

Wednesday night saw Cardiff Blues host a second question and answer session of the season with supporters in the Sir Gareth Edwards Lounge.

Richard Holland, Rhys Blumberg and Mike Brown gave up their own time to discuss the future of the club and address concerns of those in attendance, and we thank them for continuing their supporter engagement.

The event opened with a pre-recorded Skype conversation between Mike and newly announced Cardiff Blues head coach John Mulvihill, who spoke passionately about the new role he will take up in the summer.

He was complimentary of the passion shown by Cardiff Blues and Welsh rugby supporters, and was excited to join a world famous rugby side. He also stated his aim was to produce a good style of rugby for us in the stands to enjoy, as well as hoping to continue the development of our young stars, before wishing Danny Wilson and the team well for the remainder of this season.

Mulvihill confirmed he watched the game against Benetton on the weekend and has been looking over highlights of previous games, while he was already getting to work on bringing in a backs coach, forwards coach and a scrum coach, alongside retaining out of contract players currently with the squad and recruiting some new faces.

Richard then expanded on some of the points made by John, confirming that the new coach would have full control of the pre-agreed budget. An addition to the second row was mentioned and it was also confirmed that a strong offer had been put to George North.

The club was also looking to appoint a rugby general manager, taking over from Billy Millard on the player retention and recruitment front, allowing Mulvihill to be fully hands-on with the coaching as he desired to be.

While Richard had not had a chance to sit down and properly map out the next three years for Cardiff Blues yet, he did say John's aim was to make us the best Welsh region by the end of next season, before the period would culminate with us regularly challenging for Pro14 play-offs, and be playing in the Champions Cup knockout rounds.

In terms of the length of time taken to appoint John Mulvihill, Richard made no apologies for undertaking a rigorous recruitment process to ensure the right man was secured for the job. He spoke about former Cardiff RFC coach Alec Evans influence on the decision, and how emotional Alec had got knowing a protege of his would be coaching his old time, Peter Thomas had not been part of the process and has only spoke to John very briefly following the confirmation.

Moving on to off-field supporter concerns, Richard was asked about the financial state of play at the Cardiff Blues currently. He confirmed the balance sheet wasn't looking great, with accounts due to be filed shortly, but that Peter Thomas was still committed to covering the losses, and was also due to put his name to a new WRU facility.

Governance issues were also raised, after the prospect of an advisory working party to the board was floated at the last Q&A, but Richard stated that the Cardiff Blues board had unfortunately voted against that being set up. He did say they were still committed to governance changes though, and a review was still continuing.

The issue of the ground was brought up, with Richard being unequivocal on his and the board's desire for Cardiff Blues to stay at the Arms Park beyond the end of the current lease. He had also spoken to new Cardiff Athletic Club chairman Keith Morgan, who had the same hope. However, at this point there is a way to go before any agreement, and options away from CAP are still being explored.

Of course the issue of the name was also brought up, but Richard stated that actually it was only ever mentioned in settings like this, and that it wasn't discussed by the board or the WRU. Cardiff Blues was the name, and Cardiff Blues it would stay.

There was also mention of the new under-23 teams, which Richard was supported of, but warned there would be a cost implication of increasing squad size from 45 to around 70. Dual contracting with Premiership clubs was an option in that respect.

Richard confirmed that, to his knowledge, and there had only been a meeting of the Pro14 CEOs the day before, there was no plans to bring in American sides for next season and it would remain the Pro14.

The final part of the session required a joint effort from Richard, Rhys and Mike, as supporters raised concerns over the Pro14 and ticketing aspects.

Next year's season tickets are due for release in two weeks, with a slight increase in prices but still at a competitive rate.

Issues with kick-off times and length of notice about kick-off times and dates were all raised, with the frustrations being shared by the club. They were hopeful the new television deal would allow for more consistency and earlier fixture confirmations, but would continue to bring it up with the Pro14.

Richard suggested inviting Pro14 CEO Martin Anayi along to the next meeting for supporters to raise the issues direct with him. In the meantime, Cardiff Blues Supporter's Club are due to meet Anayi before the end of the season, and would bring up the points raised at the Q&A.

The final point of the evening was about the ever popular Judgement Day. The ticketing and the timing event were both mentioned, but unfortunately this season and the next (2018/19) was still involved in the original contract. Terrace season ticket holders would have their unreserved bottom tier tickets added to their ST card, while seated ST holders would receive their tickets shortly. These would all be between the two 22s.

Going forward the hope was that season ticket holders would be able to choose where they sat in the stadium for future events, and that it may be placed closer to the start of the season to increase the impact of the event on other attendances. Although many were not keen on it continuing at all!

Thanks again to Richard, Rhys and Mike for coming out to answer questions, and to the supporters who attended on the night. Thanks also to John Mulvihill for speaking via Skype, and good luck to him in the new role, but for now, all focus is on the exciting end of this season!

Cardiff Blues Supporter's Club & CF10 Arms Park Rugby Trust