

## **18s lose by one in 81 point game of two halves**

Lancashire U18s **40 v 41** Durham

Aspatria RUFC

Sunday 23rd October 2016

KO 12.45

It is fair to assume from the score line that defences were not to the fore but that tells only half the story. Lancashire were leading 33-10 at half-time before the implosion ensued!

The purpose of the three U18s County fixtures is to identify players who are potentially North Division and, ultimately, England Counties U18s representatives. To that end a number of Lancashire players played to their potential and have already caught the eye of the North Division selectors. The secondary focus, but no less important focus is, of course, to win the game and it is here that Lancashire's game management was lacking.

Lancashire were behind within 5 minutes of the game starting in the glorious sunshine of a deepest Cumbrian lunchtime at the first North Division festival. What followed was an outstanding display of high intensity, high tempo rugby where forwards and backs worked together to produce some stunning scores.

The Durham coaches identified captain Connor Johnson as their Red Rose Man of the Match and he did lead his pack superbly, supported particularly by Hunt Granby and Sword. This enabled the composed fly-half Ciaran Johnson to orchestrate training ground backs moves to perfection, helped by perfect lines of running by Rhys Llewellyn and Adam Woosey to enable both to showcase their skills with great tries. Callum Bolton and Matt Bargh were also given the platform to score tries and demonstrate their capabilities.

Despite a try by Durham just before half-time and the loss of influential prop Tom Shorrock with an ankle injury, Coach Dan Orwin could not have foreseen what was to follow!

With a commanding half-time lead it is all too easy for players to switch-off and not maintain their first-half levels, but at County standard a team will be found out if they "switch-off". Furthermore, the nature of these games is that all players must be given a chance to demonstrate their talents and by replacing players in the second half, a side's momentum can be disturbed. However, at County level, replacements need to come onto the pitch and make their mark as well.

In this instance the perfect storm duly arrived as Durham forced their way back into the game as Lancashire switched off, lost composure, forgot the basics, and conceded the second half by 31 points to seven.

The team move on to play Cheshire at Lymm next Sunday in the second trial game. As part of these young Lancashire players rugby development, this will have proven to be a valuable lesson in sticking to and maintaining the game plan and principles of play from minute 1 to minute 70.

### **Team**

1 Will French, Myerscough College & Bolton RUFC

2 Connor Johnson, Myerscough College & Blackburn RUFC (captain)

3 Tom Shorrock, Merchant Taylors, Crosby & Firwood Waterloo RUFC

4 Jack Granby, Runshaw College & Tarleton RUFC

- 5 Joe Hunt, Myerscough College
- 6 Callum Baines, Myerscough College & Eccles RUFC
- 7 Jack McCutcheon, Myerscough College & Fylde RUFC
- 8 Morgan Sword, Ermysted's Grammar School & Wharfedale RUFC
- 9 Alex Meredith, Audenshaw School & Ashton under Lyne RUFC
- 10 Ciaran Johnson, Blackpool Sixth Form College & Fylde RUFC
- 11 Callum Bolton, Myerscough College & Ashton under Lyne RUFC
- 12 Matthew Bargh, Lancaster Royal Grammar School
- 13 Adam Woosey, Myerscough College & Ormskirk RUFC
- 14 Ben Aitchison, Merchant Taylors, Crosby & Firwood Waterloo RUFC
- 15 Rhys Llewellyn, Myerscough College & Blackburn RUFC

- 16 Declan Norrington, Preston Grasshoppers RUFC
- 17 Josh Belt, Myerscough College & Kirkby Lonsdale RUFC
- 18 Joe Fogg, Lancaster Royal Grammar School
- 19 Tom Ward, Liverpool College & Sefton RUFC
- 20 Jack Woodward, Ashton 6th Form College & Ashton under Lyne RUFC
- 21 Rob Smith, Myerscough College & Sale RUFC
- 22 Ryan Leach, Lancaster Royal Grammar School
- 23 Alex Leadbetter, Leigh RUFC