ICURFC Progress Report

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Goal 1 – Bring financial stability and improved transparency to the club

Following the sanctions due to the organization of the City Varsity in previous years, the Executive Committee has aimed to bring financial stability and increased transparency to the club’s finances through our bi-weekly meeting with DPCS Tom Fernandes-Debets. As part of this process, we succeeded in bringing in a record amount of sponsorship through partnerships with InMyLocker Ltd, Sochitel, Rugby+, Newton Europe, Deliveroo & Belushis.

Although the system we initially had in place was far from perfect, we were able to work together and navigate between the different obstacles that arise from this type of collaboration when running a club. We have been able to simplify the process to ensure the different financial transactions could go through quickly on both ICURFC’s end and the Union/DPCS’s end.

As a result, we have built a relationship of trust with the DPCS where he has noticed the improvements made to the way the club is run while ensuring its financial future. The increased sponsorship obtained has enabled us to provide a better experience to our members by increasing subsidy on transport, the purchase of new equipment and the hire of a new coach.

Goal 2 – Improve professionalism in the club

As part of our objective to improve our on-field performance across all three teams, we have focused on increasing the professionalism level in the club through various factors:

* Four man coaching team

For the first time in ICURFC history, we have secured sufficient funding to hire a team of 4 coaches with one head coach (Andrew Evans) in charge of all three teams. He is working in close collaboration with the 1XV coach (Joshua Barton), 2XV Coach (Callum Pitt) and 3XV Coach (Benjamin Jones) to prepare training and select the most appropriate players for each game. As a result of this, overall performances from all 3 teams are very satisfactory with 1XV and 3XV still in the fight for promotion at the end of the season.

* Partnership developed with Grasshoppers RFC

Due to the lack of space and time restrictions to train at Harlington on Monday evenings, we have developed a partnership with Grasshoppers RFC. It enables us to use their high-class facilities with a full flood-lit pitch at our disposal every week, hence immensely improving the quality of training. In exchange we are providing them with ICURFC players to play for their 2XV and 3XV teams on Saturdays.

* Video analysis sessions

As part of the new coaching set up, we have brought in Video Analyst, Callum Pitt who analyses the footage of the game played to provide us with game statistics and deeper insights into how to develop our game. Although the video analysis is mainly focused on the 1XV, we have been able to also film 2XV and 3XV games so that they may also benefit from this very valuable resource.

* Player’s welfare

In addition to the developments mentioned previously, ICURFC also hires a sports physiotherapist (Michael Smith) for four 30 minute sessions every week to treat the injuries that may arise after a game. On top of this we have secured for another sports therapist to come and attend 1XV games to provide pre-game tapping and massages and assist in case any injuries occur during the game.

* Social media presence

In order to appear more professional, we have increased our presence on Social Media especially Instagram by posting weekly team sheets so that the wider community that follows ICURFC may be aware of the teams we are playing. We have also increased our effort to produce weekly match reports to be included in Felix so that the Imperial body may follow our results.

As a result of these measures we have seen significant improvements in our results across all teams and most notably the 1XV. After a couple of difficult seasons, the 1XV is once again fighting for promotion. The quality of training at Grasshoppers RFC, with the added value of the coaching team and video analysis, enables players to develop on an individual basis but also as team.

Goal 3 – Improve social culture

As part of the cultural reform strategy that was implemented last year throughout the club, we have continued our efforts to ensure the future of the club. We are continually building on the Plan of Action that was set forth last year to ensure good behavior while welcoming any fresher or individual into our teams. Social events are approved by the Deputy President (Clubs & Societies) at our fortnightly meetings, ahead of time.

In order to reinforce the bonds between club members that may not play in similar teams, we have organized large team socials outside of the union where most of the club were present to provide a good social atmosphere for everyone to have fun in. To pursue this, more than in the past, we have organized mixed socials with other sports teams throughout London. By doing so, we believe we encourage openness and develop the socials skills of our members by meeting people from different universities.

As a result, we have had a rather successful first semester in terms of socials with good turnout culminating in roughly 65 members coming to our annual Christmas Dinner. Stabilizing our socials in more controlled events has enabled us to prevent any slip-ups resulting in no union or outside complaint while reinforcing our desire to be a more rugby-driven club.

Goal 4 – Improve club image by making an impact

Following the incidents due to the ‘Fiesta Dash’ social 2 years ago, the club image hit an all-time low and we have realized the need to work on rebuilding it. In order to improve our image outside of Imperial we have undertaken several initiatives by making a positive impact on other people’s lives. These include our continued partnership with the Matt Hampson Foundation for ‘The City Varsity IV’ where we are guaranteeing them a £1 donation per ticket sold but also our annual Movember campaign for which we beat last year’s record and raised £1700 and the ‘Sleep Out for Charity’ campaign in partnership with the ACC committee.

We have also recognized the need to improve our image as a club within the wider sporting community at Imperial College and make a long lasting impact on the future of sport in this university. For that reason, the Executive Committee is getting involved with the new Sports Hub development, the organization of the newly renamed ‘Imperial Varsity’ and the development of the London Varsity Series as we have built a strong relationship with ACC Chair Ross Unwin.

As an indirect results of the efforts made to improve the club image, we have been contacted by Rugby Tonight, a well-known rugby show on BT Sport, to take part in the show on the 8th of January. We have also been contacted by a media group working on trailers for the 2020 Olympic games as they were looking for Imperial students to take part in their adverts. This should take place before the end of 2019.

Goal 5 – Improve wider club communication

The final point we are currently working on is to improve our wider club communication with the relevant bodies to ensure we obtain the maximum support from them. These essential bodies to the running of the club include Imperial College Union, Move Imperial and the RFU through the Rugby Cluster recently implemented.

By sharing information with them through regular exchanges and swift replies, we have been able to improve our relationships with them hence reaping the benefits of stronger relationships. We recognize that they are vital to our club growth and we are more than happy to continue to build on these relationship as they can only be mutually beneficial.