

Date: 9th December 2017

LANCASHIRE U18 V YORKSHIRE U18 ON SUNDAY 3 DECEMBER 2017 AT BISHOP BURTON COLLEGE HULL

Final Score: Lancashire U18 15 Yorkshire U18 5 (HT 3-0)

Following last season's performance and victory, Lancashire U18s relished the challenge of another 'Roses' match against our traditional opponents Yorkshire and a different game plan. Despite a 3-and-a-half hour coach journey, Lancashire arrived at Bishop Burton College in good spirits and ready for the physical contest ahead. The snow from earlier in the week had cleared and the surface of the well-drained pitch was firm and ideal for running rugby.

Lancashire U18s successfully contested possession from the kick-off following a well-judged drop kick from Jacob Tansey (Myerscough) and an athletic jump from Alfie Topping (KGS) who would go on to dominate the lineout. The pack took on their larger opponents with a series of drives and carries which built pressure and culminated with a penalty in front of the posts on 2 minutes. Inside centre Dan Kelly (KGS) duly kicked the penalty (3-0 Lancashire).

Quickly in to their stride, Lancashire U18s continued to pile on the pressure but full credit to Yorkshire who were resolute in defence. Yorkshire conceded further penalties in their 22 under immense pressure with Lancashire deciding to kick for the corner. On each occasion, Yorkshire held their line. Both lineout and scrum improved from the Cumbria game with Lancashire disrupting the Yorkshire lineout on their throw and winning their own. The scrums were well contested with the mischievous Yorkshire tighthead fortunate to have only been penalised on one occasion.

Yorkshire defended for long periods and only managed to attack the Lancashire 22 on a few occasions. Lancashire defended strongly with good exits including a memorable turnover near the Lancashire line followed by a strong carry from our loosehead to the 22. Lancashire kept up the pressure and were winning the collisions to go forward and create momentum but, having earned the right to go wide, squandered 3 try-scoring opportunities. There was strong defence and powerful carries from the Lancashire front 5 and effective work from the industrious Back Rowers and a scintillating line-break from full-back Leon Simpson (Rossendale) but Lancashire did not take their reward and there was no further score in the first half (HT: Lancashire U18 3 Yorkshire U18 0).

Several Yorkshire forwards were seen to take a knee as the half-time whistle was blown so it was no surprise to see Lancashire make 3 tactical substitutions in the backline and raise the tempo straight from the Yorkshire kick-off. The physicality did not drop off and there were some big collisions, one of which resulted in an injury to the Yorkshire openside flanker. All necessary precautions were taken by the medical team and physios with the Yorkshire player stretchered off causing a delay of 13 minutes to the game. We wish the Yorkshire player a speedy recovery and understand from our enquiries after the game that the injury was not as serious as first thought.

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Lancashire U18s built momentum spurred on by our replacement fly-half Ryan Evans (AKS & Fylde) who ensured that we attacked the gainline at every opportunity. Quick ball at the ruck and pace on the ball resulted in the first try of the game on 49 minutes when replacement Centre Fraser Stanier (AKS & Fylde) ran a great line to receive a superb flat pass from Evans to beat his opposite number and accelerate round the Yorkshire full-back to score under the posts much to the excitement and relief of the travelling Lancashire supporters. With Kelly successful with the conversion Lancashire led 10-0.

Forwards and backs were combining well and it took only a further 7 minutes for Lancashire U18s to run in their second try. After building the phases and momentum, Lancashire attacked the blindside and, on 56 minutes, our winger Harris Morris (Myerscough) finished well in the left-hand corner following a well-executed miss-pass again from Evans. The difficult conversion from out wide was just missed by Kelly but it was now a three score game for Yorkshire to get something with Lancashire now leading 15-0.

There was to be no slipping off the game plan on this occasion. The Lancashire backline played with depth resulting in a number of line breaks for the backs with Morris and Stanier in the action again along with the impressive Simpson. Both sides emptied the bench whilst maintaining the tempo which resulted in the game finishing with end-to-end attacking. The Lancashire bench made an immediate impact with go forward, support and continuity, including a number of strong carries from both replacement Props Niall Cooney (KGS) and Owen Armstrong (Myerscough). Good work in attack and defence from our replacements kept the pressure on the home side.

To their immense credit, Yorkshire showed their team spirit and continued to build pressure and attack the Lancashire line. On 68 minutes, Yorkshire earned their reward moving the ball to their left wing who beat his opposite number to score in the left-hand corner. The Yorkshire kicker missed the difficult conversion from out wide (15-5 Lancashire).

That was the end of the scoring in an entertaining, intense and physical game of rugby played in excellent spirit by both teams and enjoyed by a knowledgeable and passionate crowd. Interestingly, Lancashire U18s, although pleased with their performance, were disappointed at leaving at least 4 tries out there and conceding a late consolation try. Lancashire still have much to work on but can now look forward to their third and final challenge with a home fixture against Cheshire on 17 December at Preston Grasshoppers (kick-off 14.00).

Finally, a special thank you has to go to the parents, families, friends, injured players and players unavailable for selection who made the long trip to Hull to support their sons, friends and Lancashire U18s. We trust that our brand of rugby and performance ensured that you all enjoyed the long trip home.

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