

Monday 5th February 2007

OA U8's Weekly News

The Matches played at home to Harrow on Sunday 4th February 2007

This week all our squads were at home to entertain visitors from Harrow. The Blues, Yellows and Greens played competitive fixtures whilst the Reds took the chance for some quiet but concentrated training.

The Blues

We played just one competitive game this week against Harrow, in a game that saw the welcome return of Charlie Moffatt and Luke Simpson. The Blues were sensational and may have given their best ever all round performance today. The result – an emphatic **win, 10 tries to 1** (that law of tag rugby that says the referee should halt the game when there is a 6 try difference between the teams, to avoid disheartening the losers, seems to escape use every week!).

What did the Blues do well – *everything!* In attack the runs were straight and penetrating, the passes were fluent and the ball moved from touchline to touchline along the line in search of the inevitable breakthrough. The 10 players present were organised at every restart in attack and defence and the substitutions that ensured everyone had some game time were smooth and seamless. For the second week running, this was a 10 player performance. A pretty convincing display all round.

All the watching parents thought the first half was particularly spectacular, with some really good passing rugby where the ball travelled between the boys while they ran, rather than the more usual “tag, stop, pass” approach. As a result, the match highlight is slightly different this week – instead of a heroic try-saving tag (there wasn't much call for that) we saw the killer try-making pass, where the player “made” the try by getting the last pass away ahead of the defender to the overlapping runner at speed. Ruairi McGowan, Cameron Clark and William Stewart all produced that kind of pass but there were numerous other examples of good passing prior to that final pass. The Harrow parents also commented on how the Blues used the width of the pitch and really played like a team rather than like a bunch of individuals.

In terms of the more usual game statistics: *Defence* - Cameron Clark and Luke Simpson got 6 tags each and were joint top taggers. William Stewart was next with 5, Ruairi McGowan and Ethan Arpino had 4 and everybody else contributed tags along the way. Ethan deserves a special mention in this area because most, if not all, of his tags were from Harrow's first ball carrier and this generally knocked Harrow off their stride in their first phase of play. *Attack*: Cameron Clark was unstoppable with the ball in his hand and scored 5 tries. Ruairi McGowan was next with 2 and Daniel Hanlon, William Parkinson and Archie Radovanovic each got 1 try.

There were two other highlights involving Archie Radovanovic. Those new white boots of his were *blinding* and he will need to play on a really muddy pitch as soon as possible or we will all need sunglasses. We also think it was an accident that he nailed the Harrow lad, who tried to run down the line in the first half, with his knee but it certainly looked good - there won't be many who try to get through a narrow gap between him and the touchline next year!

So, for the game against Harrow, Cameron Clark was awarded the best overall player and top attacker awards. Luke Simpson's tagging was great, as was Ethan Arpino's very effective tagging during a shorter time on the pitch, so they both get joint top tagger awards this week. However, **all** 10 players should feel proud of the best overall team performance we have seen from the Blues.

Perhaps more importantly, if less excitingly for the spectators, the Blues went off to concentrate on learning some contact rugby after this game. This week we did 3-man mauls and some 1 on 1 attacking / tackling. The mauling was coming together well, but the tackling needs some more work and some confident purposeful aggression. This was the first time the boys were allowed to properly tackle real attacking players – very different from a tame and slow moving tackle shield! Two boys stood out as focused and effective tacklers and deserve special mention – Ruairi McGowan and William Parkinson. Well done boys – you are the first *tacklers* of the week.

Report by Andy Stewart & Brian Clark

The Yellows

Two more games and two more wins for the continually improving Yellows.

Working hard on defence, the team started brightly, and didn't need their usual half game before getting going and concentrating.

The passing was exceptional with players looking for their team mates rather than taking on the whole team themselves.

The games against Harrow were hugely exciting - the second against Harrow A's particularly so as the large and vocal touchline crowd will testify. Thanks to good teamwork and the best tagging of the season, OAs won by a single try.

Final scores 4-1 and 7-6.

This week's top defender is Jasper Williamson and top attacker is Rory Superfine.

Report by Simon Mitchell

The Greens / Whites

Sunday was not a day for the romantically inclined. The mean Green machine's brand of flamboyant rugby finally met its match against the arch pragmatists from Harrow, who taught us some invaluable lessons about running straight and holding a strong defensive line. Even the coach's attempt to sneak eight players onto the pitch was doomed to the failure, thanks to the eagle eyes of referee Moffatt.

We managed to give all players in the squad some match time against Harrow's 1st and 2nd teams, which in itself was a major logistical challenge. The **losing score lines 3:6, 3:5 and 2:6** did not reflect the balance of play, but the boys (& girl) almost certainly learnt a lot more about the game than in some of our recent wins.

Try scorers on the day were Joseph Hensman and Matthew Ellis (who both scored two tries), Thomas Murphy, Harry Deeks and Elliot Lusby-Park. If we had had Johnny Wilkinson's favourite video ref on hand, the chances are that we would have scored a few more tries, with Maxim Vuolo and Matthew Ellis coming particularly close.

A big thank you to Guy Palmer for helping Mr Gianni and myself in our vain attempts to manage the silliness.

Report by Martin Thomas