

19/01/08 - Guy's Hospital II XV vs. Park House II XV

After a prolonged Christmas break we were all itching to get back on to hallowed turf of HOP and get one over a team that had already fallen once this season to the electrifying play of the mighty 2s.

Despite multiple disruptions in the London transport network the majority of the team managed to arrive more or less on time and calmly began preparations for today's battle. From the opening 5 minutes it became apparent that we were all in for a tough, physical 80 minutes as the oppo attempted to halt our impressive opening play with a combination of borderline illegal ball-killing tactics, and some very illegal man-killing tactics. Despite the use of underhand aggression, Guy's continued to dominate the early exchanges and we were awarded a penalty just to the right of the sticks on the oppo's 22, duly converted by Big Luke Atkins to give a well-earned 3 point lead.

As the first half continued the dominance of the Guy's pack both at the set piece and in the tight, combined with explosive running in the backline meant that further scoring opportunities were inevitable, and although we did cross the try-line Justin Chandler's effort was ruled out due to a phantom knock-on. A few minutes after this decision we were once again threatening and the opposition had to concede another penalty under the posts and Luke added another 3 points from his Cambridge educated boot. 6-0 up and cruising.

However, with around 15 minutes to go in the first half, Guy's were guilty of taking our foot off the gas and we began to be sucked into the type of tight scrappy game that the Kent teams thrive on. In our efforts to create turnovers we began to frequently infringe, allowing their fly-half to perform his one apparent skill, and push us back towards our line. Our defence was committed and strong, and the opposition never really looked like scoring until the referee spotted a foul in what seemed to all present a fantastic piece of defensive play by our Titan of a number 8 Imran Khan. In the resulting confusion, a quick tap penalty allowed the Park House 7 to crash over from 8 yards. The additional 2 points meant that despite our dominance, we somehow went into the break 6-7 down.

The disappointment of being a point down served to spur the team back to the dynamic aggressive play of the opening twenty minutes of the first half, but silly errors allowed the opposition to continually pin us back in our own half with well judged kicks making use of the prevailing wind. Fortunately our continued success in the line-out, due to accurate throwing by Ken and fantastic jumping by both Imran and Frazer Barnes, consistently presented a great platform to launch our exciting backline. The game began to settle in to a pattern of aggressive kicks from the opposition, and exciting running from our backs and it began to feel like one piece moment could turn the tide. On around 60 minutes a delayed pass from Toby Welch allowed Big Luke to power through a small gap and set up a break away, with Justin Chandler receiving the ball from Luke's pass and going on to beat two men before scoring to the left of the posts to finally give us the try our play deserved. Despite the missed conversion we still had an 11-7 lead and we finally felt that we would be able to put the game to bed. However once again we were perhaps guilty of falling off a little, conceding a penalty in front of our posts and allowing ourselves to be pinned back to an 11-10 lead.

Once again the team showed fantastic spirit to rally, and we coupled solid defence with more exciting attacking play. The back line, guided by Toby, were slinging the ball around waiting for the chance that would hopefully seal the game, whilst the pack continued to front-up and match the aggressive style of the oppo with a dominant effort of our own. It is worth mentioning that no-one encapsulated the determined effort of the pack more than David Prowse, who's play was fantastic all day and was really a pleasure to watch!

With 10 minutes to go our pressure told, Big Luke once again battered his way through a gap that seemingly wasn't there to run 70 yards and score under the posts where he was promptly flattened 4 seconds after scoring by a ginger hooker with a chip on his shoulder. Luke managed to compose himself and convert his own try, putting us up 18-10. That was how the score remained, securing a much valued 3 points and generating a feeling of relief from all concerned. It was one of those games you couldn't bear to lose and luckily we didn't. My thanks to everyone who played, now let's build on this result and make the most of upcoming opportunities!

Bruce Young

Starting XV:

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| 1.) Tom Goddard | 10.) Toby Welch |
| 2.) Ken Onwuka | 11.) Jamie Hamley |
| 3.) Rupert Enticknap | 12.) Luke Atkins |
| 4.) Simon Hill | 13.) Justin Chandler |
| 5.) Frazer Barnes | 14.) Harry Gasper |
| 6.) Bruce Young | 15.) Luke Waldron |
| 7.) Dave Prowse | |
| 8.) Al-Imran Khan | |
| 9.) Simon Trotter | |