



Ulster Bank League – IRFU President’s Message

It is my pleasure as President of the Irish Rugby Football Union to extend my best wishes to your President Mike Reid and the members of Belfast Harlequins RFC for the 2017/18 season and in particular your campaign in the Ulster Bank League.

Irish rugby’s premier inter-club competition is now in its 28th season and continues to strengthen in its appeal and popularity. That the Ulster Bank League plays an important and positive role in the IRFU’s domestic rugby programme is further highlighted by the increasing number of talented, ambitious young players who are emerging from the club scene to gain recognition at Provincial and National team level and on the Ireland Sevens’ teams.

In its five division format, played on a home and away basis, greater interest is being generated and this has resulted in improved attendances in many clubs on big match days, further helped by the increase in the number of appealing “Friday Night Lights” fixtures.

I am delighted on behalf of the IRFU for this opportunity to recognise and thank the huge army of volunteers for their commitment each season in the cause of their respective clubs. As Union President, I assure you that your selfless contribution to club rugby is acknowledged and greatly appreciated at Union and Branch levels.

As I share with you the exciting prospect of another stirring Ulster Bank League campaign, I outline the gratitude of the Union to Ulster Bank, the IRFU’s Community

Rugby programme partners. In addition to the League, its sponsorship also includes the Club International side, the Ulster Bank Bateman Cup, the Ulster Bank All Ireland Junior Cup and the Ulster Bank *RugbyForce* initiative.

Throughout the 2017/18 Ulster Bank League campaign: news updates, fixtures and tables will be available on www.irishrugby.ie/ulsterbankleague; on the Ulster Bank's Facebook page – www.facebook.com/UlsterBankRugby and the results on [twitter@UlsterBankRugby](https://twitter.com/UlsterBankRugby). In addition, Irish Rugby TV will be broadcasting live games and highlights from matches on You Tube.

Meantime, good luck and best wishes throughout the season. It promises to be another memorable one for club rugby.

Philip Orr

President – Irish Rugby Football Union

MEET PHILIP ORR - THE IRFU PRESIDENT

Philip Orr, the former Ireland and Lions prop forward, was enrolled as the President of the Irish Rugby Football Union at the annual Council meeting in the Aviva Stadium, today, July 14th, 2017.

He has assumed the highest office in Irish rugby after a distinguished career as player and administrator. His services have twice been recognised by the Rugby Writers of Ireland, as winner in 2007 of the Tom Rooney award for exceptional contribution to Irish rugby and also induction to the Hall of Fame in 2016.

A member of Old Wesley RFC for 44 years – he was President in its Centenary Year in season 1991/'92 and Captain of the 1985 winning Leinster Senior Cup team - and in a glittering playing career he also starred for Dublin University FC, the Combined Irish Universities, Leinster, the Barbarians, Ireland and the British and Irish Lions.

He made his Ireland debut in 1976 against France in Paris and in a career spanning 12 seasons he was for many years Ireland's most capped prop forward with a then World record 58 appearances, 49 of which were earned consecutively. His tenure was highlighted as a key player on the Triple Crown winning teams of 1982 and '85. He also represented Ireland in the 1987 inaugural World Cup and toured with Ireland to New Zealand (1976), Australia (1979), South Africa (1981) and Japan in 1985. He was twice chosen for the British and Irish Lions, to New Zealand in 1977 and to South Africa in 1980.

On retirement from international rugby after the World Cup 1987 he immediately began what has been an equally effective administrative career, initially in the preparations for the Old Wesley club's Centenary Year celebrations and then in 2000 as the Old Wesley club's delegate on the Leinster Branch, followed by his election to the IRFU Committee in 2009.

Since then he has held a number of key roles, including Chairman of the Disciplinary, Coaching and Referees Committees and as a member of the Representative Game, Commercial and Marketing and Rugby Committees. He was Manager of the inaugural Ireland Club (amateur) team in 2005/'06 and also Manager of the Ireland under 20s team for three years which included the winning of the Six Nations Championship Grand Slam in 2007.

Educated at The High School and Trinity College and formerly joint Managing Director of the family owned protective clothing company Orrwear Ltd; he is married to Anne and is the fourth member of the Old Wesley club to be elected President of the IRFU.