

## Match Report: 4<sup>th</sup> November 2007

### Wirral u8's v Ormskirk u8's

With twenty-one players eligible for the u8's numbers were never a problem and so it was that game A allowed for seven starters & three replacements, whilst game B comprised seven fresh starters and four replacements.

#### Game A: Wirral 3 tries – Ormskirk 1 try

All 14 minutes of this game were about pace and panache on the part of Wirral, who moved the ball confidently through the hands and in a very direct fashion toward the Ormskirk try-line from start to finish.

Even when time and space was at a premium the Wirral players demonstrated confidence and awareness when tagged, showing the quality of their support play by moving the ball out from the crowd of players in the tag zone/contact area and into the wide open spaces where handling was exceptional and the confidence to take on the opposition one on one was exploited.

Only on one occasion did the referee invoke his u8's club rule that;

***'No Wirral player shall run in a straight line from touch line to touch line, and in a line that is parallel with and therefore not in the general direction of the try-line'.***

This resulted in Wirral being penalised 5m from the Ormskirk try-line. In handing over possession Wirral then promptly conceded a try as a momentary lapse in concentration saw the opposition exploit the confusion in the Wirral ranks to run in a well-worked score from their own half.

All of the Wirral players played well; the passing was excellent, the support play exceptional and the speed and determination of every player who carried the ball in hand, into space, or into the fray is worthy of praise – little Ollie never fails to impress with his ability to side step and body-swerve in mid air with all the grace of a Nuryev/O'Driscoll.

We all know it is the collective effort that carries the day, however three performances of note relate to Will Tyrer, Conor Anderson & Sam Wood.

Will, as Captain, marshalled his team exceptionally well in both defence and attack, ensuring there was depth on the ball in attack and that his team-mates sustained a flat line in defence.

All of this without the aid of an on-field coach, a tactic which shall be used with increasing regularity to promote independent thinking on the part of the more experienced players.

Conor Anderson's support play, pace and situational awareness saw him run in all three of Wirral's tries, turning, swerving and wrong footing almost all of the Ormskirk team for his third. Sam Wood continues to impress by way of his natural, easy going leadership style, his pace and unselfishness. Sam epitomises the ethos that it is not for the more able and aware players to go out and simply win games on their own. He consistently brings out the best in his team mates and contributes to the success and development of those around him.

#### Game B: Wirral 3 tries – Ormskirk 3 tries

If game A was all about pace and panache every player involved in this game offered grit and determination, coming from two tries down to draw three apiece.

In spite of trailing by two tries Wirral stuck solidly to the coaching teams principles of direct running - accompanied by an emphasis on support play and an ability to move the ball out from the congestion of the tag-zone/contact area.

In the end Wirral drew level through their ability to move the ball out wide and exploit the space on the touch line. Although, for a brief spell both sides were determined to over work the narrow channels next to touch as opposed to moving the ball away, or stepping in and using the available space on the defenders inside shoulder. This resulted in a see-saw exchange of possession as each side consequently ran out of grass and went into touch – a point duly noted for future training sessions.

As stated, grit and determination were the order of the day with three performances of note in game B. These being Conor Morris, Matthew Gibson and Harvey Lonsdale.

Conor Morris showed a real appetite for running with ball in hand and was key to the turnaround in the second half as he took the game to Ormskirk with gusto, duly contributing to the attacking platform from which Wirral's tries came.

Matthew Gibson used this game to show just exactly what the pacey wee guy on the wing can do when the ball gets out there. He used all the speed and guile of a Cheetah on blue Smarties to maximise every inch right up to the touchline, scoring two of Wirral's three tries. He was undone and denied his hat-trick (and a Wirral victory) in the very last second as someone called 'touch' and he stopped when clean through, albeit he was only in possession of one tag at the time – cause of much consternation to his Dad whose expression gave hint to the fact that he also had covered every blade of grass (even if in spirit) when the final whistle went at no-side.

Man of the match and therefore player of the day went to Harvey Lonsdale, whose turn of pace and strength when on the ball took him diagonally across field on several occasions gaining vital yards and beating two, three, nay four players, each of whom, were like rabbits dazzled in the headlights – unfortunately on at least two occasions he ran out of grass and crossed the touchline when a check to the inside of the wrong-footed defender would have seen him score.

All in all, a good day at the office. Onwards to Collegiate next week – the 11<sup>th</sup>.



Serge Blanco doing a Harvey *“Get two hands on the ball and cut inside!!!!!!!!!!”*