

Ian Ramsdale looks ahead to 2009 in the Capital



I'm no Mystic Meg, far from it, but...

At this point last year, I had a feeling 2008 was going to be special. I couldn't quite put my finger on how, but I just had a feeling - and I don't think I was the only one.

On this very page I wrote: "You'll cheer more home-grown talent than ever before", then amongst all things, we witness a team including seven Londoners beat the World Champions.* Just 12 months prior to that such an event would have been unheard of, and even at the time there wasn't one media outlet that didn't go overboard on it.

Yes, it was a big thing – for most a big surprise - but that's what everyone at this club have been working towards, for years, the next chapter in London RL's history. They probably felt as I did. And you know what? I've got "that feeling" again.

Rugby league is on the up in London. As a journalist who covers a number of sports, there's a real buzz that this is going to be another landmark season in the capital.

Last year saw a record number of London trained players have representative honours, from professionals down to under 14's. The systems, having been put in place, are now producing the talent, and it's those systems that are pivotal to the success of the sport here.

I do still have one worry: attendances. The long-term success of this sport here isn't based on just crowd numbers, but it is a big factor.

The difference of RL to other sports, which haven't quite worked in the capital – and maybe should, is that the infrastructure,

commitment and support is now in position. With this the attendances will increase, but it'll take time.

One thing that needs to be sorted this year is investment. Albeit not imminently crucial, it soon could be - but what better time, year and location to do it, especially if the team can produce on the pitch. Which brings me on to the Harlequins Rugby League Super League XIV squad:

One of the rising coaches in the game has an entire group who encapsulate his ethos; unfaltering effort, team cohesion and a desire for flair. Amongst all the off-field achievements associated with Harlequins RL in 2009, I don't think it's out the question that this season the main talk will be about consistent on-field success.

Enjoy.

Rammo
ian.ramsdale@bbc.co.uk

* I did also write "they'll finish nearer the top of the table than the bottom." Oops.

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Hear all the latest Harlequins RL news in BBC London 94.9's weekly programme throughout the season. You can send post-match comments and thoughts to london.sport@bbc.co.uk

The programme is also available on the BBC's iplayer.

BBC London continue to exclusively cover every engage Super League match with Harlequins RL across the season. Go to www.bbc.co.uk/london/sport