

**Recommendations from the Competition Review Group
on the RFUW Player Pathway
For Implementation Season 2010-11**

The Competition Review group (CRG) chaired by RFUW Board Director Kean Clifford, was mandated by the RFUW Board in June 2009 to review the Regional Programme and the current Player Pathway to ensure that it was fit for purpose, delivered the appropriate outcomes for the talented athlete and also reflected the current playing population.

The CRG consulted with professional staff and the RFUW membership, through the Player Pathway Survey, which was available online in September 2009. The CRG submitted their proposal based on the findings of the Player Pathway Survey to the RFUW Board in November 2009, which accepted the concept in principle. The RFUW Board now wishes to gain feedback from interested parties and stakeholders from the game.

The RFUW believes that it is time to broaden the playing base at all age groups, through increased resources and support to improve the quality of participation opportunities within the Player Pathway, to include a fully functional County programme. This will not only allow greater participation in the Pathway but will also help to integrate the Women and Girls game into the recognised programmes of the Constituent Bodies (CBs) and also reflect the Pathway that is in place for the male game. This in itself will hopefully allow for increased understanding and support for the Programmes from those in the men's game.

The RFUW recognises that there are a number of challenges within this proposal that will require patience and effective partnership working for their implementation to be successful. One in particular is that of the requirement for an increased number of quality coaches to work within the Player Pathway. The RFUW professional staff and volunteers will work closely with the RFU Coaching Department and the CB Coaching Committees to ensure that we have the resources to deliver the County and Divisional Programmes. The existing pool of Regional Coaches will be key to this delivery, whether that be at Divisional or County level.

Key Outcomes from Proposed Changes:

- Regional rugby to be replaced by Divisional rugby (South West, South East, Midlands, North)
- County rugby (CB squads) will become a formal part of the Player Pathway.
- More local training and competition opportunities for a larger group of players at the next level via County rugby.
- Divisional rugby will incorporate both player development and competition.
- England squad programmes remain.
- Greater continuity for club coaches to work with players through a less fragmented league.
- Club programme is supported and increased through calendar changes.
- Opportunities for clubs to rest players, attend tournaments or play friendlies
- Potential for Player Development sessions to be run at a local level.
- Entry and exit routes are clearly signposted at each stage.
- Talented players targeted with specific training and development programmes.
- A closer alignment to the men's and boys' game resulting in increased understanding by partners.

Nicky Ponsford, David Rose and I will be delivering a series of evening roadshows in January and this is a great time for us to discuss the document and examine any local issues that may need to be addressed to ensure the success of the programme,.Dates and timings are detailed below and further information will be on the RFU website and available from your local WRDM in the next few weeks.

Day	Date	Region	Venue
Wed	6 th Jan	North	Preston Grasshoppers
Mon	11 th Jan	Midlands	Lichfield RFC
Wed	20 th Jan	SW	Portway Rugby Development Centre, nr Bristol
Mon	25 th Jan	Lon N&S and South Region	Twickenham

We have included the key outcomes of the recent Player Pathway survey. If you have any feedback on this document either from a personal perspective or from your players or clubs, then we are keen to hear from you and have attached a feedback form for you to use.

Please complete the [Online Feedback Form](#) by 25th January 2010.

Kind Regards

Rosie Williams

RFUW, Managing Director

Key Details

Club Rugby

- 6.1 Club rugby is part of the player pathway as an entry route into the pathway and so comment on club rugby is included.
- 6.2 Club rugby is critical to the successful implementation of the Player Pathway through the development and support of their players. Any player wishing to play within the Player Pathway structure should be playing club rugby. By Year Two of the revised Pathway structure, this should be feasible at all age groups. This will be achieved through the clarity of message from the RFUW and RFU professional staff and the clubs themselves.
- 6.3 The position in 2009/10 is that many CBs have school players (in particular in the U15 age band) who are not members of clubs. The message will be stronger that to play in the Pathway, players should be training and playing regularly and a focus of the strategic plan is the development of school club links and HE/FE club links, which will be supported on the ground by both RFUW and RFU staff.

Club Development

- 6.4 The integration of RFU and RFUW, and the key targets within the Whole Sport Plan will assist in achieving more girls teams playing rugby. The revised roles of the Rugby Development Officers will focus energy and support directly on the clubs, linking in with local schools and colleges more effectively. The work of the Women's Rugby Development Managers (WRDMs) will be key in managing this support to the right clubs.
- 6.5 Club rugby is the backbone of the game, and as has been detailed in the findings of the surveys, it is where players enjoy their rugby and gain the most from training with the club on a regular basis.
- 6.6 The RFUW will continue to support clubs through the work of the WRDMs and their delivery partners, as well as through Toolkit funding to Premiership clubs to support the Elite players.

Club Competitions

- 6.7 The RFUW recognises that in the Youth game there needs to be more structure around fixtures and whilst it is not a direct part of the pathway a strong club fixture programme supports the success of the programme.
- 6.8 Many teams are currently playing as clusters at U15 and U18 level, and the WRDMs will work hard with these teams to progress their development to enable them to play matches in their own right.

- 6.9 The new pathway proposals support the club game by ensuring that there is a more consistent club programme throughout the year that is not disrupted by pathway programmes as much as previously seen.
- 6.10 Fewer players will be involved at the higher levels of the pathway so more players will be available for club rugby on a more regular basis.

Constituent Body (County) Squads

Rationale

- 6.11 The target is for there to be CB squads at all levels in 28 areas. 2,100 players will be on the identified Player Pathway (800 players were in Regional squads). This means the pathway is accessible to a much wider number of players than have previously been involved. The CB squads previously sat outside of the pathway so were not recognised as part of the pathway for talented players to develop.
- 6.12 The rationale for moving to County squads is the growth of the game – there are enough players to support a CB structure.
- 6.13 The training and competition programme for the CB squad can be regulated within the pathway to ensure players have the correct opportunities. The syllabus and selection criteria will be controlled centrally.
- 6.14 CB's link into the RFU structure and is easily understandable by both internal and external partners. We will be reallocating budget to support the programme
- 6.15 Coach development continues to be important and the RFUW will need to work with the RFU Club Development Officers and CB coaching committees (CBCDCs) to identify enough quality coaches for the programme. The formalisation of the CB squads into the pathway raises the profile of the CB squad in terms of coaching. There is a commitment from CBCDCs to appoint appropriate qualified coaches to the programme.

Entry route

- 6.16 Through County trials – open to all.

Selection

- 6.17 Selection will take place in September and will be an open process.
- 6.18 In September 2010, players who are not in the Elite squad and wish to access the pathway should attend County trials. Those senior players who are selected for the S4s will not be required to attend CB programmes and will be nominated for their Divisional squads.
- 6.19 The trial format will be developed as part of the implementation plan.

- 6.20 In September 2010 it is anticipated at Senior level in particular that there will be several CBs without squads. If the proposals are accepted over the next six months, the RFUW will work with those CBs to put in place development days with a view to ensuring there are squads in place from September 2011.
- 6.21 It is intended that 25-30 players will be selected in each CB squad so a total of approximately 2400 players will be selected.
- 6.22 Training will take place for CB selectors during the summer of 2010.
- 6.23 Selection will be made against identified criteria.

Programme

- 6.24 The programme will consist of both training and competition.
- 6.25 The competition programme will culminate in a County festival for all CB squads within the Division.
- 6.26 The County programme will take place on weekends already identified so no additional weekends will be required. (3 weekends – 2 games and 1 festival).
- 6.27 There are 2 dates identified in the calendar for training but it is expected there may be an additional midweek session to be agreed with the CB.
- 6.28 The syllabus for these training sessions will be identified centrally for the core skills element. The unit and team skills development will be set by the coaches and the CBCDC.

Exit Route

- 6.29 Players not selected for the County squad will be given feedback and return to their clubs with an opportunity to attend County trials in the following year.
- 6.30 Players not selected for the Divisional squad will be given feedback and return to their clubs with an opportunity to attend County trials in the following year.

Divisional Rugby

Rationale

- 6.31 Ensure resources are being targeted effectively at players who show potential to develop. Each Divisional squad would have up to 30 players. This ensures targeted support for identified players. The programme would involve 360 players in three age groups across four divisions (South West, South East, Midlands, North).
- 6.32 A Divisional structure is one that will give players an identity. The Divisions have a traditional place within rugby and are understood by the RFU and Constituent Body members. A Divisional structure is one that the RFU have moved to with the U18 and U16 squads so a move to this structure will increase understanding.
- 6.33 The introduction of a Divisional programme streamlines the talent ID and talent development process. Every Divisional programme will have consistent delivery of training programmes and quality of coaching. Selection and competition programmes will be consistent for each division across each age group.
- 6.34 Divisional training will involve training and competition from January through to August. Training will consist of team/ unit, small group and position specific skills.
- 6.35 A Divisional structure will allow us to develop fewer coaches more effectively. Within the Regional Programme there are 140 volunteers including coaches. Within the new programme 24 coaches will be selected and have the opportunity for development along with managers and medics.
- 6.35
- 6.36 Clubs will only lose a small number of players during the Divisional programme and should be able to continue with Club training and matches.
- 6.37 Fewer weekends will be taken up in season with this programme so the club programme can be enhanced.

Entry Routes

- 6.38 Through selection from CB Festival or nomination (depending on age-group).
- 6.39 Or where a CB festival does not take place through an open trial in January (Seniors).

Selection:

- 6.40 30 players at each age group in four divisions will be selected in December/January from the CB festival or Divisional trials depending on age group (total 360 players).
- 6.41 The selection process will be through CB tournaments at U18 and U15 age groups.
- 6.42 Seniors will be selected through a trials process as not all CB's have an established CB programme (in years 1 and 2).
- 6.43 Selection criteria will be in place for all age groups.

Programme

U15 Programme

- 6.44 The U15 programme will not mirror the other programmes to ensure that the needs of these younger players are catered for.
- Weekend training sessions – four sessions in Feb and March. This will include one game plus a Divisional festival. The sessions will primarily be run separately to the U18's and Seniors to make sure that any player welfare issues can be considered effectively. These sessions may be delivered during school holidays if more appropriate. The focus will be on team and unit skills. There will be some position specific work.
 - Evening sessions- all Divisional U15 players will be included in Schools of Rugby. It is anticipated that girls will attend one of three nominated SoR per Division. The exact programme will be confirmed as players are identified from Dec 2010 onwards. The focus will be on the core skills of handling, continuity and defence.
 - Summer programmes – weekend / day - 2 days in June/ July/ August
 - Fitness testing and programming, and nutrition work will be included in the programme.

U18 Programme

- Weekend training sessions – 5 sessions in Feb and March. This will include 3 games against the other divisions
- Focus on team and unit skills. There will be some position specific work

- Evening sessions outside of club nights (Monday) - 12 sessions run 1/month at a sub Divisional level (2 per division) / month in Jan/Feb/Mar/April
- Focus on core skills of handling, continuity and defence.
- Summer programmes – weekend or day - 4 days in June/ July/ August
- Focus on team and unit skills.
- Fitness testing and programming, and nutrition work will be included in the programme.

Senior Programme

The Senior programme will mirror the U18 programme.

- 6.45 Position Specific: In addition to the programmes above will be position specific clinics for hookers, scrum halves and kickers. These will run on a Divisional basis and be for all relevant players in the division.

Exit routes

- 6.46 Players not selected for the Divisional squad will be given feedback and return to their clubs with an opportunity to attend County trials in the following year
- 6.47 Players not selected for the National programmes (HPAs, TDGs) will be given feedback and return to their clubs with an opportunity to attend County trials in the following year
- 6.48 After attending National squad programmes, players at U15 and U18 level will return to their clubs after the programme and trial for CB squads in the following September.
- 6.49 Those senior players who are selected for the S4 programme will play S4s and not be involved in the CB programme.
- 6.50 If selected into the Elite squad, players will play and train with the England squad and will not play CB or Divisional rugby whilst a member of the England Elite squad.
- 6.51 If not selected into the Elite squad, players will be nominated for their Divisional squad and play club and Divisional rugby for the remainder of that season.
- 6.52 England U20 players will be expected to play Divisional rugby.

National U15 Talent Development Group (TDG)

- 6.53 The National U15 Talent Development Group will be delivered in conjunction with the U18 TDG programme. It is anticipated that U15 TDG programme will mirror the U18 programme in terms of content and the focus on individual core and unit skill development. The development programme will be modified in accordance to the Long Term Athlete Development model (LTAD) and consideration given to the physical and mental development of the athletes involved.
- 6.54 Players will be selected into the U15 National Talent Development Group (TDG) from the U15 Divisional Squads. Players will be assessed during Divisional training and matches and at Divisional camps prior to the National TDG camp. Players will be invited to attend an U15 National TDG Camp in the summer of each year. Approximately 30 U15 players will be selected in to the U15 TDG.

Entry/ Exit Routes

- 6.55 It is anticipated that a player will be included within the TDG for 12 months (from selection / invitation to National Camp in the summer to the conclusion of the Divisional Programme the following year. However players who do not demonstrate the commitment to the programme and ambition to develop will be removed from the programme and directed back to club, County and Divisional rugby.
- 6.56 At the conclusion of the season, U15 TDG players at the top end of the U15 age group will be supported with the transition to U18 rugby and encouraged to progress onto U18 CB and U18 Divisional rugby. It is also anticipated that a significant number of players will progress from the U15 Talent Development Group into the U18 Talent Development Group. As Figure 3.1 indicates, since 2007, an average of 6 players per year have successfully moved from U15 rugby into the U18 Talent Development Group programme.

National U18 Talent Development Group (TDG)

Rationale

- 6.57 The development of talented U18 players is vital to the overall success of the England Women's Rugby and the pathway as a whole. The U18 Talent Development Group (TDG) will remain in place with a slightly revised format and will continue to be an integral part of the player development programme.
- 6.58 The TDG provides the very best players and the players identified with potential to progress further along the pathway with further development opportunities. The TDG programme also provides recognition and kudos for aspiring players.

Entry Routes

- 6.59 It is anticipated that a player will be included within the TDG for 12 months (from selection / invitation to National Camp in the summer to the conclusion of the Divisional Programme the following year). However, players who do not demonstrate the commitment to the programme and ambition to develop will be removed from the programme.

Selection

- 6.60 Players will be selected into the National Talent Development Group (TDG) from the U18 Divisional Squads. Player will be assessed during Divisional training and matches and at Divisional camps prior to the National TDG camp. Players will be invited to attend an U18 National TDG Camp in the summer of each year. Approximately 30 players, aged 15, 16 and 17 years old (on the 1st September) will be selected in to the U18 TDG.

Programme

- 6.61 National TDG camp players will have individual programmes to support their development alongside their Divisional programme these may take the form of National sessions in holidays or 1:1 work as required. More detail will be set out in the implementation plan.
- 6.62 The Talent Development Group programme will consist of individual player development sessions, focusing on core rugby skills, strength and conditioning education, nutrition, performance lifestyle (including Elite athlete behaviours), injury management and prevention (including rehabilitation) and video analysis.
- 6.63 All TDG players will be expected to play CB and Divisional Rugby as their participation will form a part of their individual development and will be linked to the TDG.

Exit Routes

- 6.64 At the conclusion of the season, TDG players at the top end of the U18 age group will be supported with the transition to Senior rugby and encouraged to progress onto Senior Divisional rugby through attendance in the Senior CB programme. It is also anticipated that a significant number of players will progress from the U18 Talent Development Group into the England U20 squad. As Figure 3.1 indicates, since 2007, an average of 9 players have successfully moved from the U18 TDG into the England U20 squad.
- 6.65 Players who are still eligible for the TDG will be required to attend the Divisional summer camps having been involved in their Divisional programme during the year and earn selection for the National TDG Camp .

Super 4s

Rationale

- 6.66 Super 4s is a Talent Identification system. There is limited or no work on player development. It is a proven system that allows current squad players to be measured against new talent.
- 6.67 The newly identified players will have a much improved programme to enable them to be able to move along the Player Pathway more readily.
- 6.68 The programme fits into the calendar and is understood by all players and staff.

Entry Routes

- 6.69 In 2010 selection will be from the HPAs and the Elite squad.
- 6.70 Post 2010 selection will be from Divisional programme and previous year's Elite squad.

Selection

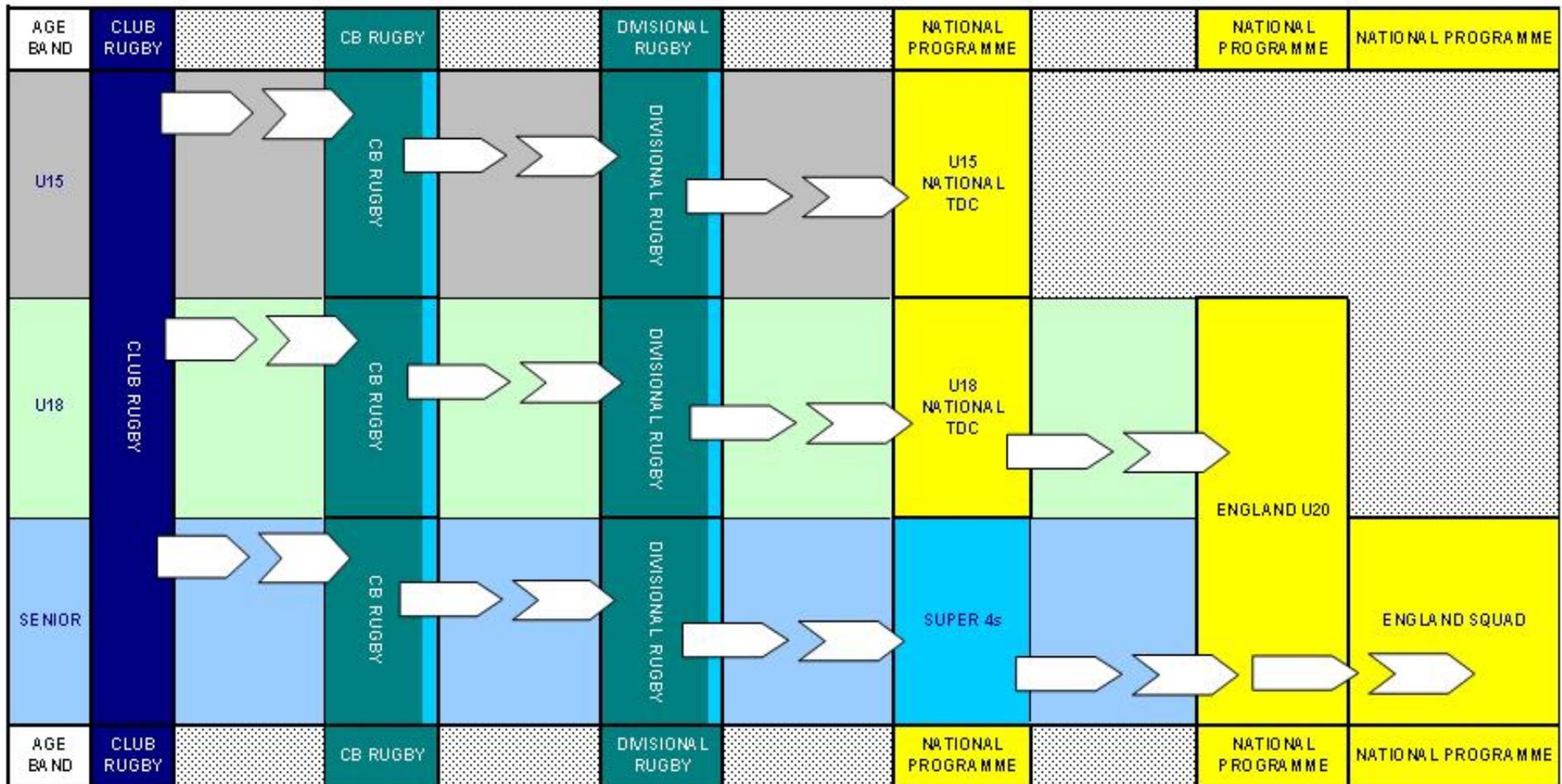
- 6.71 From Senior Division to S4s. The previous year's Elite squad players are also invited to take part.
- 6.72 Selection will be made by the Divisional coaches against selection criteria provided to them on performances during the season and at the summer training weekends.

Programme

- 6.73 The programme will take place over three weekends. In some years this programme may be cut to two weekends where an additional weekend is required for the International programme. Whilst this is not ideal it ensures that players can still be matched against one another.
- 6.74 Three games in a round robin format so every team plays each other. The games will be played in September and October.
- 6.75 In September 2010 the programme will involve two games but will not include players who have played in the World Cup as they will be required to rest before starting the new season. Those Elite squad players who are not selected for the World Cup will play against the best of the HPA players identified during August 2010.
- 6.76 There is one match preparation day. There is little or no player development as the focus is on selection but the squads are supported by coaches.

Exit Routes

- 6.77 Players will be selected from S4s to the England Elite squad. 44 players are selected.
- 6.78 Those players not selected through S4's to the England squad will get feedback on their performances and will return to their clubs. Players will be nominated for their relevant Divisional programme and will take part in this programme for the remainder of the season.



Recommendations from the Competition Review Group
 on the RFUW Player Pathway
 For Implementation Season 2010-11

Sample Pathway Calendar

Below is a draft youth and senior calendar for a season. No additional half term dates or summer dates added.

DATE (Sunday unless noted)	U15	U18
05/09/2010	Club Training	Club Training
12/09/2010	Club Training	Club Training
19/09/2009	Club Training	Club Training
26/09/2010	COUNTY DEVELOPMENT DAY	
03/10/2010	CTM	CTM
10/10/2010	CTM	CTM
17/10/2010	COUNTY TRAINING	
24/10/2010	CTM	CTM
31/10/2010	CTM	CTM
07/11/2010	COUNTY MATCH	
14/11/2010	CTM	CTM
21/11/2010	CTM	CTM
28/11/2010	COUNTY TRAINING	
05/12/2010	CTM	CTM
12/12/2010	COUNTY TOURNAMENT	
19/12/2010	CTM	CTM
26/12/2010	CHRISTMAS	
02/01/2011	Club Training	Club Training
09/01/2011	CTM	CTM
16/01/2011	CTM	CTM
23/01/2011	CTM	CTM
30/01/2011	DIVISIONAL TRIALS/ TRAINING	
06/02/2011	CTM	CTM
13/02/2011	CTM	DIVISIONAL TRAINING
20/02/2011	DIVISIONAL TRAINING	DIVISIONAL MATCH
27/02/2011	CTM	CTM
06/03/2011	CTM	CTM
13/03/2011	DIVISIONAL MATCH	CTM
20/03/2011	CTM	DIVISIONAL TRAINING
27/03/2011	CTM	DIVISIONAL MATCH
03/04/2011	CTM	CTM
10/04/2011	DIVISIONAL TRAINING	CTM
17/04/2011	CTM	CTM
24/04/2011	EASTER 7's TOURNAMENT	
01/05/2011	DIVISIONAL TOURNAMENT	

DATE (Sunday unless noted)	PREMIERSHIP	CHAMPIONSHIP 1 North & South CHAMPIONSHIP 2	NATIONAL Challenge 1 & BELOW	ELITE PERFORMANCE
22/08/2010	 WORLD CUP			
29/08/2010				
05/09/2010				
12/09/2010	SUPER 4 / COUNTY			
19/09/2009	SUPER 4 / COUNTY			
26/09/2010	CLUB	CLUB	CLUB	
03/10/2010	League 1	League 1	CLUB	
10/10/2010	League 2	League 2	League 1	
17/10/2010	League 3	League 3	League 2	
24/10/2010	League 4	League 4	League 3	
31/10/2010	COUNTY			England Training
07/11/2010	League 5	League 5	League 4	
14/11/2010	League 6	League 6	League 5	
21/11/2010	League 7	CLUB	CLUB	
28/11/2010	League 8	League 7	League 6	
05/12/2010	League 9	League 8	League 7	
12/12/2010	COUNTY			England Training
19/12/2010				
26/12/2010	CHRISTMAS			
02/01/2011	CLUB	CLUB	CLUB	
09/01/2011	League 10	League 9	League 8	
16/01/2011	League 11	League 10	League 9	
23/01/2011	DIVISIONAL TRIALS			England Training
30/01/2011	DIVISIONAL TRAINING		League 10	6 Nations
06/02/2011	DIVISIONAL MATCH		League 11	6 Nations
13/02/2011	CLUB	League 11	CLUB	England Training
20/02/2011	CLUB	Reserve	League 12	6 Nations
27/02/2011	DIVISIONAL TRAINING / MATCH		League 13	England Training
06/03/2011	DIVISIONAL MATCH		CLUB	6 Nations
13/03/2011	CLUB	Reserve	League 14	6 Nations
20/03/2011	League 12	League 12	Reserve	
27/03/2011	League 13	League 13	Reserve	
03/04/2011	League 14	League 14	Reserve	
10/04/2011	Reserve	Reserve	Reserve	
17/04/2011	Cup			
24/04/2011	EASTER			
01/05/2011	Cup Finals	Cup Final		
08/05/2011	Play off	Playoff		

on the R-UW Player Pathway
For Implementation Season 2010-11