



Rugby

Colts Rugby



Vinehall School

2002-2003

As Junior Colts last year, this squad proved that they were prepared to listen and to learn as they evolved into a team who were very aware of their own strengths and limitations (as well as a healthy batch of set pieces!). Having been their coach as Under 10s meant that we were able to dispense with the usual getting-to-know-you sessions and get ready for our first match: an ambitious assault on Holmewood House on their home ground. Although the lads responded well to the two practices that we had before this big match (aware that Holmewood were already four weeks and as many games into their season), our brave efforts in the first half were no match for the well-drilled HH boys who gathered pace and a few points in the second half. The lads refused to give in and they proved to me that they had not lost the fighting quality that marked their previous season.

It took little time for the boys to become accustomed to the kicking game (although I outlawed the boot in all but last option defensive moves) and the notion of 'creative' lineouts. But the one outstanding attribute that we held which was way above any of our opponents was the power of our pack; indeed, I can remember only one instance when we were pushed backwards by an opposing scrum. The pack, consisting of the inimitable Rose, Grainge, Bowie, Thavisin, Neill and Lawson were frightening in their belligerence and cohesion, and it's a testament to their command of the scrumming set piece that we lost only one scrum throughout the entire season!

It is probably true to say that the team played their most attractive rugby against two strong rivals, St Bede's and Ashdown House. The demolition of St Bede's was fantastic to watch as the boys endured freezing winds to notch up eight tries on the cliff edge field. The two tries engineered by Edward Stapley and Bertie James were amongst the best of the season.

The Ashdown match, the final game of the year, was the match in which the boys really gelled and produced an inspired and imaginative display against excellent opposition. Thomas Caffyn, Bertie, Chris Goldsack and Ed Stapley provided cracking pace and wonderful handling to maintain continuous pressure on the Ashdown defence; but it was the Vinehall pack that seemed to dominate proceedings as they rather surprised the Ashdown boys with drive and control. As junior Colts last year the boys played with great skill and passion against Ashdown but lost by a couple of tries. This year the Ashdown wings were shut down early and crunching tackles coupled with quick hands in possession saw the boys come to within a couple of points of reversing the previous season's result. Without a doubt this was the game of the season.

It was, in so many ways, a rewarding and satisfying season for a group of big-hearted sportsman who made great progress in all aspects of their games.

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