

**Chief Executive David Thompson to leave the club  
February 2nd 2009**

Celtic Crusaders have confirmed that its Chief Executive Officer, David Thompson is leaving the Club.

Thompson said: "When I joined the Crusaders in 2006 my brief was to help the Club win a licence and prepare for Super League. Now that the remainder of our overseas players have their visas and are in the country I have fulfilled my role. I now have to honour previous personal and business commitments.

"I have very much enjoyed my time at the Club and feel privileged to have played a small role in helping the Crusaders and rugby league become established in Wales. It has been a real pleasure working with everyone involved with the Crusaders and Wales Rugby League. My family and I are looking forward to supporting the club which I am sure will only go from strength to strength."

The Club's General Manager, Mike Turner, will take over the day-to-day running of the club. Thompson will remain at the Crusaders for a time to ensure a smooth handover.

**Carwyn Jones wishes the Crusaders good luck  
February 4th, 2009**

As the Celtic Crusaders prepare to do battle in engage Super League for the first time later this week, Bridgend's Labour Assembly Member Carwyn Jones has wished them luck on their entry into the top flight.

The Crusaders kick off their campaign away to Leeds, the reigning Super League and World Club Champions this Friday (06 Feb).

Carwyn Jones AM said: "As a big rugby fan of both codes, league and union, it will be great to see yet more top draw sporting action at the Brewery Field.

"Bridgend has sporting heritage that it can be proud of and to have rugby league giants such as Leeds, St Helen's and Wigan coming here over the next few months is an exciting prospect. It will also be a great boost for the town in terms of bringing visitors to the area with spectators expected to travel from all parts of the country to come and watch their teams play here.

"Many people in Bridgend want the Crusaders to survive and prosper in the Super League and I wish them well in what is going to be a tough year for them up against some of the best club sides in the game."

**Jace Van Dijk will be captain for a third season  
February 5th, 2009**

Jace Van Dijk will be captain of Celtic Crusaders for their first ever engage Super League season that kicks off this Friday with a trip to World Champions Leeds Rhinos (kick-off 8pm).

Van Dijk, who turns 28 next week, has been skipper the Crusaders since their second season in 2007, leading them to National League Two championship glory in that season and to the National League One Grand Final last year.

Third highest scorer for the Crusaders with an all-time total of 332 points, Van Dijk was also the official National League Two Player of the Season in 2006.

Crusaders coach John Dixon said: "It's a pleasure to announce that Jace will be captain for the third successive season. He has maximum onfield respect of the players around him, he has the ability to execute matchplans and is capable of adjusting when needs arise."

### **Bridgend Designer Outlet Appearance a Big Success February 9th, 2009**

If you weren't at the food hall at Bridgend Designer Outlet last Saturday, you missed out on one of the best Celtic Crusaders public appearances ever.

All 25 Celtic Crusaders squad members made appearances, less than 12 hours after getting back to Wales following their historic first Super League match at Leeds Rhinos, to sign autographs and have photos taken with fans.

Fixture lists were given out and ticket competitions took place. All backroom staff were also there (John Dixon, Kevin Ellis, Anthony Seibold, Thibault Giroud, Gerald McCarthy, Mike Turner) as was the still unnamed Crusaders mascot and engage's very own Sid the Savings Pig. The event was presented by Andrew Whitelam from the Rugby Football League while videos from last year's Super League and a preview of this year's were shown on big screens.

Hundreds of autographs were signed by the players for fans new and old with many people visiting because they had seen the Leeds Rhinos match on Sky Sports the night before which was their first ever viewing of the Crusaders.

Crusaders' Operations Manager Gerald McCarthy said: "This really was a fantastic event and I'd like to thank all the players for turning up just hours after they'd played a very tough game in Super League. You wouldn't find that at most sports clubs. It was also good to see so many fans at Bridgend Designer Outlet plus I think we gained more than a few new supporters in the process - it's outstanding how many people saw us on TV the previous night then made a special visit to Bridgend Designer Outlet because of that. We look forward to seeing all of them, plus many others when we play our first ever home Super League game at the Brewery Field in Bridgend on Saturday 21st February."

### **Crusaders match reports to be written in Welsh February 12th 2009**

Celtic Crusaders' matches will all be reported on in Welsh on the Celtic Crusaders website for the first time this season as the club play their debut season in the engage Super League.

The reports, that will be written by Cardiff-based freelance writer Sian Couch, will appear in Y Cymro newspaper, a Welsh language publication that is released every Friday. They will also appear here on the Crusaders' official website.

Y Cymro newspaper editor William Owen said: "We're delighted to be publishing Celtic Crusaders' match

reports in Welsh throughout 2009. The Crusaders have been a massive success story over the last three years, they represent the whole of Wales and we're proud to be a part of it."

The report of the Crusaders' first ever engage Super League game against Leeds Rhinos from last Friday will appear in this week's Y Cymro which priced 50p available from all good newsagents throughout Wales. The Crusaders travel to Salford City Reds this Saturday before taking on Hull FC in their first ever home Super League match at the Brewery Field in Bridgend (Saturday 21 February, kick-off 6pm). Tickets for this home match, priced from only £4 for juniors and £14 for adults, can be purchased by calling 01656 658535.

### **Kiss 101 is Celtic Crusaders' official radio station February 16th 2009**

Celtic Crusaders are pleased to announce that their official radio partners for the 2009 engage Super League season will be Kiss 101.

The regional station, which broadcasts to South Wales and the West of England, is part of the Kiss Network, broadcasts dance and R&B music in the main, and will celebrate its third anniversary in September this year. Kiss 101, whose logo is on the Crusaders' home and away playing shorts in 2009, has already been very proactive in promoting the Crusaders in the lead up to the start of the Super League season. This has included broadcasting an advertising campaign on their radio station as well as sponsoring the press packs for Crusaders' official season launch at the Big Pit in Blaenafon three weeks ago.

They will also provide all the music and presentation at the Brewery Field on matchdays starting with the home game against Hull FC this Saturday (kick-off 6pm).

The new stadium announcer will be Kiss 101's own Reece Carter, presenter of "The Weekend Edge" which is broadcast on Saturday and Sunday mornings from 6am.

Reece, a long-time rugby league fan is pleased and honoured to be part of Celtic Crusaders' first ever Super League season and can't wait to get started.

"Finally we have big time Rugby League in Wales," he said. "This is something that I've been looking forward to for years, ever since I was officially the Cardiff City Blue Dragons' youngest ever club member in the early 1980s, at just three months old.

"Born and bred just up the road in Tonteg, I've watched the Crusaders grow over a very short space of time, and I'm extremely excited about what this season holds and I'm proud to be playing my part in it. I can't wait for the Hull game on Saturday now."

Celtic Crusaders' General Manager Mike Turner said: "We were impressed with Kiss 101's proposal in our initial meetings and we've been even more impressed with their hands on approach, professionalism and sheer enthusiasm over the last couple of months. I'm sure this is the beginning of a long and fruitful partnership and I'm looking forward to hearing their output on matchdays."

### **Super League opening round is a record breaker February 16th, 2009**

The opening round of the 2009 engage Super League season was a record breaker...with the seven matches attracting an all-time high aggregate attendance of 77,944 (an average of 11,132 people per game).

That figure comfortably beats the previous best aggregate for an opening round which was 69,499 set by the six matches in the opening week of the 2004 season.

Super League was a 14-club competition in 1999 but, on the opening weekend of that campaign, the round one aggregate only reached 47,758!

The record breaking total set over the recent weekend is also only 973 supporters behind the record attendance for any round of matches in the 13 year history of the competition (78,917 for Round 25 of the 2007 season).

Commenting on the news, the RFL's Chief Executive Nigel Wood said, "This is a tremendous start for the engage Super League and clearly demonstrates that the competition continues to grow and develop at a healthy rate. We believe the League offers a unique family sporting entertainment experience and supporters are responding to this in ever increasing numbers.

"The players and the coaches have worked extremely hard in the off-season and have already produced some exciting and gripping contests".

Wood added, "We would also like to thank and recognise the tremendous efforts of the marketing and PR staff at all the clubs who have worked so energetically and productively to promote and organise what was a highly successful opening weekend".

"We feel there will be many more exciting occasions as the 2009 engage Super League progresses. Indeed, the Round 8 fixtures staged over Maundy Thursday and Good Friday have the potential to attract tremendous gates and possibly set a new all-time record.

"The combination of a set of highly attractive fixtures including many huge local derbies and the traditional heightened enthusiasm supporters have for the engage Super League at this point of the season is set to generate massive gates.

"The message to all supporters has to be, if you're not a season ticket holder, to stay in close touch with your clubs regarding ticketing arrangements in the build-up to what will be a series of huge games".

### **Paul Ballard re-signs for the Crusaders February 16th 2009**

Celtic Crusaders have re-signed Paul Ballard for the 2009 Super League season.

The 24-year old winger ran in 40 tries in 49 appearances for the Welsh club in 2007 and 2008.

"I'm delighted to have re-signed for the season," Ballard said. "Obviously I've a lot of friends here, I get on well with the players and I want to see how well I do in Super League. I'm looking forward to challenging for a place in the side."

Crusaders' coach John Dixon said: "Paul was very keen to return. I was keen to have him back. Paul has played very well for us over the past two seasons and we're excited to see him get his chance in Super League."

### **Get to the Brewery Field early on Saturday February 19th 2009**

As well as a thrilling rugby league match between Celtic Crusaders and Hull FC this Saturday at the Brewery Field, there's a lot for you to do.

#### **Behind the Goal - Family Village**

A new introduction to Celtic Crusaders matchdays is the family village situated behind the posts from 2pm until kick-off, so come on down and take a look.

The village is a great opportunity for different companies to showcase themselves. We have the Welsh Regiment who have brought down an assault course, climbing wall and their Panther Desert 4x4.

Really Welsh have an exhibition display and have provided daffodils for all around the club.

Engage Super League title sponsors' engage Mutual Assurance have a bungee run and some inflatable games to try out, while the renowned Super Sid the Savings Pig will be out and about.

Euro Vehicles have put on a competition where you have to guess how many of our first team players managed to get in their vehicle. They also have a van and two cars on show.

Bridgend College have a samba band playing while they also have an exhibition unit.

Rural Foods will be here doing a cooking demonstration giving out tasters and promoting local produce.

Global Games are providing a number of inflatable games for your enjoyment.

The Hogfather make a welcome visit to the Brewery Field providing a tasty Hog Roast to warm up all fans on a February evening.

#### **On the field – The DanceKatz Squad**

The DanceKatz squad (pictured above) is an all girl group aged 16 to 28yrs of age. The girls dance at numerous sporting event across Wales and are delighted to be supporting the Celtic Crusaders at this prestigious event!

The squad train on a weekly basis in Newport and are professional and dedicated performers. They are part of the DanceKatz Academy of Theatre Arts, which is an extremely successful Performing Arts Academy in South Wales. If you would like more information on the squad or would like the girls to perform at your event then please contact Sarah on [dancekatz@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dancekatz@hotmail.co.uk) or visit their website [www.dancekatz.com](http://www.dancekatz.com)

Plus Kiss 101 will be here as they will be throughout the entire season, providing entertainment before and during the match.

## **Withers and Van Dijk targeting St Helens February 26th 2009**

New Celtic Crusaders signing Lincoln Withers (pictured right) and skipper Jace Van Dijk are both hoping to play against St Helens on Saturday 7th March at the Brewery Field (kick-off 6pm).

Van Dijk limped off against Hull FC last Saturday and he, along with all the other Crusaders players, returns to training this afternoon (Thursday) after a few days off.

He had a physio session yesterday (Wednesday) and has said that he responded well and is targeting St Helens. Withers is almost certain to be making his Crusaders debut against last season's league leaders.

A close season signing from Canberra Raiders after making 154 appearance in Australia's NRL for the his home town side, St George Illawarra Dragons and Wests Tigers, the hooker has been laid up due to a knee injury from late last year. So obviously he can't wait to get started in his new career in Wales.

"I'm really excited to be playing my first game in Super League," he said. "Training has been going well, the team spirit has been fantastic with all the boys and I'm just looking forward to being part of it.

"I've been a long time on the sidelines. When I was injured, I was told that it would be about a nine-month recovery period so I'm on target. St Helens are a famous name all around the world, everyone knows about them in Australia so I can't wait to make my Crusaders debut against such a team.

"But whoever it's against I'm just itching to play again. I wanted to wait until I was ready and I'm ready now and raring to go."

## **Bryant looking forward to Sea Eagles reunion February 26th 2009**

Celtic Crusaders' star forward Mark Bryant is looking forward to meeting up with his old Manly Sea Eagles team-mates this Sunday when the Australian side take on Leeds Rhinos in the Carnegie World Club Challenge at Elland Road (kick-off 6pm).

The prop played an instrumental role in Manly's success in Australia's NRL last season playing in 25 out of their 29-game charge to the title including all three finals matches, coming off the bench to make his 100th NRL appearance to help his side to a record 40-0 win over Melbourne Storm in the Grand Final.

Now he is starring for the Crusaders, having turned out in the first three games against Leeds Rhinos, Salford City Reds and Hull FC, and he is enjoying every minute of it.

"This is a new challenge for me," Bryant said. "I'm still going through a settling in process but all is going really well.

"Obviously initial preparation wasn't as good as we'd like with some of the boys having visa problems, but this season is a building process for all of us.

"We're still working on our combinations in training but there's been real positive signs in the last couple of

matches played so we'll keep working hard. Down the track I'm sure we'll hit some good solid form and I think we'll finish the season really strong."

Bryant will be reuniting with his old team-mates this weekend as the Sea Eagles aim to become only the third Australian side this decade to win the annual contest.

"I can't wait to see the boys again," he said. "I've got a lot of good mates at Manly, after spending a lot of time there and I still speak to a lot of them via phone and email.

"I'm meeting up with them on Friday night and we're all going out to watch the Bradford Bulls v Huddersfield Giants game at Odsal as another of our former team-mates, Steve Menzies is playing for Bradford. I'm then staying with Steve in Bradford, I'll spend time with the Manly guys on Saturday morning and go to their last training session in the afternoon."

Bryant will also make use of his time in Leeds to watch Celtic Crusaders second team as they play their first ever match in Super League Reserves away at Leeds Rhinos at Stanningley RLFC. This game is being played on Sunday afternoon at 1.30pm.

"I'm going to have a look and see how they go," Bryant adds. "These boys are the future of the club and of rugby league in Wales so it'll be interesting and exciting for me to watch.

"Then of course it's on to Elland Road. This is the Manly guys' reward for an unbelievable Grand Final win last year. As that game last year was my last at the club and my 100th NRL appearance, it was the icing on the cake of four years of hard work. I hope they do really well on Sunday night and after that I'll be looking forward to the visit of St Helens to the Brewery Field on March 7th. That should also be an evening to remember."

### **Regal Travel to sell Crusaders tickets February 27th 2009**

Celtic Crusaders have teamed up with Regal Travel to provide more outlets for supporters to buy tickets for matches at the Brewery Field.

From next Tuesday 3rd March, all four branches of Regal Travel, who are one of the Crusaders' shirt sponsors for 2009, will be selling tickets for the home game against St Helens on Saturday 7th March (kick-off 6pm). This match is the second of a double header with Crusaders reserves taking on their Saints counterparts at 2.30pm.

Regal Travel's General Manager Helen Tustin said: "We're delighted to be increasing our partnership with the Crusaders. We're pleased that Super League has already become a big hit in the area and we're pleased to be helping out by selling tickets, not just in the Bridgend area but in our branches in Port Talbot, Maesteg and Porthcawl. I'm sure that this will increase Crusaders attendances even more and will provide easy access for fans in a number of areas to walk in and buy tickets. We're all looking forward to the St Helens game, it should be a very exciting day and we're pleased to be playing such an important role in the preparations."

The branch addresses are as follows:

BRIDGEND - 8 Derwen Road, Bridgend. CF31 1LH. Tel: 01656 668725.

PORTHCAWL - 90A John Street, Porthcawl. CF36 3DT. Tel: 01656 773377.

PORT TALBOT - 2 Forge Road, Port Talbot. SA13 1NU. Tel: 01639 895522.

MAESTEG - 28 Llynfi Road, Maesteg. CF34 9DS. Tel: 01656 737755.

Crusaders match tickets are also available from...

Scrum n Surf, Bridgend Designer Outlet. CF32 9SU. Tel: 01656 766101.

Surfs Up n Under, 6B Taff Street, Pontypridd, CF37 4UL. Tel: 01443 400 533.