

Auchinleck Academy Rugby Review

Wow what a run up to Christmas we have had at Auchinleck Academy Rugby. All fixtures organised have managed to be played across U13/U14/U16/U15 Girls, with all of our boy's sides undefeated in the East Ayrshire Conference.

The standout performance from the U13 team was at home to Loudoun Academy, winning eleven tries to four to ensure they made it to the Conference Semi-Final, nineteen boys were in the squad and all got plenty of game time. This highlights the brilliant effort from all U13 players who are developing into a skilful Rugby team. Unfortunately they came undone to a huge (very huge) and much older looking Garnock side in the Conference Semi-Final. The team displayed great effort and commitment, highlighted in the fact that we scored the last try of the game – great effort boys and keep that never give up attitude.

Our U14s dominated the conference winning each game comfortably. This side were Ayrshire Finalists last year and have played with a clear focus of ensuring they go one better this year. This shared goal was evident in the Conference Semi where we played some great attacking and mature Rugby to secure a conference Final place with an impressive 62-0 win over Ardrossan Academy. Grange were the other Conference finalists and were put to the same treatment with a strong win by 64-12. In the Ayrshire final Belmont Academy looked sharp in their warm-up and they scored straight from the kick off when the ball was worked to the third fastest athlete for his age (Belmont no.4) who sprinted round the entire Auchinleck defence and scored in the corner. At half time the score was 28-14 to Belmont Academy but showing great character, Auchinleck battled back to level the scores at 28-28. The majority of the decisions went against Auchinleck and allowed Belmont vital field position deep inside the Auchinleck 22m. From a 5m Belmont scrum the ball was worked to the opposite wing where Belmont sneaked in to take the win and the Ayrshire Conference 32-28. All players were outstanding and should be proud of their achievements in the conference. This result must be a key learning opportunity for everyone involved from the players and coaches/teachers to ensure that the squad come back next year better.

The U16 team have had a mixed six months, undefeated in Conference Rugby, winning their opening Scottish Cup game 50-5 against Grange Academy, traveling with a depleted side to Carrick Academy and losing the second round fixture 31-21. We all thought that was the end of the national competition journey however a bye in the Shield meant we had a National Quarter-Final versus North Berwick High School who play against George Watsons School, Edinburgh Academy and other fee paying schools with massive Rugby programmes. The boys battled and were in the lead at half time, however the Berwick boys showed their class late on to win the game 27-20. A tremendous effort from the entire team to reach the quarter finals of a national competition.

In the Conference the U16s took on Largs Academy in the Semi-Final and scored thirty-five unanswered first half points. Largs battled back and scored an unconverted try to take the score to 35-5 for Auchinleck meaning that they faced local rivals Cumnock Academy in the Conference Final. Auchinleck were on fire and would have been difficult for any side to beat. Hard work, support and offloading ensured that Auchinleck would have two sides in the Ayrshire Final. 62-0 didn't do any justice to the Cumnock side that battled hard and fought well throughout the entire game. In the final the Auchinleck back row were dominant. Making tackle after tackle, West Pathway player J. Drummond was like a man possessed especially when he chased down and then perfectly smashed

his opposite number and Belmonts best player. This was the key moment in the game and Auchinleck ran away to a 20-7 lead. To Belmonts credit they battled and scored the last try of the game to make the result more respectable – 20-12.

The U15 Girls have had a brilliant few months. From taking part in the National qualifying tournament at Whitecraigs RFC in horrendously wet weather, to a brilliant performance against a combined Grange/Loudoun Academy side to beating Duncanrig Secondary in the Scottish Cup. A hard loss to a very physical and aggressive Shawlands Academy meant we had a National Shield Semi-Final versus Gordons Huntly School from Aberdeenshire. The game was tight and could of went either way until a certain S1 girl who has massive potential in the sport took the bull by the horns and scored four tries to ensure that Auchinleck Academy would be taking part in its first ever Rugby National Final. The final saw Auchinleck take on the combined might of Royal High and Liberton High Schools. In the end the experience of the Royal Liberton girls showed, with Auchinleck fielding eight S1 girls the future is certainly very very bright for Girls Rugby in Auchinleck Academy.

Overall a very successful conference campaign from all age groups with each going to the conference semi-finals undefeated. School of Rugby numbers at S1 continue to increase and the S2 playing squad is also increasing. Overall Mr Raby is a very happy Head of Rugby.

Fixtures are now being sought for the New Year, any pupil that is thinking of playing rugby should speak with Mr Raby. From everyone involved with Auchinleck Academy Rugby have a great Christmas and a Happy New Year. Remember “Happiness is Egg Shaped!”