

OHRFC Season Review 2024/25

OHRFC couldn't make it back-to-back league titles in 2024/25, but achieved a "three-peat" of promotions as we clinched a place in Counties 2 Surrey for next season.

The club has returned to the eighth tier of English rugby, the joint highest level in our history, having re-entered the RFU pyramid at level 12 in 2021.

A restructuring at the end of that season has been followed by league titles in Counties 5 and 4 Surrey, and though we fell narrowly short this season, Worth Old Boys were worthy title winners.

They beat us home and away, losing just one game all season to end a long wait to claim the title they had been searching for for several seasons, with a 20-6 victory at Reed's Weybridge and 17-20 reverse at Dean Road.

But once again we took huge strides forward, enough so that we claimed our place with Worth in the league above for the following year.

For the third season in a row, we started with four straight wins. The fact that three of those were away was no bother, with a 22-0 win at Effingham & Leatherhead preceding bonus point victories at home to Law Society and away to London Exiles. We then followed it up with a long awaited and famous win at Streatham-Croydon, ending a run of defeats at Frant Road stretching back to 2021.

Though we lost to fellow unbeaten side Old Johnians and previously-mentioned champions Worth, we had seen off Warlingham and London Media in the middle of those games and beaten Economicals to remain in the hunt for a promotion spot at Christmas, crucially battling past Old Georgians 12-10 at a freezing Dean Road before completing the double over Law Society and London Exiles to ensure we would be in the top two heading into 2026.

We only trailed Worth by two points. We had accrued 49 in total, with eight four-try bonus point victories, two wins without a bonus point, one defeat with a losing bonus point and one without.

It was a remarkable showing to get to that point still so much in contention having started the campaign believing the best we could hope for was a mid table finish after promotion the season before, but we had made it to the New Year in second and in the process bagged a place in the Papa Johns Cup Counties 3 and below Championship (the top tier of the level 9 and below competition) for a third time on the trot.

But the reality of over excelling yourselves is sometimes things can catch up to you, and that was our reality in January 2025 as disciplinary issues and some vintage performances from opposition led to our first losses at Dean Road since 2021 with Old

Johnians fighting back from 29-7 down to win 31-29 before Streatham-Croydon avenged our earlier victory the following week.

A victory against Warlingham steadied the ship, and we had our eyes back on the title after holding off a second half fight back by London Media to score over 50 for the first time in a 52-24 thumping at Battersea Park.

The game that followed against Worth Old Boys felt like our biggest in years, the chance to complete an epic hat-trick of league titles and fly into Counties 2 in style. Alas, we were 15-0 down, and could've been further adrift, after the eventual champions showed their class in the first half hour, and though we fought back brilliantly to lead 17-15 halfway through the second half they completed the win with a late try to all-but secure the Counties 3 crown.

That was gone, but we still had a promotion to chase, and a 69-24 thumping of Economicals showed our intent ahead of our decisive showdown with Old Georgians, five points behind us with two games to go.

It proved to be one of our greatest performances in years, with this year's Player's Player of the Season Thom Braund going over along with 22/23 recipient Louis Goodwin and 23/24 winner Billy Franklin for a 19-0 lead, before Oli Taylor knocked over a penalty and got a try of his own for a 29-0 advantage at the break.

Top try scorer of the season Pip Bird added another before Pat Silcox and Jacob Turley took us to 50 points with Georgians scoring just 12 in response. It was a famous victory that will live long in the memory and meant we were back in Level 8 for the first time since 2011.

A final day defeat to Effingham & Leatherhead and first round exit in the cup to Thamesians followed, but we would still have time to write more history as we went on tour for the first time in 20 years. Newcastle was the destination, and after a 48-48 draw at Seghill we went to Gateshead FC, Newcastle Falcons and Newcastle greyhound track on an action-packed and hugely enjoyable weekend that was a fitting way to bring down the curtain on another successful campaign.

Alongside Player's Player Braund and top try scorer Bird, Fletcher Kipps would pick up Chairman's Player of the Season for his superb ball-carrying all season and Matt Oxborrow would earn the Clubman of the Year award for his longstanding service to the club, with fellow front rower Iestyn Humphrey winning Young Player of the Year.