

## OA Saints September Update

Saints Chair, Kate Barnes – Season Update

A new approach in how we play and building depth in our squad has reaped rewards as the Saints currently lie top of the league with two out of two wins!

A key result of this has been the strong links we have with the Junior Saints run by Head Coach Craig Ihlenfeldt. The girls have transitioned easily into the Saints and come back to us when they can whilst away at University. A new regulation brought in this year is girls of 17 years old can now register to play Women's rugby but not at front row level until they are 18. This will benefit both parties as the season progresses.

The league has changed yet again with Blackheath finally getting the promotion they deserve as they have been fighting to go up for many years. There was no playoff either due to the big changes with the RFU Women's League structure. Southwold were relegated and Lewes Ladies have moved up, so we look forward to a coach trip to east Sussex which will involve a few beverages on the way back!

We were offered promotion to Championship North 1 by the RFU as we met their criteria but after a player meeting we decided to stay down and keep building our squad which is best for where we are as club currently.

New RFU initiatives include Inner Warrior Camps hosted at hundreds of rugby clubs all over the country are a way of encouraging girls and ladies to try rugby and 'release their inner warrior'! The Saints hosted their first Camp in May and are pleased to have registered a talented young player who regularly starts matches. Social Media has been a big focus for us in our effortless search for new players and with the England Ladies making the final of the World Cup, this has made a positive impact on recruitment. Barnsey says 'I am very pleased to have registered nine experienced players this season and one brand new to the game.'

Development tournaments have opened up aimed to push the development of 2<sup>nd</sup> teams within ladies rugby and also ease the transition from junior to senior. Saints will be participating at Hackney RFC on the 1<sup>st</sup> October taking a few new players that will benefit from game experience.

Head Coach Darren Brown moves into his second season with a strong focus to win the league with a bigger squad.

Two new additions to the coaching team are Henry Clear as our Backs's/Development Coach an ex OA himself. Also, England Capped Sarah Mckenna who brings her experience and energy to the Saints that the girls feed off.

It sounds like all work and no play but that certainly was not the case on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September when the girls were initiated in true saints tradition, led by the saints social team.

The season is moving in the direction it needs to be and the new girls have slotted in as if they have been with the club for years.

Our next match is Hampstead away on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October

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