

Australian Schools UK Tour Newsletter Number 4

Sunday 13th December – The team said farewell to their billets this morning and regrouped at the Lymm Hotel where the management had stayed for the previous 5 days. A team room was arranged with the players going through final preparations with the coaches, followed by an early lunch. After the all the strapping and preparation was completed, I had the privilege for the first time as Manager to present the jerseys to the players for the England game which was an honour and a highlight I shall never forget. After loading the bus we headed for the Sale Rugby Football Club in high spirits and very focussed.

To our dismay we were held up near the entry to the gate and told to go around to the other side of the ground. Unfortunately, the bus couldn't move as it was caught up in a massive traffic gridlock. On the spur of the moment we decided to get off the bus and walk the rest of the way to the venue. The team certainly dealt with this well and got on with the job of preparing for the game to their credit.

This was to be the best game on tour so far with the score sea soaring throughout the whole game until last 5 minutes when England scored to move in front and pip us at the post 30 – 28 after we lead at half time. At the after match function I commented on how proud the management was of the team effort and commitment out there. They gave everything they had and wore their jersey proudly. A match report is attached.

At the conclusion of the post match function we boarded our team bus and headed south for Gloucester. The next port of call being Hartpury College, Hartpury. Situated about 15 minutes outside of Gloucester, it is situated in some 400 acres of farm land, it provides an ideal base for the final two matches. After arriving and settling into a very modern single room dormitory style accommodation, it was off to bed for a good nights sleep.

Monday 14th December – The main priority for the morning (after breakfast) was a recovery session as all those who played the previous day were very sore from what was a physically brutal game. Our two Liaison Officers assigned to the team for the week were Chris Dewsnap and Luke Fisher who guided our group around the Hartpury College Campus. The College is quite unique, combining both "A" level and university courses covering a wide range of areas from recreation, sport, agriculture and university entrance. The College's impressive sports facility has an extensive gym and recovery centre. This building was where, for the next hour and half, the team went through a recovery session utilising the treatment hot and cold baths, aerobic and weight areas. Once finished we were taken up to the Principal's Office for an official greeting and welcome. Mr Wharton loves his rugby and was extremely pleased to have the team at Hartpury for the week. The campus is made up of multiple rugby, soccer and hockey pitches, all in first class condition. They also have one of the largest equestrian centres in Great Britain providing many of the countries top riders for their national team. The Gloucester Rugby Team use the College as their home base for training through the winter and run a number of school, university and local club rugby teams from the College.

In the afternoon the team was treated to some down time away from rugby and went Go Kart racing and Lazer Tag in Gloucester. Both activities were held in the same building with the Go Karting made up of teams of four and competed against each other in a 90 minute endurance race. Each driver had there turn for up to a maximum of 22 and half minutes each and you could change over as many times as you wanted with your drivers. The team with the most laps in the 90 minute period won the event. I'm happy to say after a clear victory the team that came out on top was the management team of Tim

Needham, Graeme Dedrick, Andrew Elliot and Michael McLean. Perhaps this says something about the young generation and their driving. Once the Go-Karting was completed the boys enjoyed some Lazer Tag while the management decided to quit while they were ahead!

The evening finished with video analysis of the England by the players and coaches. This enabled both players and coaches to go forward with planning for the game on Wednesday.

Tuesday 15 December – An early start with breakfast and straight to our buses provided by Hartpury for our visit to Rugby School. After a two hour bus trip we arrived to a cold (1 ½°C), overcast and drizzly day. Rugby School’s Director of Games Simon Brown and Rugby Director Peter Dewey made us feel very welcome. The Captain’s Run was held on the main oval known as “The Close” where William Webb Ellis picked up a soccer ball and ran with it, and hence the game of rugby was born. The school was established in the late 1500’s and is steeped in history with some original magnificent buildings and chapel – providing magnificent backdrops to this very special place. At the completion of the training we were generously provided lunch in the rugby/cricket pavilion overlooking the oval.

On our way back we stopped at the popular tourist spot, Warwick Castle. This is an 11th century Castle built by William the Conqueror, with several later additions and reconstructions. The completeness of the castle is further enhanced by the use of a variety of wax figures of various personalities who have lived in or visited the castle throughout the centuries. This included Richard II, Henry VIII and Winston Churchill. The rooms and apartments are decorated in various furniture of the different periods and large displays of the weaponry used by the soldiers of the castle. The boys enjoyed walking around the huge castellated walls and battlements.

Wednesday 16th December – Today was a restful morning with a well earned sleep in and rest up before the game today. After an early lunch the team went through their normal procedure of strapping, team talk and walk to the venue for our game. After encountering two very tough encounters so far in England we new this game was not going to be any easier. The ground was slippery with a light drizzle for kick off. Unfortunately after some good positive play in the first 5 minutes of the game we made two fatal errors and dropped the ball on both occasions to have the Academies Team score to tries in the first 20 minutes of the game against the run of play. We found ourselves down at half time 24 – 5 with a try to Nathan Paila. The second half saw two more tries scored against us and one strong run from Curtis Browning to score our second try. Final score: Academies 36 – Australia 10. They were far too strong, fast and executed their play much better than we did today in the wet conditions and thoroughly deserved their win. A full match report will be sent through with the final Newsletter in a few days.



Team preparing



Ready to Go Kart



Rugby School



Warwick Castle