

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2024**

### **The 2024 Season and Year 75 for NIACUS**

In preparation for the season we had a comprehensive out-of-season programme.

It began with an exciting interactive evening led by Jonny Kennedy on disciplinary issues and when and how they should be handled.

We had a similar informative and engaging evening with Richard Kerr from IRFU Ulster Branch. He discussed issues facing Rugby Referees and the difficulties they face with recruitment and retention, discipline and referee morale.

Paddy Grimes and Alan Waite spent an evening discussing NCU developments and priorities and the relationship with umpires. We were able to highlight some important topics we felt needed clarification and or resolution.

We were also privileged to have some in-house training and wisdom from Mark Hawthorne and Ronnie Balfour.

To all those who gave of their time and experience we are very grateful.

Also during the closed season we had restructuring of Cricket Ireland and this involved the development of a Cricket Ireland Umpires Forum and the disbanding of IACUS. This was done with some trepidation by many and to date we haven't seen the Cricket Ireland Umpires Forum materialise.

The season just ended was very successful. More teams and more matches than ever: cricket is growing in the NCU area. The feedback obtained was that the umpires and scorers were well appreciated by the clubs and the standards of officiating were to a high standard. Thanks to all who stood and scored during the season and especially to some new faces who appeared behind the stumps this year. We look forward to seeing many more in 2025.

At the end of the season we were able to reignite the rivalry between NIACUS and our Leinster counterparts when the White Stick Trophy was again up for grabs.

Sadly, largely due to a century innings by a Leinster official, we were unable to retain the trophy and it has gone down south. Hopefully, soon to return.

Immense thanks must go to Paul Black for organising the event and to his wife for providing catering after the match. Paul also provided some sparkling batting which made the game much closer than Leinster would have liked.

I must recognise the efforts of the Executive Team: they are the engineers who make NIACUS work. Problem solving, forward planning and providing encouragement where needed.

I must especially mention 3 people: Simon Burrowes our Secretary for his patience, organisation skills and communication across the Association and the NCU.

Brian Alexander has represented our interests at the Domestic Directorate and kept us informed of developments.

Then there is Ian Houston who not only juggles the fixtures and umpire appointments but who umpired over 60 matches himself last season.

Thanks to all umpires and scorers who made the season a success.

Finally, I leave you with two issues to ponder.

This season saw a substantial increase in Disciplinary Reports:

- is behaviour on field getting worse?
- are we less tolerant of bad behaviour?
- or was it Johnny's pre-season tutoring that has made us better umpires?

Cricket is growing and becoming more diverse, which is great news.

The challenge is for us to expand and become more diverse in response.

Are we up for it? I think the indications suggest that we are, but we must work hard to involve more people of diverse cultures and genders to become the umpires and scorers we need going forward.

Thank you all.

**Brian Patterson**

**Chairman**

**29 October 2024**