

U 12'S Cup Qualifiers at Ballynahinch

Wednesday 3rd March 2015.

After the disappointment of having their match against Strangford cancelled, and being moved to another part of the Cup draw, the fresh faced and enthusiastic Yr 8's made their opening bow on behalf of Glastry College at this year's U12's Cup Qualifiers at Ballynahinch Rugby Club.

As the boys gathered for the bus journey you could see the excitement in their faces, and hear the giddiness in their chatter as they spoke of game situations that had not yet come to pass. They daydreamed of their own personal glories, the differences they were going to make this day. It was the usual questions over who was going to start, "what position am I playing sir?!" and the ultimate desire of every player, "who was going to be Captain for the day?" This undercurrent of mystery was to be held in check until we arrived at our destination, and so with bus packed, seats filled and the weather perfect for an afternoon's rugby the Fellowship left on their Unexpected Journey.

As we arrived and changed, we spoke of the pride we had in wearing the school kit, new, crisp, clean and never worn before, ready to be baptised on the field of play. We were proud to be Glastry College!

As all of the teams warmed up and got acclimatised to the conditions, it was clear that the players had already started to weigh up the quality of the opponents they would face this day. Beady eyes flicked this way and that, whispers and pointing and over the shoulder glances were ramping up the excitement, and now nervousness as all teams were minutes away from kick off. Time to unveil the Captain...

Lawson Porter would have the privilege to lead the boys and to represent Glastry College as Captain for the day. And lead the boys he did!

Our first match of the day was against Shimna College in their green, purple and white hoops. We sent out a strong pack to scrum well and carry the ball forward. With a sturdy front row of Lawson Porter, Scott Lowry and Dylan Murphy, and in the engine room in 2nd Row were Oliver Spence and James McDowell. Conducting the back line and pulling the strings at scrum half was Christian Locke, Harry McCarroll was poised for hard tackling and running like a wrecking ball, Dean Bennett providing the gas and go approach with his fancy footwork, Daren Graham, a little terrier in defence and a determined runner in attack and lastly Joshua Moore with great passing and vision for a gap and a line break.

Scott kicked the game off and the "Road to Lurgan", as that's where the final is, was underway! Shimna fielded the ball well and attacked, the boys tackling hard and rucking well, but after several out of the tackle passes Shimna found the extra man to score the opener. After a quick restart and turnover it was Glastry's turn to show their dominance in the scrum, with a clear weight advantage. The scrum was won, and to credit all of the forwards that played this day, the set pieces were excellent, stealing ball in the scrums with solid drives and taking the ball in the line out with a towering presence, like giant cranes Samson and Goliath, after accurate throwing by Scott Lowry, who also put in some hard tackling all day, wrapping up his opponents. Barnstorming runs from Dylan Murphy, with players practically hanging off him. Quick ball from the scrums saw us break up the pitch and after several phases score the first try of the day, which brought an instant smile and belief to the boys. As the game progressed Shimna scored again, eventually touching down 4 times, yet nearing the last play of the game we scored again. Joshua Moore putting the finishing touches to some hard running! A valiant first game, which all of the boys should have been proud about!

Our next opponents were Saintfield who put six tries past us in a very competitive game that I feel we should have won. We butchered 2 try scoring opportunities at least and fell foul to a break away try, but in reply we scored four well-crafted and hard fought tries. Losing 6-4 was hard to take, but

then it's these small things that make the difference on the day. I would like to point out that Cameron Barclay really caught the eye with his constant picks and drives with the ball that put us in positions to score on several occasions, well done you! Christian Locke continued to plague the opposition defences by digging the ball out from the base of the rucks and running with the ball himself, time after time after time. It was in this game that the forwards in particular, seemed to apply all they had learnt after school. Great hard running, great support play, going to ground and presenting the ball back, rucking hard over the ball to secure possession. It brought a huge grin to an old man's face and a tear to my eye, which thankfully no one saw! Big rampaging runs by Ryan Waring, Louis Adamson, and the aforementioned Barclay! Great passing and support from Dean Bennett, especially when Locke was in full flight. Punching runs from David Patton, as it took two sometimes three players to bring him down. Then the dancing feet and courage of lions shown by Mackenzie McCormick and Scott Cunningham, working together in the tackle, finding the gaps and on came the burst of speed that kept propelling us forward.

The qualification was not to be this year, however spirits were high after our two close encounters and we still had one game to demonstrate our desire again. Again with substitutions made and a reshuffled forward pack and backline, we took on Ballynahinch, the hosts. Scott Williams and Jacob Caughey came on in the backline with Daren Graham, and the "Two Josh's".

We started spritely and galloped into a two try lead! We played some lovely rugby, again dominating set plays. Hinch came back into it and broke away with a one on one to score a try and get back in the game! But not this time! Jacob Caughey put in a superb try saving tackle and the ball was turned over by Glastry! Hinch came again through their backs and this time had more joy. 2-2 at half time! In the second half Hinch continued to avoid our forwards with the ball, because they were getting slayed by the tackling of Harry McCarroll, the rejuvenated James McDowell and Captain Lawson Porter. Scott Williams took the ball and ran hard at the Hinch defensive line time and time again, putting them under pressure to make last ditch tackles! It was back and forward in the second half with Glastry scoring and then Hinch back in it. Hinch got into a 6-5 lead despite the hard tackling defence from Josh Strain and O'Neill, who for their first game played great! With mere minutes left James McDowell broke free of the Hinch defence... One try to tie the game! Was this the moment? Was this James's and Glastry's moment? He galloped away like a thorough bred race horse, eating up the ground. Our players looked on wishing him over the line with their shouts and waving arms, but this was not the moment. We didn't support our man, something we had done all day, and when the tackle came in and James fell like a Giant Redwood, the support wasn't there to take the ball over the line and tie the game. It finished 6-5.

I have nothing but praise for all of our boys who took part that day! You did yourselves proud and showed what massive potential you have for the coming years. Thanks should also go to Mrs Cowan who accompanied us and supported the boys. Special mention should go to Lawson Porter, who as captain, led the teams in all games with great encouragement to his fellow players, showed respect to the opponents and referees and represented Glastry in an extremely positive way. Oh, and scored 2 tries! Christian Locke also stood out for his overall commitment and his work at scrum half. Well done to all the boys and I look forward to our next match!

'STAND UP FOR THE GLASTRY MEN!'