

Australian Schools UK Tour Newsletter Number 2

Saturday 28 November – Today we travelled to Cork. After picking up all the players for the last time at Terenure College from their billets, it was off to Cork. As you leave Dublin you quickly pass through some beautiful countryside. Unfortunately a lot of mist and rain kept viewing to a minimum in the bus. After a couple of hours we stopped for a quick break at Midway for a snack. Approaching Cork, the weather cleared to reveal a breathtaking mountain range covered in snow.

For the next four nights the team was accommodated at the very nice Carrigaline Court Hotel. This is about 20 minutes outside the town city limits of Cork and well away from the previous week's devastation and record floods that went through Cork city. Upon our arrival the hotel had set aside a section of the restaurant area for the group to watch the Wallabies game against Wales on the big screen. This was to be a great match that we all enjoyed. The meals at the hotel were outstanding, with plenty of food to eat. The hotel staff and service was excellent and they couldn't do enough for us.

That afternoon we were met by Peter Melia, the representative from CBC (Christian Brothers College) Cork. He provided some excellent insights into the events that had transpired over the previous few weeks in Cork. Fortunately, he assured us that we would be looked after and he was there to assist in any way he could to make our stay welcome.

Sunday 29 November – This was to be a big training day for the squad. We woke to a beautiful sunny day where the temperature was about 5 degrees when we woke. After breakfast we headed off for training at CBC Cork grounds to be met by the College's 1st XV team on their way to Dublin to play a game. It had just been called off due to flooding in Dublin. After some discussion we agreed to have an opposed training session with them for the morning and this provided some good opposition for our team. As the morning progressed it gradually got colder and colder and this was to be a challenging mornings training with cold blustery winds getting worse by the minute. That evening, we returned to CBC Cork for an indoor session in their gym. After dinner there was some good group work done with the coaching staff, analyzing the previous game and planning for our next game.

Monday 30 November – After breakfast at the hotel, a meeting for the group was arranged with the Principal of CBC, Dr Larry Jordan at the school. He greeted the group officially and reminded them of the close link his school had with Pat Langtry, the previous Australian Schools Coach. He was delighted to host our tour squad. Some exchanging of gifts and photos were taken. The team presented a signed team jumper to the school to assist in fund raising for victims of the recent floods. The squad trained for the remainder of the morning with lunch provided by CBC. The team had the afternoon off from training, enjoying some shopping at Mahon Shopping Centre and taking in a movie. The group met again that afternoon for some valuable analysis of the game put together by Andy Clark and the coaching staff.

Tuesday 1 December – This morning was taken up with some local sightseeing. A short bus trip saw us travel to Kinsale, a small fishing and popular yachting area with a quaint village atmosphere. The group got a great laugh out of Jack De Guingand trying to retrieve a soccer ball that was kicked into the mud flats of the bay and on attempting to retrieve the ball sank knee deep into the mud and making a complete mess of himself in the process. From Kinsale, just up the road we visited Charles Fort a

fifteenth century English garrison built to protect the area from French and Spanish invasion. Late in the afternoon we travelled to CIT (Cork Institute of Technology) to view the playing venue for the game the following day. Unfortunately, due to a drenching rain over the preceding days we couldn't hold the Captain's run. Alternative arrangements were made to train at CBC's gym that night to return to a magnificent dinner at Carrigaline Court Hotel.

Wednesday 2 December - The morning was about finishing off our preparation with some additional coaching tips in team unit groups; followed by packing up and moving to our team room for the day. After some visits from parents and a relaxing afternoon we set off for CIT ground full of confidence. On arrival we were met by our guest presenter for our jersey presentation in the change room. Tony McGahan is presently coach of the Munster team and has been with them for the last three years. Tony was also Assistant Coach of the Australia "A" Schools XV in 2004 and he was honoured to be given this opportunity to be present the jerseys to the team. His message was to enjoy the opportunity to play for your country, trust those around you and back your own ability.

The conditions for the game against the Ireland U19 team were good considering a 7.30pm kick off with a firm pitch, a light breeze blowing in our favour and the temperature around 7 degrees. Ireland won 15 nil with four penalties and one field goal. They thoroughly deserved their win and out enthused and pushed us when we dropped the ball or made any mistakes. A full match report is attached.

A very nice after match function was held at CIT where players were treated to a buffet dinner and parents attended the speeches at the end. On returning to the Hotel late, the team had to strategically load the bus to overflowing with player luggage. We managed to get an hour or so sleep before departing for Dublin Port.

Thursday 3 December – After a short sleep we departed Carrigaline Hotel at 2am to catch the 8 am ferry to Holyhead, Wales. Everything was going smoothly, arriving at Dublin Port at 6am to change coach drivers and have a short stop for some breakfast at a truckies station. We then proceeded to the docking area for the ferry with plenty of time to spare. After sitting there for nearly an hour and only one other truck queuing and no one there to open the gate area, we were notified by a passer by that there are no ferries that depart from this terminal in the mornings. With only 45 minutes to go before the scheduled departure the driver quickly turned around and got us in quick time to the correct departure area with only 10 minutes to spare before the ferry was scheduled to leave.

The crossing on the ferry was just over 3 hours and we were lucky to get a tail wind that made for a smooth ride all the way. Arriving at 11.30am, it took an hour to travel to Conwy where we were to stay at the Conwy Youth Hostel. The hostel provided a welcome lunch for us and that afternoon we trained at the Colwyn Bay Rugby Club. After a long day travelling everyone deserved an early night sleep.

Meanwhile, Andrew Elliot had flown to Manchester, grudgingly giving up the ferry crossing. There he met with Ruka Hanlon who had been flown in to replace the injured Nick Stirzaker. They arrived in Conwy shortly after the rest of the tour party.

Friday 4 December – Today was spent doing some sole-searching after what was the big disappointment of the last Ireland match. The coaches analysed the video of the previous game to target the areas that

required improvement. That afternoon we visited the game venue in Colwyn Bay – Parc Eirias – where the kickers had some shots at goal. The final Captain’s Run was held back at the Colwyn Bay Rugby Club. Jordan Tuapou swam the small creek to retrieve several balls that had been kicked to the other side.

Saturday 5 December – Today was a relaxing morning for the group with a sleep in and late breakfast. The morning was free for the squad to walk the picturesque town of Conwy. It is surrounded by 13th century stone walls and is dominated by the magnificent Conwy Castle, built by Edward I of England to protect the English settlement from the marauding Welsh. After a late lunch and rest, the team jersey presentation was held just before departing for the game venue. Our guest presenter was Assistant Coach Tim Wallace. This was to be an appropriate choice as his first test Wallaby cap for Australia was here in Wales. The boys left in high spirits wanting to make up for the disappointment of Ireland.

We arrived at Parc Eirias to a light drizzle and to a relatively mild night. As the team ran out to warm up the rain started to roll in and it was becoming bleaker by the minute. As kick off arrived, the team ran onto the voices of a 30 strong choir and a very supportive local crowd. For the first time on tour the National Anthems were played and this was just the right start we needed for this game. The team responded from the kick off to attack the Wales team and continued to do so for the whole 70 minutes. We thoroughly deserved a hard fought 10 – 6 win after dropping a few chances early on in the game. A match report is attached.

Sunday 6 December - This morning we packed up at the YHS Conwy Hostel. An important recovery session was organized at the Colwyn Bay Leisure Centre to get all the bumps and bruises out from last night’s game with a swim and stretch. Today we moved onto our next port of call which is Lymm High Schools Outdoor Education Centre at Tyn y Felin in the North Wales on the Isle of Anglesey which is the largest island in England and Wales. This will be our home for the next two days before returning to the mainland to be billeted by the families of Lymm High School next Tuesday for 5 nights.

Everywhere we have gone, the hosts have made positive comments of how well mannered and polite the team is and how well behaved they have been.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Carl Peterson for all his work in providing everyone with up to date photos from each game.

Newsletter number three will be sent next week and enjoy a few highlights of our trip.



CBC



Jack in Kinsale



Half time talk Cork



Conwy Castle