

MATCH REPORT

Australian Schools versus Irish Schools at Belfield Bowl, University College Dublin

27th November 2009

The Australian Schoolboys kicked off their rugby tour to the Ireland and the United Kingdom in style with a comprehensive 31-14 victory over Irish Schools at University College in Dublin on Friday (Saturday AEDT). The weather, although cold in Australian terms, remained dry with a light wind at the start of the game that favoured the Irish.

This was a match of high quality and intensity as the two sets of players hammered into each other right from the first whistle.



Initially, Ireland centre JJ Hanrahan sent a long punt tumbling towards the Australian 22-metre line. From there, team captain Emmet MacMahon took a ball against the throw. Tighthead Conor Carey drove around the side. The ball was recycled for out-half Paddy Jackson to send Hanrahan hurtling through the middle for what looked like a certain try - until full-back Jacob Woodhouse intervened with a textbook tackle.

First points were taken by the Irish in the eighth minute with a mid range penalty kick by Paddy Jackson. The Australians regrouped and with some good passages of play worked their way down field. From a scrum on the 22 and after several phases of play the enterprising halfback, Nic Stirzaker, picked up a loose ball from the back of the ruck five metres out and scored on the blindside. A successful conversion by Rohan Saifoloi giving the Australians a 7 – 3 lead.

Following some midfield play with both teams attempting to gain the advantage with their kicking games, the Irish kicker, Paddy Jackson, kicked his second penalty in the 22nd minute meaning the Irish only trailed by a point. From the resulting line out, the Irish won the ball and after taking the ball midfield, switched play and found some space down the left hand side of the field scoring in the corner to regain the lead 7 – 11.

During the next five minutes, the Australians started to find some weaknesses in the Irish defence but at times kicked the ball away for little effect. In the 30th minute the Australian scrum won a tight head on the Irish 5 metre line. From the following ruck the Australians spread the ball wide. Nic Stirzaker swept around taking a low pass passed it to Kimami Sitauti who crossed the Irish line out wide to put the Australians back in the lead 12 – 11.



An injured Nic Stirzaker was replaced by Matt Lucas in the last minute of the half while the Irish once again found themselves within penalty kicking range giving them the half time lead 12 – 14.

In the early minutes of the 2nd half both teams started to use their bench players, making several replacements. Luke Jones and Jack De Guingand taking the field for the Australians. It was in the second half that the Australian midfield combinations started to gel and they piled on 19 unanswered points in a dominant second-half,

although it was not until the 40th minute that the first try of the second half was scored.

A gallant Ireland defended strongly but their attack had been nullified, while the Australians started to adapt to the French Referee's interpretations and conceded fewer penalties.

Australia regained the lead from a line out in the Irish 22 where Paul Alo-Emile, with the support of a driving maul crashed over the line to score taking the total to 17 – 14.

Several more bench players were given the opportunity to get some game time, with Matt Garland, Marcus Heather, Joe Welch and Rodney Esekia all taking the field.

In the 57th minute, captain Liam Gill latched on to an errant Irish pass and scored a runaway try in which was converted by Rohan Saifoloi taking the score to 24 – 14.

The finals points for the Australians came after five phases with Christopher Feauai touching down in the corner with a conversion by Rodney Esekia to seal victory for Australia with the final score line of 31 – 14.



Australian Schoolboys 31 (Nic Stirzaker, Kimami Sitauti, Paul Alo-Emile, Liam Gill, Chris Feauai tries; Rohan Saifoloi 2, Rodney Esekia cons) defeated **Irish Schools 14** (Chris Colvin try; Paddy Jackson 3PG)