

**United Hospitals Cup – Round Robin Fixture at Teddington
19th January 2005**

Guy's, King's and St. Thomas' Hospitals RFC 31 - 14 Imperial Medicals RFC

On a glorious winter's day in Teddington the GKT team achieved an extremely important victory, the first win in four years over the combined hospitals team of St. Mary's, and Charing Cross & Westminster. With the UH Cup Final taking place on the 20th March, Guy's can go into the game confident of their ability to win the oldest rugby competition in the world.

The team that took to the field was not I believe the captain's first preference. Due to injuries and unavailability Robert Hone stepped up to play outside half, and debutant Serge Neumann took a place on the wing. Despite this the team adapted admirably. Overhead the skies were blue and there was little wind, conditions highly conducive to the fast flowing Guy's rugby to which we have become accustomed. The boys in blue and gold opened proceedings and immediately got involved into what would develop into a highly physical game. St. Mary's ran hard at our fringes and searched earnestly for holes in midfield but the Guy's line held firm. Soon, effective rucking and a fast tempo saw Guy's surge for the line. The result was a lineout on the opposition 22. A good throw from hooker Oliver Laird found the leaping Rhys Davies which culminated in clean, fast first phase ball for the backs. Mesmerising lines of runs followed which allowed full back Tom Kennedy to score in the corner! The long conversion proved too difficult but Guy's were un-phased and straightaway ran hard back into the home side. What resulted was a fantastic converted try. Forwards linked impressively with backs, and sterling work by the back row ensured that we recycled possession quickly. Indeed, it was number 8, Rob Whyte when after making a break offloaded to openside Mark Jenkins who scored a fine try despite the attentions of several opposition players. 12-0 down and severely under the cosh, St. Mary's attempted in vain to get back into the game. Regardless of what came, the Guy's defence was steadfast. Unfortunately, a lapse on the wing allowed an Imperial winger to score. A fine conversion followed. The goal was a great shame since it was the only blemish on a brilliant first half.

With the halftime score at 12-7, Guy's were by no means safe. Davies instilled the need for Guy's to maintain the high work rate, tackle aggressively and attack with venom. However, the resumption of play witnessed a resurgence from the home team. It appeared that a few words had been exchanged between opposition coaching staff and players during the interval. An attacking lineout for the current cup holders saw them only 10 metres from our line. A good line from their winger saw him penetrate our defences albeit due to some off the ball interference. Nevertheless the conversion pushed St. Mary's into a 14-12 lead. At this point the Guy's defence became supremely resilient. A sense of "they shall not pass" became engrained within the psyche of those from the oldest club in the world. Despite dominating the scrummage Imperial Medicals could not capitalise. They had three attacking scrums, all of which went astray, not least the result of nifty work from Whyte and scrum half Sam Rigg. From this point forward, Guy's took the game by the scruff of the neck. Clinical lineouts from Davies and his two lifters, Wheeler and Sheppard saw them steal

several against the throw. Combined with superb forward mobility and hard running from Hone, Robinson and Turner the blue and gold onslaught approached the opposition line. Effective ball retention gave the backs confidence to enact the trickier moves from their portfolio, and it proved to be worth it. Centres, wingers and full back all charged at full steam with the result being a fine try in the corner from Whyte. At this stage St. Mary's were effectively garrisoned in their 22. Marvellous forward interplay matched with distinct lack of selfishness allowed the fresher Robinson to thrust his way over the line under the posts for a converted try. Now two scores ahead, Guy's sought to hammer the finals nails into the coffin. Rejuvenated with fresh legs from the bench there was to be no let up. Imperial had a defensive lineout of their 22, but a cheeky move failed. Instead the loose ball was seized by Tim Wright who kept the ball alive well. The pack moved like a herd of stampeding bullocks towards the whitewash. It was fitting for Whyte, who had played so well to notch up the final score. After converting his own try, the whistle blew to signify a monumental victory.

In the best traditions of the game, Guy's were gracious in victory and heartily congratulated by Imperial Medicals. One believes that they are relishing the prospect of a close final just as much as GKT.

Team: B Wheeler, O Laird, E Sheppard, R Davies (c), T Wright, I Wilson, M Jenkins, R Whyte, S Rigg, R Hone, P Robinson, R Turner, S Neumann, S Minomitani, T Kennedy.

Subs: G Josan, M Halls, L Brunton, M White-Peart

Tries: R Whyte (2), P Robinson, M Jenkins, T Kennedy

Conversions: R Whyte (3)