



The Online Welsh Rugby Championship has been devised and created by All Wales Sport Ltd.

## **The Online Welsh Rugby Championship – Community Spirit**

*by Ellis Davies - deputy chief Rugby writer*

What started as an idea just to keep rugby supporters interested and occupied when the lockdown kicked in has by now developed into a project that appears to be contributing to the continued well being of the participants.

As a company directly involved with rugby clubs at grass roots level on a daily basis an immediate and almost total reduction in contact between the clubs themselves was evident once the rugby season was abruptly halted.

Many sports clubs went on to develop on line fund raising games to support the NHS and many clubs continued to be involved with the distribution of food etc to those members of the public who remained in isolation.

There was however, no specific long term on line competition to retain interest for the rugby family as a whole and there were more than a few indicators that the game itself was suffering.

This is why we devised our Online Welsh Rugby Championship which was launched at the end of May.

Our initial thoughts that it might only appeal to a few clubs but we were more than surprised when we had to close entries with 224 clubs taking part.

Ever since, the social media interaction between clubs has grown week by week and we even had request to extend the half-time break so that clubs could tweet their scores and even their fictional scorers.

By now, thousands of people across Wales are watching the action 'live' on line twice a week and visiting the fixtures/results/tables section on the All Wales Sport website.

One would think that the appeal of this type of competition would be limited but fair play to several Premiership and Championship clubs as well as London Welsh, they have all entered and joined in the on line 'banter' with the other clubs in all parts of the Principality.

Teams have been selected, match reports compiled and some coaches have even made pre-match video interviews for social media.

The online league is just over the halfway stage with the prospect of Cup, Plate and Bowl competitions to come once the league matches are completed.

Whatever the eventual outcome for the competing teams, they have taken on board our initial thoughts and are continuing to play their part in maintaining interest in Welsh rugby.