportunities. We will evaluate the possibility of developing the current off-line facility for the grouping of purchases by CBs and clubs to a system of commodity purchases through an on line e-system. We will also seek to consolidate all online payment methods into a single process to improve our service to customers and users alike.
- 594** As part of the brand protection process we will also be seeking to provide the game with an online resource system for clubs, CBs and referee societies to access nationally branded materials that can be personalised with club logos, and details for local use. This will include formatted paperwork for clubs and colleges that are RFU accredited and where use of the RFU logo has been prior approved.

Complete the design, development and implementation of the Executive Information System (EIS)

- 595** In order to effectively manage the game and ensure that we measure the return on investment from the investments made by the RFU into the game, we need to have an EIS that can effectively report the activities of the game. We will continue the implementation of the EIS, recently developed with KPMG, to drive management reporting of both financial and non-financial information. The EIS will cover all aspects of the game and head office functions and will provide an automated 'health check' for departmental heads, directors, the Management Board, Council and the game at large.

Implement an Electronic Point of Sale (EPoS) system within the Stadium

- 596** We will invest in an EPoS system in the public food and beverage outlets within the stadium to

improve cash management, cost controls and inventory management. Currently holdings of both stock and cash are open to abuse and there is in practice no totally effective method of mitigating this risk. There is therefore a significant benefit in installing an EPoS system initially within the new C&B and public catering areas of the South Stand and then rolled out throughout the whole of the stadium.

Keep under review the RFU's IT technical strategy

- 597** The IT infrastructure has been continually updated in recent years in order to provide the necessary platform on which to build our mission critical applications. The platform is and will continue to be built around Microsoft solutions for the foreseeable future. Other vendors are making tentative steps into the core Microsoft marketplace with online versions of tools looking to challenge Microsoft's dominance of the workplace. These products and services are likely to develop greatly over the Plan period and they will be closely monitored and assessed as they develop and are adopted by others. Given the fast moving nature of IT technologies, it is impossible to provide a roadmap for the full period of the Strategic Plan but utilising Microsoft technologies in the short to medium term ensures that the RFU will always have a roadmap that provides a full range of reliable software solutions.
- 598** As a medium sized organisation, the RFU will not look to be at the leading edge of technologies as they are released from Microsoft but will endeavour to follow in the second wave of take up. This allows full analysis to be undertaken as to the benefits offered by new technologies whilst ensuring that any of the 'issues' associated with new software are ironed out prior to implementation.
- 599** Many new systems are offered as web-based solutions limiting the requirements to install software on individual machines and requiring only central maintenance. This removes a significant support overhead given the geographically dispersed nature of the workforce. The vast majority of these systems are developed and deployed using Microsoft web technologies both in terms of language and associated web browsers. These solutions can also be hosted externally to ensure 24/7 support for mission critical applications.
- 600** 'Virtualisation' of some of the older servers within the RFU estate is planned. Virtualisation allows for many differing systems to be located on a far larger single server as opposed to many smaller servers as has historically been the case. This leads to reduced maintenance requirements and lower purchase and servicing costs.

Electronic communication and data storage technologies

- 601** The existing RFU Intranet solution, RUFUS, has not yet delivered the objective of creating a single source of head office information, primarily due to inconsistent staff usage and to its limited availability to office based staff only. We have recently relaunched RUFUS and will continue to develop it to provide staff with a single source of company information which can be accessed as required. This solution is now also provided over an extranet which allows all field based staff to have the same access.
- 602** In line with our stated aim of moving as far as practicable towards a paperless office, the internet solution will also provide a document management and archiving facility. It will also provide a collaborative working solution that allows groups within the business to work securely

and concurrently on documents for the purpose of allowing drafts, tracking and amendments to be compiled within a secure system again without creating many individual email versions of a document outside of this secure environment.

- 603** We will also introduce a secure Management Board microsite to store confidential documents in order to both improve the efficiency of document handling and version control and to improve security over the circulation of confidential and sensitive material.

IT environmental considerations

- 604** IT has continually monitored its position on the recycling of older IT equipment in line with legislation such as the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive but it is planned to conduct a review of all new equipment being considered for purchase to take account of energy use as part of the decision process. In some companies IT equipment can account for up to 70% of a company's energy use according to the Carbon Trust. A single PC left on for 220 days is responsible for a tonne of CO₂ over its projected three year life. There is clearly great potential for both financial and environmental savings by selecting equipment that is more energy efficient and by educating staff on energy efficient working habits.

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