

Guy's Hospital (Penguins) v London Welsh Vets Sat 4th October 2008

At 3.00 pm on a fresh yet blustery afternoon the Captain and his prop, George, were as warm as toast as they inched passed the shops and shoppers in the pretty town centre of Richmond. Grid lock more than 'grid-iron' had been their frustrating experience as the unforgiving clock ticked agonisingly by. Penguins' kipper had been up since 6.30, had time to complete chores, take daughter swimming and check the train times. The offer and lure of the Greek bearing lifts was foolishly accepted! They arrived at 3.30 with the game underway and it was Guy's calling the shots and passing the ball about the Park with great skill and confidence: both forwards and backs joining seamlessly up the middle and scooting the ball wide at the right moment. Wayne Llewellyn had already had a try disallowed, as the ref was apparently tending his sheep and missed it! Brian's injury, at full back, brought Gushie on as replacement sooner than anticipated. London Welsh had also lost a couple of key players, one apparently their inspirational fly-half. Despite the encouraging signs and positive play Guy's turned around 12-0 down at half time, a score in past years which would have dampened the ageing hearts. This revitalised Penguins team has discovered the winning way and a level of commitment that is more warming than the pipes and slippers that we return to on Sunday mornings. Most inspiring was the youthful front row with a combined age of 160.

The second half began well with the forwards catching and driving deep into Welsh territory. There we remained winning ruck, maul and lineout. Stretch gathered and fed Llewellyn setting the backs on a diagonal charge. The ball popped out of the ensuing maul just left of centre. Tobin carried well and off-loaded to Yorkie Boy who touched down in the corner for Guy's first try. The strong cross wind prevented the addition of 2 points. Tempers frayed occasionally and the ref needed to stamp some authority on the middle 3rd of the game. Sadly he didn't and at times it was like being back in Newport, outside Scamps Club at midnight on Christmas Eve! Even the abuse in close harmony was a familiar sound! The continued pressure paid off for Guy's when after some slick passing between Holmes, Manson-Bahr, Reading and Walker the ball was nudged through by Gush and grounded by Jephcoot. The converted try drew us level with Welsh much to their obvious annoyance.

Welsh came back strongly and dominated the next few phases. Langrish was solid in defence and stifled their attack at the line. The half-charged drop out was pounced on by Robbie and Shay who reacted with typical speed and strength in midfield. The ball was recycled quickly and some deft passing took us beyond their defence. The Welsh struggled to regroup as we poured support runners into and behind their lines. Having turned defence into attack the short pops between our surging forwards maintained the momentum until a hole emerged and Yorkie Boy sailed through to score his second. The conversion took us clear at 19-12 with the end in sight.

The penultimate twist came from a line out. Just inside the Welsh half, having bounced off a tree, the ball was dead and the line was forming. Manson-Bahr sportingly retrieved the ball and handed it to their winger who promptly took a quick line out. Obviously an ELV which only applies in Richmond on the first Saturday in October! With the ref busy checking his *Gluteus Maximus* against his *Humerus* they scored and converted to level the game. Still it's all good fun! Thanks to all who turned out at Old Deer Park last Saturday: 19-19 was a fair result. At the end of the day, of course, rugby was the winner; and the blue and gold corner came up trumps on that score. Meanwhile the red corner was left to mop their metaphorical bloody noses. The slick hands of the Guy's side and the never say 'Dai' attitude outshone the Welsh at their own game and in their own back yard. The final twist: Taffs cry 'walkover'!

Team: Oli Howlett, Terry Gibson, Chris Howell, George Tsolakides, Simon Holmes, Chris Langrish, Nick Tobin, Yorkie Boy, Stretch, Pat Gush (Captain), Shay Reading, Robbie Walker, Brian F Back, Kielblock Wouter, Andrew Jephcoot, Centre Chap, S Ubhooker, David M-Bahr.
Result: 19-19 **T:** Yorkie x2, Jephcoot **C:** Gush x2