


HABIB ANNOUS (nominated twice)

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CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

HABIB ANNOUS – BLACKHEATH RUGBY



- Wanting to see the Club promoting rugby in the local community, Blackheath Rugby's School Coaching Programme was set up by Habib Annous, Club stalwart and former player
- Habib's tireless efforts to introduce rugby to a new audience of children and young people focuses not only on the game itself, but on the core values at the heart of the game. Every participant leaves the programme with a true sense of the spirit of rugby
- The programme's aim is to introduce rugby to school children in south-east London and is now in its second year of operation - it has given over 2,000 Primary School children and over 200 Secondary School students a chance to try rugby

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The programme's aim is to introduce rugby to school children in south east London and is now in its second year of operation - it has given over 2,000 Primary School children and over 200 Secondary School students a chance to try rugby. In primary schools, Habib organises the coaching to be provided during curriculum time for all students, both girls and boys, with coaches provided by the club, working with school staff, introducing the children to the skills and ethos of rugby. In secondary schools, he organises coaches to assist school staff in running after-school clubs, again for girls and boys.

Habib is also currently working with Greenwich Council on a programme to reach out directly to the community, widening the catchment groups, outside of just schools.

The amount of time and effort Habib has dedicated to bringing rugby to a wider community has been huge: his dogged determinedness to make this happen and his belief that rugby, and its inherent values, should be enjoyed by all, has created a brand new audience in south east London.

HABIB ANNOUS

Habib has led the way in setting up the schools' rugby coaching programme as part of the Blackheath Rugby Charitable Trust.

The coaching provided by the Trust takes two forms. In primary schools, the coaching is provided during curriculum time for all students, both girls and boys, with coaches provided by the club, working with school staff, introducing the children to the skills and ethos of rugby. Coaches go into schools for five weeks, spending a day each week working with Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. At the end of the period festivals are run at the Club's ground at Hervey Road for all participants. Each pupil gets a medal and awards are given for performance and, most importantly, for displaying the spirit of rugby.

In secondary schools, the Trust provides coaches to assist school staff in running after-school clubs, again for girls and boys. A festival day is held for all participating secondary schools in the Spring at Hervey Road, with the same focus on the spirit of rugby.

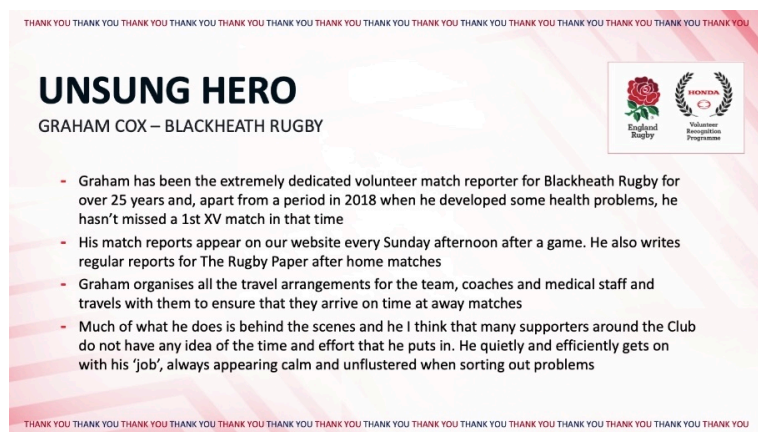
The Programme is now in its second year of operation and has given over 2,000 Primary School children and over 200 Secondary School students a chance to try Rugby.

Habib's desire was to see the Club promoting the game in local schools, and forms part of the Club's efforts to contribute positively to the local community. The coaching is provided by a team of coaches and the trust thanks them for their professionalism, preparation and enthusiasm. The

At the grassroots level of the club he has worked tirelessly during his free time to ensure that the social side can play rugby every weekend. Tim has identified the difficulties all grassroots clubs are having with retention which has caused clubs to forfeit games or even withdraw from the leagues. Most recently, two clubs have come to play us without the required numbers to field a 15 person team, however due to the “rugby is the winner” mindset that he has instilled on the team, the teams still played with the help of Blackheath players to ensure everyone gets to play. He has also encouraged Blackheath Bandit players to make their services available for other clubs in the local area even when not up against Blackheath to keep the sport thriving.

As a result of Tim’s hard work, countless hours of his own time, and commitment to the sport, rugby is played week in week out. This mentality has also increased recruitment and the clubs presence in the community. Blackheath’s positive name in the local area has come from his diligence behind the scenes and other clubs in the area are always thankful for the support he also provides them to keep rugby going. Rugby runs through his veins and the community is in his heart.

GRAHAM COX



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UNSUNG HERO

GRAHAM COX – BLACKHEATH RUGBY

- Graham has been the extremely dedicated volunteer match reporter for Blackheath Rugby for over 25 years and, apart from a period in 2018 when he developed some health problems, he hasn't missed a 1st XV match in that time
- His match reports appear on our website every Sunday afternoon after a game. He also writes regular reports for The Rugby Paper after home matches
- Graham organises all the travel arrangements for the team, coaches and medical staff and travels with them to ensure that they arrive on time at away matches
- Much of what he does is behind the scenes and he I think that many supporters around the Club do not have any idea of the time and effort that he puts in. He quietly and efficiently gets on with his 'job', always appearing calm and unflustered when sorting out problems

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Graham has been the extremely dedicated volunteer match reporter for Blackheath Rugby for over 25 years. He didn't miss a 1st XV match for over 20 years until he developed some health problems in 2018. His match reports appear on our website every Sunday afternoon after a match. He also writes regular reports for The Rugby Paper after home matches.

Graham also organises all the travel arrangements for the team, coaches and medical staff to ensure that they arrive on time at away matches. In the past year he has had to cope with problems caused by rail strikes and by postponements due to bad weather which have necessitated last minute rearrangements of travel plans. He also escorts the players and support staff to away matches.

Much of what he does is behind the scenes and he I think that many supporters around the Club do not have any idea of the time and effort that he puts in. He quietly and efficiently gets on with his job, always appearing calm and unflustered when sorting out problems.

Graham is a key member of our Media Team, and he deserves great credit for all his volunteer work at our Club.

Thanks to Graham's dedication, effort and hard work, the 1st team can travel smoothly and efficiently to away matches, meaning that they arrive in good shape and are able to play and better standard of rugby.

Tragically, Noel lost his son Anthony in 2016 at the age of 18 when he died suddenly at home of an undiagnosed heart problem. Anthony had played rugby at Blackheath from the age of 8 to 18.

Heartbroken and devastated, Noel and his family wanted to do something in memory of Anthony to help prevent other families from going through the same terrible experience. They set up the Anthony Fitzgerald Memorial Fund.

This memorial fund was set up by the family to help raise funds for CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) in order to reduce the frequency of young sudden cardiac death through supporting CRY's screening programme. The aim is to fund the screening of young people within the local community.

The money raised from the fund has so far enabled cardiac screening of 1,472 young people at Blackheath, and almost 2000 more at other clubs. The tests have revealed potentially life-threatening conditions, thus enabling treatment through early detection and saving lives.

In the past few months, the Anthony Fitzgerald Memorial Rugby Match has taken place between Blackheath and another local club, raising £1,200 and another £2,500 was raised for CRY at the Blackheath City Lunch.

Noel has been instrumental in making these events happen. The CRY screening programme has been a Game Changer with regard to the health and welfare of young rugby players not just at our club, but at other clubs locally.

JAMES FLEMING, NICK PROBERT, RUSSELL TICEHURST

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UNSUNG HERO

RUSSELL TICEHURST, JAMES FLEMING, NICHOLAS PROBERT –
BLACKHEATH RUGBY



- Blackheath Rugby has never owned its own ground. The vision of Russell Ticehurst many years ago, his determination to create the possibility for his to happen, and the inordinate amount of hard work put in by him, James Fleming and Nick Probert over the last few years, has meant that The Club will soon have the security of fully owning its ground, and along with it the benefit of securing the future of rugby union at The Utilita (Well Hall). It will allow investment in the site for the benefit of members, but also for the community as a whole
- Whilst these three have been important members of The Club for decades, they are also simply people who want to create a lasting, sustainable legacy for generations to come, borne out of the passion for rugby, and the community and friendships it builds
- Most of this work has happened behind the scenes, with none of them wanting any plaudits. True unsung heroes

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Blackheath Rugby, the oldest open rugby club in the world, has amazingly never owned its own ground. The vision of Russell Ticehurst many years ago, his determination to create the possibility for his to happen, and the inordinate amount of hard work put in by him, James Fleming and Nick Probert over the last 3-4 years, has meant that The Club will soon have the security of fully owning its ground, and along with it the benefit of securing the future of rugby union at The Utilita (Well Hall). It will allow investment in the site for the benefit of members, but also for the community as a whole.

These three men, who have dedicated most of their adult life to volunteering for The Club in one way or another, have spent years talking with the current owners of the site (Greenwich University) and the Royal Borough of Greenwich Council, in order to put the foundations in place for of a potential purchase. This culminated in entering a bid for a government Community Ownership Grant last year.

The amount of time the group dedicated to drawing up the successful bid, the subsequent work needed to be put in, in order to raise the remaining funds (the award was given on a 'matched' basis, so our membership was reached out to in order to fund the other 50%), and the still ongoing work to finalise the purchase of the site has been extraordinary.

She recently told me that one of the dads of the girls she coaches said he'd sat watching rugby with his daughter for the first time and really bonded with her whilst helping her learn the game. He said it wouldn't have been possible without the touch rugby option for her.

I wish all rugby clubs could have someone like Claire who thinks outside the box and finds new ways to achieve things. She is driven by the children's needs and works hard to make everyone feel included within the rugby community and have a passion (and understanding) for the sport. The kids have a load of fun with Coach Claire. Rugby clubs can be daunting places to many people not familiar with the game but Claire is someone who is proving that rugby is for everyone.

CLAIRE WILKINSON

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CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

CLAIRE WILKINSON – BLACKHEATH RUGBY



- Claire coaches rugby in primary schools in London as part of Blackheath Rugby's Community Outreach Programme and has coached 1000+ children since September 2023
- Upon talking to teachers and watching news features on one of the schools, Claire became aware of the needs of the children and their families. Claire volunteered her time and her house to collect 223 pairs of shoes, 98 coats and 33 large Ikea bags of clothing, as well as bedding donations for the families from the rugby community and friends
- In addition, she raised £800 which was used to buy food vouchers for the families. It meant that the children had food and warm clothes over the winter months and are now able to play sports without having to use their normal shoes

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Claire coaches rugby in primary schools in London as part of a community outreach programme and has coached 1000+ children since September 2023. Boys, girls, aged 7-12, state schools, faith schools, girls only schools, mixed races and cultures, mixed abilities etc have all had an introduction to rugby they otherwise wouldn't have got. About 80% had never touched a rugby ball before.

One school had pupils whose families have been hit by the cost of living / housing crisis and many were taking off their shoes to play rugby as their parents couldn't afford replacements. Upon talking to teachers and watching news features on the school Claire became aware of the needs of the children and their families. They were living in awful conditions with the school being their only support. Claire had to help and volunteered her time and her house to collect shoes, clothing and bedding donations for the families from her rugby community and friends. 223 pairs of shoes, 98 coats, 33 large Ikea bags of clothing all sorted into ages. She spent 6 weekends arranging everything so families would have the dignity of choosing what they wanted. In addition, she raised £800 which was used to buy food vouchers for the families. It meant that the children had food and warm clothes over the winter months and hopefully can now play sports without having to take their shoes off.

This sparked the interest of several rugby foundations who offered long term support to the school via Claire. The school are part of Harris Federation who have schools in areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage and as one in 40 children in London attend a Harris school then Claire is hoping to grow the rugby community in these schools, plus many more. A collaboration has started whereby children can be supported to join their local rugby club. Rugby was not the first sport of choice for most of the children but by trying it in school gives a taster of how much fun it can be! The support shown by Claire is exemplary and demonstrates what can be done when she rallies her rugby community into action to help those most in need.

Claire's approach in coaching children is fantastic and very progressive. She takes music and encourages silly warm up games to capture their attention first. She adapts her communication for each school / class based on the pupils. She shows compassion and empathy to those children experiencing difficulties or who are neurodiverse so struggle understanding concepts. She truly demonstrates that rugby is for all and she is content when all the children are running

around with a rugby ball in their hands. The children have been surprised that the rugby coach is glamorous female but proves rugby is for everyone!

Several children Claire has coached at schools have now joined the rugby club and play in the minis teams.

Claire received a personal thank you letter from the Harris Federation's CEO Sir Dan Moynihan and has had several initial planning meetings with Star Scheme, Atlas Foundation and Matt Ratana Rugby Foundation.