

WORLD DEAF RUGBY CHAIR REPORT

Michael Oosthuyzen

December 2019 – April 2023

INTRODUCTION

My name is Michael Oosthuyzen. I am the current Chair of World Deaf Rugby, and have been Chair from late 2019 to now.

Firstly, I would like to introduce, acknowledge and thank my fellow WDR Executive Committee Members for their commitment and hard work since late 2019:

- Tim Stones the WDR Vice-Chair and Johanna Plante the WDR Secretary who have also been on the Executive Committee since late 2019;
- Gwynne Griffiths who joined the Committee in 2021 as Project Manager for Sponsorship & Marketing; and
- Antony Crook who recently joined the Committee as Treasurer

I would also like to acknowledge and thank URSA for planning, organising and hosting this amazing Championships, and for everything they have done to make it a wonderful experience for everyone.

And lastly, I would like to thank all of you for making the huge effort to travel to Argentina to be part of this event.

The 3 years in which I have been Chair have been a very difficult time for World Deaf Rugby and the world in general, with the *Covid-19* pandemic drastically impacting every dimension of our lives. Everything was put “*on hold*” and most of us were in lock-down for months and months at a time. All sports right around the world were shut down, and all scheduled sporting events postponed.

It is only in the last 6 months or so that most of the world has gotten back to some semblance of “*normal*” and we’ve been able to again play sports and socialise.

SUMMARY OF WDR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Even though we have been in lockdown or restricted in what we could do for most of the 3 years in which the current WDR Executive Committee has been in charge, we have continued to do what we could to progress various aspects of the organisation from the safety of our homes. This included:

WDR Website: Reviewed, updated and added documents and other information to the *Website*, including regularly updating membership details.

WDR Hearing Loss Policy: Created a formal *WDR Hearing Loss Policy* that fully explains the *WDR Hearing Loss* regime voted on by Members in 2019, distributed it to Members and put it on the website

WDR Constitution: Reviewed, amended and updated the *Constitution* to better reflect the current and possible future activities of the organisation, consulted with Members about the changes in two separate consultation processes, and conducted a formal vote of Members

WDR Overview Document: Produced a five-page "*WDR Overview*" document to introduce the organisation, why it was established and what it is seeking to achieve. This document is a useful resource for Members to use in discussions with their home Rugby Unions, Government and potential sponsors to enhance understanding of what Deaf rugby and "*World Deaf Rugby*" is all about

Deaflympics: Had preliminary discussions with several individuals who indicated a particular interest in progressing *Deaflympics* Rugby Sevens. However, the substantial difference in hearing loss eligibility policies between the ICSD and World Deaf Rugby remains a barrier

World Rugby: Had several productive phone and email discussions with *World Rugby* who encouraged closer alignment, engagement and cooperation between national Deaf Rugby Unions and their national Rugby Unions, noting that such national relationships should be our focus rather than WDR trying to seek formal "*recognition*" or financial support from *World Rugby*

WDR Executive Updates: During the *Covid-19* pandemic, produced and regularly distributed *WDR Executive Updates* to keep in touch with WDR Members

WDR Logo: Driven by Gwynne, developed and consulted with Members on a possible new *WDR logo*

WDR Treasurer & Bank Account: On the instigation of Gwynne, appointed a well-qualified *WDR Treasurer* and established a *WDR Bank Account* in the UK

WDR Incorporation as a Charitable Organisation: On the instigation of Gwynne and in consultation with Members, obtained *pro bono* legal support from *DJM Solicitors* to help us with the *Application* and other *Documentation* required to register *World Deaf Rugby* as a *Charitable Incorporated Organisation*

WDR Sevens Championship, Cordoba Argentina: For the past two years, actively worked with *Union Rugby Sordos Argentina* and regularly liaised with WDR Members on the planning, preparations and organisation of the 2023 *WDR Sevens Championship* being held in Cordoba, Argentina

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Some of the activities I've just summarised are still in progress, and will be considered in more details at today's *WDR General Meeting*.

Another very important subject that we need to discuss today is what future WDR Events we want to plan for, how we select which country will stage such events and what we will need the host country to provide in terms of facilities and documentation.

We also look forward to hearing from each of you about Deaf rugby within your country, any updates as to the Officeholders of your Union/Association and whether you might be interested in hosting future *WDR Championships*.

CONCLUSION

I would like to finish my report with a special thankyou to Mariano, Agustin and all the other people from *Union Rugby Sordos Argentina* who have worked so hard and for such a long time to enable these Championships to happen and make them so successful. You deserve all our thanks and appreciation for your amazing efforts in these very difficult times.

Thank you.