

Monday 21st April 2008

OA's U9's Weekly News

OA Under 9s UNBEATEN and VICTORIOUS in the Hertfordshire County Festival

on Sunday 20th April 2008

A great day and end to the playing season in many regards yesterday! Thanks to everyone of you for your support and enthusiasm all season long - your hard work has clearly payed off! The clean sweep yesterday was an AGE GROUP WIDE TRIUMPH for sharing amongst all 60 players, coaches and helpers and parents - not just the players who ended up with winners medals and trophies.

I want to give a special mention to the Yellows. If possible, I would encourage them not to feel they left the day yesterday as the only OAs team not to "win" (although in their hearts and heads this might be what they feel right now). Although their day was shorter than that of the other squads, they played their socks off, were not beaten by a team from another club, were second in their group and would probably have gone through to the semi (if not further) had fate been kinder to them at the draw for the group stages to put them in another group. With only 3 competitions to enter yesterday and the draw placing Reds and Yellows together, all 4 squads could not end up with winner's trophies. Simon and Dawn - thanks to you and your players for your good grace in every sense yesterday. Their season end goal was to compete at a "B" team level and they did just that.

I am sure that we have set some firsts here (although I can't be sure, so let's believe it nonetheless) - the Blues have won the County Cup 3 years in a row, perhaps the first age group in our club to do so in recent times, and to end the season *completely* unbeaten. I am also guessing that this is the first time any age group in our club has taken all the silverware in a County Festival. Let's not also forget that the Reds have now won the County Plate twice in the last 3 years. I might also propose that this might be a rare occasion where a "D" team from any club (the Greens) have won the "C" team competition. We also ended the day with no OAs under 9 team being beaten by a team from another club.

Congratulations players! Well done also to the excellent coaches who have brought all squads to this high point over the course of this season, our first in contact rugby, and to the point of completely cleaning up in the County Festival.

Brian Clark
Head Coach

The Greens

Competing in the **Shield** competition the Greens won all of their Group matches, the results and try scorers as follows:

Game 1 - OAs Greens 10 v Bishops Stortford 0

Try scorers - Luke Barbour, Angus Wight

Game 2 - OAs Greens 20 v Hertford 15

Try scorers - Toby Spence (3), Angus Wight

Game 3 - OAs Greens 25 Harpenden 10

Try scorers - Angus Wight (3), Conor Quinn (2)

Semi Final - OAs Greens 30 Harpenden 15

The Greens opponents at the semi-final stage were the Harpenden side they had beaten previously with the knowledge that their unbeaten record would count for nothing if defeated. A hat trick of tries from Captain **Angus Wight**, two from **Toby Spence** and one from **Oscar Finnie** ensured that the Greens progressed to the final.

Try scorers - Angus Wight (3), Toby Spence (2), Oscar Finnie

Final - OAs Greens 5 Bishops Stortford 5

In a game between two very well matched teams, scoring chances were few and far between with the opening try by Bishops Stortford immediately cancelled out by a great individual effort by Captain **Angus Wight**. Stalemate ensued thereafter with the scores remaining level. Due to the rules of the competition no extra time was allowed leaving the **Greens joint winners of the Shield competition**.

Try scorer - Angus Wight

Player of the Festival - Conor **Quinn**.

Report by Martin Wackett

Coaches - Jim Finnie, Mick Quinn and Stephen Barbour

Players - Luke Barbour, Angus Wight, Oscar Finnie, Maxim Vuolo, Ethan Piggott, Joseph Wackett, Andrew Doughty, Oliver Marshall, William McKay, Conor Quinn, Rhys Williams, Luke Benfield, Toby Spence

The Yellows

The Yellows coaches approached the festival with a mixed array of emotions. First, we were very proud of how far the squad had come during this season - having played many matches against other clubs' A & B squads, with some very respectable wins! On the other hand a sadness that we were coming to the end of our season together. But, then again, we have 2008/2009 to look forward to! Lastly, we had both excitement and nervousness at what the festival would bring. Our objective for the season had been to win more games than we lost, and to achieve a status equivalent to most "B" squads from other clubs. I think we can conclude that the mighty Yellows have certainly done that.

OA Yellows 5 - OA Red's 15

Incredible that our first game would be drawn against our very own Red squad!! Nonetheless, The Yellows took to the field with a positive stance.....Whilst the 1st half belonged to the Red's, the Yellows came back in the 2nd half making the Red's earn their win! A fantastic team effort, determination and drive culminating in **Jack Rye** scoring for The Yellows!!

Try scorer - Jack Rye

OA Yellows 15 - OV B's 5

The Yellows were all fired up now, and determined to win.....even into the 2nd half when OV's put on some of their 'bigger', 'faster' players. Nothing was going to stop the Yellows!

Try scorers - (it is believed) Rory Jeram, Thomas Murphy, Joseph Hensman

OA Yellows 15 - Hertford B's 10

The pressure was on for this game - we had as many points as Hertford, so whoever won this game would come 2nd in the group....We had to win, and what's more, the Yellows really wanted to win! It was a tight game - nail-biting at times. The win was secured by **John Greener's** MOST SPECTACULAR run, leap and dive to score.

The Hertford coach turned to Dawn during the game saying "We've got problems - this is our "B" team against your "C" team.....)

Try scorers - Euan Wattley, John Greener, and TBC (apologies)

It was a great day of rugby, and a fine way to end the season - for The Yellows to have played so well, and for The Under 9's, as a club, to have cleaned up!!!

Report by Dawn Sewell

Coaches - **Dawn Sewell** and **Simon Mitchell**

Players - Thomas Dee, Harry Deeks, Matthew Ellis, John Greener, Paul Greener, Joseph Hensman, Rory Jeram, Jake Mlodecki, Connor Mitchell, Joshua Montoya-Timperley, Thomas Murphy, Jack Rye, Edward Sewell, Euan Wattley, Jasper Williamson.

The Reds

At last the Reds proved to one and all they are the best "B" team in Hertfordshire. I've been saying it all season (or been told it by other coaches) but the trophy (erm, ok it's a plate!) now confirms it.

Well done for the effort put in by the whole squad on Sunday and over the whole season. The triumph on Sunday was not a fluke or a surprise but was a result of the hard work and team spirit shown over the past 32 weeks! It's not always fun - training can be, as the kids often tell me, hard work and boring, but I hope the satisfaction and genuine thrill of **winning the Herts County Under 9 Plate 2008** was shared by all .

Game 1 - OA Reds 15 - OA Yellows 5

The day started with probably our most nervous and potentially most difficult game, against the Yellows. After some early pressure the Reds started to dominate and raced to a three try lead. The Yellows put up a strong resistance in the second half and finally took advantage when we were temporarily a man down (coach's fault for trying to get the refs attention before subbing an injured **Rory Superfine** - it won't happen again!) .Not our best game, but a relief to come away with a win. We all sympathised with the Yellows because we all believe that if they had been in any other group we could have met them in the final. Well done to Simon and Dawn and the lads.

Try scorers - Rory Superfine, Jack Tahesh and Toby Palmer

Game 2 - OA Reds 25 - Hertford B 0

Our second game against Hertford B showed how dominant the Reds were with a convincing, though still slightly error ridden display. Try of the match was **Harry Newman-Booth's** solo sprint to the line. It is also interesting to note that all 5 tries were scored by the backs.

Try scorers - Caswell Sparks, Rory Superfine, Ronan Harris, Harry Newman-Booth and Jack Tahesh

Game 3 OA Reds 30 - OV's 0

Our third game was notable for two things - **Jonathan Powdrell** scoring **two** tries in a game, and **Ashling Lamer** showing her classmates in OV's how rugby should be played!

Try scorers - Jonathan Powdrell (2), Zach West, Rory Superfine, Ronan Harris and Ryan Owen

Semi Final - OA Reds 10 - Watford 0

Having successfully negotiated our way through the group, the semi final saw us pitched up against Watford. By now the team realised it was down to the knock out stages (though it did take some convincing them that this was the case). The performance in this game was immense, the tackling and discipline were exemplary and at no time did we look like conceding a try .The centre pairing of **Rory Superfine** and **Oliver Palmer** typified the effort shown by the forwards. The victory was gained with two forward executed moves with **James Clark** emerging both times with the try (forgive me if this was not the case as it was difficult to see in the excitement who really scored!) A word here too for the substitutes who, obviously disappointed not to be on the pitch, gave every encouragement from the touchline. It all helped.

Try scorer - James Clark (2)

Final - OA Reds 20 - Bishop Stortford B 5

Onto the final against Bishop Stortford . Early in the day I had witnessed Bishop's A side give the Blues a hard game and was weary of what their B's would be like. Any concern about the way the final was going was quickly erased as the Reds took control from the first whistle. In the end the final was comfortable with the whole squad managing to play a part .Fine tries from **Finlay Cripps**, **Ronan Harris** and **Ryan Owen** were capped off by a theatrical effort by **Caswell Sparks**.

The final whistle bought to an end a great day and a great season. Well done all and enjoy the success.

Try scorers - Finlay Cripps, Ronan Harris, Ryan Owen and Caswell Sparks

Report by Rick Powdrell

Coaches - **Rick Powdrell** and **Guy Palmer**

Players - Zach West, Oliver Palmer, Adam Ford, Harry Newman-Booth , Jonathan Powdrell (captain) , Caswell Sparks, Jack Tahesh , Ryan Owen ,James Yurkwich ,Finlay Cripps ,Rory Superfine ,Toby Palmer, James Clark, Ashling Larmer , Ronan Harris

The Blues

County Cup Champions 3 years in a row!!

The weekend did not start well with **Cameron Clark** pulling his hamstring and being 'doubtful' for the festival, it got rapidly worse with much loved Blue **Daniel 'The Iceman' Hanlon** breaking his arm in a warm up drill. I know Daniel would have played his heart out as Cameron's replacement in the starting team but alas he was our one and only rugby related injury of the season.

It was with a sense of cautious optimism that we descended on mass to Hertford - it couldn't get any worse could it?

Game 1 - OA Blues 25 - Stevenage 0

Our first run out on the massive pitch was a great team effort, the wide spaces lent themselves well to **Ethan Arpino** and **Ed Birchinall** our very fit and fast forwards. These boys were outstanding all day and started as they carried on by being at every breakdown. Ethan even popped over a score showing a talent for rising to the occasion.

Of course the big spaces needed smart backs who can do the basics well, catch and pass, and **William Stewart** and **James Lear** stepped up to mark with some excellent movement and momentum from the back line. The Scrum halves - **Ruairi McGowan** and **Simon Jones** both did their normal excellent work of recycling the ball and despite a lack of forward grunt we were well suited to this fast and open game.

Both wings were heavily involved and that is always a good sign, **Luke Simpson** going close on several occasions and **Jonny Olive** dotting down for a score. The star of the show was **William Parkinson**, a lot of responsibility was put on Parky and he looked to the manor born, charging up the pitch with ball in hand, slipping passes across the line and tackling with real oomph!

A great start.

Try scorers - Ethan Arpino, Ruairi McGowan, Jonny Olive, James Lear (2)

Game 2 - OA Blues 30 - Hemel Hempstead 0

Cameron Clark was keeping his leg moving and felt ready to try a cameo appearance in this game so some confidence grew in the boys on this news. For the first half we kept his powder dry and went with the same line up - with the same result. **Parky** was the main man again and was joined by a beautiful performance from **William Stewart**. Hemel were game but limited and the key to the Blues success all year - tackling - kept their big boys at bay. **Parky** scored straight from the start to set the tone, **Kane White** set a land speed record to run in a try from the wing and everything was right with the world. At halftime we unleashed **Cameron Clark** with instructions to play fly half and set up attacks with passing so he was not putting stress

on his leg. The first two times he touched the ball, two quality passes resulted in two long range scores for the team. Cameron then decided to run one in himself from half way to show he could play a key role if used correctly. Again the whole squad contributed to this fine win. We were in good shape going into the big one against Bishops Stortford.

Try scorers - Cameron Clark, Jonny Olive, William Parkinson (2), William Stewart, Kane White

Game 3 - OA Blues 5 - Bishops Stortford 5

I am not sure how the seeding in the pools was worked out but they got it wrong as Bishops were the best team we played all year and as winners of the recent Richmond festival were full of confidence. They were a very similar team to us in that they had skilful quick players who tackled in packs and kept a good shape. Having said all that, we should have won this game since we spent the first half attacking their line and **James Lear** was on the end of a real team effort to touch down. The forwards were tackling their hearts out in the middle with **Archie Radovanovic** matching the work rate of **Ethan Arpino** and **Ed Birchinnall**. The basics make or break a team - passing, catching, tackling, seeing space. And it was a break down in the basics that cost us the win - a lovely passing move and a clear overlap to the wing simply required a catch and open run to the line. Alas our boys had a attack of the dropsy's and two opportunities went begging. To compound the issue we decided to pass the ball along the line from a defensive scrum (a big NO NO in our set piece play) and knocked on just on our own line, this lead to Bishops getting a well earned score. The boys ran back to half way but the whistle went nearly straight away. Missed opportunities!!!

Try scorer - James Lear

The Toss

The calculators were out and Bishops Stortford and OAs Blues had exactly the same scores in all matches, this meant the dreaded toss of a coin was imminent. The guys from Bishops were a great bunch and we all agreed that a) this is a bad way to loose out and b) whoever won the toss would win the tournament on behalf of the other.

My biggest contribution all year was calling tails as the coin sailed in the air, we all stared at it in silence for a moment and then I grabbed the Bishops coach and gave him a very macho cuddle and wished him well. We have fixtures with Bishops next year and that will be a really good game for the Blues. You can all insert you own tosser joke about me now.

The Semi - OA Blues 2 - Tring 0

Ahhh Tring, our friendliest and fiercest rivals. True to form their star players played well and they were very competitive however I can't dress this up - after Bishops Stortford it was one way traffic. Cameron Clark who had played a bit of a half against Bishops watched on as his team tackled their socks off to keep Tring at bay - sorry to bang the drum but the aggressive and secure tackling the Blues put in really shutters down on the opposition - every single player put in a lion hearted effort. A score up from **James Lear** and the Blues rocked into half-time confident but not complacent. **Cameron Clark** came on and got stuck in with some big hits. A special mention for **Archie Radovanovic**, who was hobbling on one leg but sucked it up and started the game, putting in four or five tackles that stopped Tring attacks. He lasted into the second half until he could go on no longer and off the bench comes **Robbie Pope** to carry on as Archie left off. We sealed a win through **William Stewart** and Tring did not even look like scoring. Beautiful!

Try scorers - William Stewart, James Lear

The final - OA Blues 2 - Harpenden 0

With a nod to Grantland Rice (Google him), we come to the report on the final - I was pleased to see that Harpenden had made it as a local derby is always fun and to be honest, we ain't ever lost to them and we ain't ever gonna!

Outlined against a blue-grey April sky the Four Horsemen rode again. In dramatic lore they are known as famine, pestilence, destruction and death. These are only aliases. Their real names are: **Clark**, **Birchinall**, **Parkinson** and **Stewart**. They formed the crest of the Old Albanian cyclone before which another fighting Harpenden team was swept over the precipice at Hoe Lane as the proud friends and family members looked upon the bewildering panorama spread out upon the Under 9 pitch in front of them.

The game turned out much like the semi final - one way traffic - but required a real effort to score due to some great energy and application from the opposition. We made sure **Cameron Clark** started this one as the Harpenden boys know his skills and tend to stand off him. **Archie radovanovic** could not last long and **Robbie Pope** again filled in with an excellent performance. **Parky** put in a dynamic and direct performance and one of his snipping runs ended just short of the line, **Ethan Arpino** was alert and agile enough to pick up the ball and score. Yes!!

At halftime we asked the boys to do the simple stuff well and cut out mistakes, we also asked them to think of the Iceman in hospital and 'do it for Daniel'. They proceeded to do just that - **Cameron Clark** had thrown off concerns over this hammy and after a lovely darting run by Parky, a loop around the back to wrong foot the defence by Cameron and a lovely pass by Parky, Cameron sprinted down the wing to give us room on the scoreboard. With the whole second half played out in Harpenden's half there was little doubt of the result.

Try scorers - Ethan Arpino, Cameron Clark

Ladies and Gentlemen - the Hertfordshire Champions - OA Blues!

The end of a long and emotional day saw the boys claim their medals and cups, but spare a thought for Bishops Stortford, they didn't lose but went home - it could have been us. Still all you can ask is to make the most of the opportunities you have the Blues certainly did just that.

Report by Andrew Radovanovic

Coaches - Andrew Radovanovic, Steve Pope and Tim Birchinall

Players - Ethan Arpino, Ed Birchinall, Cameron Clark, Simon Jones, James Lear, Ruairi McGowan, Charlie Moffatt, Jonathan Olive, William Parkinson, Robbie Pope, Archie Radovanovic, Luke Simpson, William Stewart, Kane White