

DEVIZES RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Affiliated member of
Dorset & Wilts. RFU



Member of the RFU
and England Rugby

Chairman
Mark Sheppard

President
Chris Jones

Secretary
Nick Dark

Ladies Section Review – May 2023

Women's NC 2 South West (Central)											Download table as imi
#	Team	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	TB	LB	Pts
1	Dings Crusaders Women	12	12	0	0	679	143	536	0	0	59
2	Melksham Ladies	12	7	0	5	207	299	-92	1	0	45
3	Hornettes Ladies	12	8	1	3	390	191	199	0	0	43
4	Avonmouth Ladies	12	7	0	5	296	276	20	0	0	41
5	Devizes Ladies	12	3	2	7	187	271	-84	0	0	33
6	Chew Valley Cats Ladies	12	2	2	8	195	353	-158	0	0	31
7	Bridgwater & Albion Ladies	12	0	1	11	48	469	-421	0	0	17

Devizes ladies started the season in a new lower league NC2 South West (central), but with some familiar faces from teams they have played previously. The league structure originally started with 9 teams but due to two clubs folding, lowered to 7 teams overall. The ladies started the season aiming to finish within the top three teams, however due to player injuries, adverse weather, and time between games, Devizes ladies finished 5th in a league. Total points scored was 187, and total points conceded was 271. Interestingly, away game stats differed significantly (59 scored & 164 conceded) compared to home games (128 scored & 107 conceded), demonstrating the positive impact playing at home has on the ladies which can be partly attributed to the home game support we have. The top try scorer was our skip Denny, and our biggest victory margin was against Chew Valley at home where we scored a stomping 60-0; something that we would not have scored against Chew Valley when having played them in previous years.

The ladies have gone through a transitional period this season, and being in a lower league has come with both strengths and weaknesses. In contrast to last season struggles with player retention, this season has seen a vast increase in new players joining and has allowed the ladies time to rebuild the team structure, and encourage new players to trial playing games in a safer and slightly less competitive environment. Due to being in a lower league however, and having inconsistent weather adversely affecting the pitch, the ladies have had large gaps between games and this has impacted

on their momentum to be 'game ready', particularly in the former part of the season. With regard to the league, the ladies played against some tough opposition this season despite going into a lower league. Dings crusaders, who won the league, are a filter team for Bristol Bears ladies and really should be in a higher league as a result of this; however Devizes ladies last game against them at home may suggest otherwise with Devizes being a more dominant side. Melksham ladies have been a friend to the Devizes team since they started, and sadly some of the Devizes ladies in previous seasons have transferred to Melksham making them a tough team to beat and one we were unable to win against this season. We were also last in a league with Chew Valley Cats 3 years ago when we were in NC1 South West, and were a team who not only came third in the league (we were 4th), but were a team we struggled to draw against let alone beat.

In terms of player base, we had 26 registered players at the end of 2021-2022 season, of which we lost 4 to retirement, University or moving clubs. We started the pre-season with 24 and have gained a further 14 players over the season, ending 2022-2023 season with 38 registered players which is a marked difference to last season. Having a stronger team and larger numbers has meant the team were able to start the season in better stead, but this changed rapidly with key players taking injuries early on. Devizes ladies have also teamed up with local teams in Westbury, Trowbridge, and Chippenham to either play friendlies or borrow players to boost our numbers, and have seen two Westbury players recently permanently register with Devizes as a result. Having larger numbers has also allowed the ladies to expand on supporting each other, alongside the coaches, to work on skill sets and teach new players specific techniques.

Off the pitch, morale, passion and enthusiasm has remained consistent, and team spirit has generally stayed high. This was despite seeing our head coach Keith taking unexpected time off for critical health reasons, which caused a ripple of upset, worry and distress throughout the team and ladies committee. Thankfully Keith remained firm, and it was during his steady recovery in hospital and at home that saw the club as a whole pull together and show the 'one club' ethos all teams and main committee have worked hard to build. Our backs coach Den stepped up significantly to manage the overall coaching during training and games, as well as support players individually off the pitch. Den had support from Ben Biss and Chris Hiscock for a period who willingly stepped in to help run training sessions and offer ideas and tips to the team, alongside other 1st team members offering to support in training sessions if needed. Thankfully Keith returned to training prior to end of season, and this saw the team relay round to ensure he knew how missed he was!

End of season ended on a positive high, and the ladies have celebrated their end of season dinner in style. We also have enjoyed success at County Level with Trixie Beddoe, Charmaine Crook, and Kirsty Hemmings all being selected to represent the county.

In terms of coaches/committee, this season saw Den Warbuton join Keith as the ladies back's coach and she has integrated well into the team and used her knowledge as a retired Devizes ladies player to the teams' advantage. We lose Emma Matthews as Team Manager at the end of season. Emma was an early member of Devizes ladies when it started, and has been a member of the club in different capacities for 12 years. For the next season, Georgia Walker and Amy Williams have jointly stepped up to take over the TM role and will meet with Emma to complete a handover.

The ladies are looking forward to next season with aim to finish in the top three teams of the league, which looks a much more achievable goal for 2023-24.