

## **Guy's Hospital (Penguins) v Old Cranleighan's Vets** **Sat 11<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

The opening 19-19 thriller against the Welsh, 7 days ago, seemed a distant memory! The Gentlemen of Guy's experienced a far friendlier affair, this week, in leafy Thames Ditton. A perfect day for rugby, if not a little hot for October. Sunshine and our bevy of gorgeous female supporters hugging the touchline and basking in the Indian Summer that we now come to expect in this corner of a foreign field!

Guy's Vets got off to a frisky start and set quite a pace in the early exchanges. A formidable back line of Wouter, Walker, Carbass and Rodders was bolstered by the return of the ever youthful Al Jones at 10. Sharp distribution and quick hands sent the ball wide and stretched the Old Cranleighan's defence: we spent almost the entire first half deep in OC's territory and set up camp near their 22 metre line. Alas we only crossed for 2 tries and failed to capitalise on this early domination. The first try came from those fast hands and sustained pressure. The final wide movement brought a slick scissors near the right wing which put Wouter in the clear, outpacing the full back to the corner. The conversion hit the post and fell the wrong side of the bar. The Penguins were waddling proudly with an optimistic swank as they maintained the attacking flair. We struggled in the scrums being considerably out-chubbied: valiant efforts from Rich Lee and Si Holmes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> row could not match the OC's powerhouse!

Cranleighan's continued to give us trouble around the fringes but our tackling was firm and committed. From a solid tackle in mid-field we turned over OC's ball and then recycled quickly through Terry Gibson and Chris Langrish. Just inside their half, Guy's forwards ran on, popping out of the tackle, supporting each other and keeping the ball alive. Once fed to the backs, Robbie Walker chipped the flat defence and won the sprint to touch down; no sign of the 'twinge to the hamstring'! These moments typified the first half style: great support work and flashes of lovely individual skill. Another narrowly missed conversion and the fact that we had only 2 tries under our belt came back to haunt us during the five minutes that followed. On the stroke of half-time, OC's broke through some sloppy tackles and after a little 'juggling' by both sides, their No. 8 seized the advantage to score unopposed beneath the posts. After a dominant half we turned around only 10-7 ahead.

Within 1 minute of the restart we found ourselves 10-14 down! OC's were buoyant and bullish from the kick off Guy's were sitting back and fast asleep! At least the scrums had been altered – front row stuff – and we were a little more competitive in that department but OC's, attacking freely and strongly at the fringes, were far more dangerous and effective. Both sides were well matched and desperate to break the other down. The game opened up and players were puffing as the heat took its toll on the aging bodies. Then at last, from a scrum near the half-way-line, Guy's shipped the ball wide once more. Walker pivoted at 10 with his dodgy leg and Jones drifted at outside centre. He drew 2 defenders with a little Welsh wizardry and slipped a beautiful pass to Ed Sixsmith on the left wing. With the lead restored by 1 point, the game remained on a knife edge. OC's had a chance to sneak back when they opted to kick a penalty on our 22. The scuffed opportunity was a turning point. A huge drop-out took us deep into OC's half. They failed to find touch and from good ruck-ball wide on the left, Stretch and Langrish went on a surging run up the middle. Gush supported the break and carried the move to their 22. With the defence now in tow, he passed to Carbass. Their scampering defence just closed us down but the attack continued with our forwards pounding ahead. Langrish burst through to score, putting us 6 points in the clear. The final 5 minutes were nerve jangling but Guy's held out to win narrowly 20 -14.

**Team:** Clive Hudson, Terry Gibson, Chris Howell, Simon Holmes, Chris Langrish, Stretch, Pat Gush (Captain), Ed Sixsmith, Allan Jones, Graham Hill, Marc Carbass, Robbie Walker, Kielblock Wouter, Richard Lee, Rhodri Morgan.