

## **“A DRAPPIE OR TWO”**

### **Gordon v West Harbour – Round 2 Tooheys NEW Shute Shield**

The first real test for the season was set for the initial of three marquee games to held at Chatswood on Sundays during the season. West Harbour and Gordon have had some terrific battles in the last few seasons, including the final of the Trevor Allen Cup at Wests' home ground in 2007. In any event, if what unfolded in this encounter was a glimpse of what can be expected from the remaining Sunday games at Chatswood, then rugby fans should ensure that they are not anywhere else on 31 May and 16 August against Eastwood and Manly respectively.

After a week of torrential rain, a fine day and in the circumstances a very good track at Chatswood greeted the teams. All credit must go to Glen and his team for producing a pitch that was conducive to the type of game that both of these teams have become known in the last 2 years. Unfortunately, despite having an extra day to try to get it up an running, Dave Bezer was unable to get the Chatswood public address system working for the first day of the season at home. He has vowed not to rest until the gremlins have been removed from the system.

It was terrific to see that the Gordon Rugby Club sponsored cricketing Stags had success in the final of one of the two grades that they contested on the weekend. Third grade triumphed against Sydney Uni, whilst fourth grade were not able to get on the park for long enough at Penrith to get the result that they desired. Congratulations go to Ed Howitt and his team for winning the Mitchell Cup.



**Gordon DCC Third Grade premiers**

Immediately upon the opening bell, about 45 minutes after the Gordon cricketers started celebrating in the rooms at Uni No. 1, the Highlanders were in difficulty, when drop ball led to the Pirates attacking down the right hand side. A penalty was awarded after the home team were caught off side and the ball was swept left before John Sinisa crashed over out wide under the scoreboard for first points after 5 minutes. However, the Pirates were not

able to add the 2 points. As fine a player as Wests' halfback Steve Massey is, his team may suffer during the season because of his goal kicking.

Despite the early set back, Gordon were soon back in the game. Within a couple of minutes of Wests' try, skipper-for-the-day, Kingsley Seale was the beneficiary of poor line out defence 5 metres out from the Pirates' line, when the visitors contested a pinpoint throw from Nath Nicol to Billy Ratu at the back. When the Wests' jumper came up with thin air, there was not much left to defend the stripe. After one phase, Seale put the ball down near the posts.

It was not long before the Highlanders were again on the scoreboard, as from 40 out the ball was spread left across the line. The ball was grubbered through the line and toed ahead before it was touched down by Matt McDougall, replacing Mark Preston at outside centre, in front of the Trumper Stand. Usually the home crowd savours a score in that corner to secure a game in the dying minutes. However, they were collectively pleased to see Doug out pace the cover defence and get to the ball first. [\[McDougall, Matt celebrates 050409D-2213.JPG\]](#)

The Highlanders had momentum on their side and had the opportunity to take control of the game. However, with 10 minutes to the break the Pirates scored two tries to go to the break 17 - 12 in front. The last try before the break included one of the only tackles that Vinnie Byrne has slipped off in the time that he has been wearing tartan. Whilst not wishing to highlight a negative, it is a testament to the dependability that Byrne has added to Gordon's defence in the last 2 years. Wests went to break with momentum on their side and the home side had a battle on their hands to get back into the game.

Ten minutes into the second half David Harvey took his first steps to owning this game and securing the points for the home team. A penalty to the home team on halfway led to a line out at the attacking quarter line. Josh Keil took the ball from Byrne from the line out, where he stepped through the central defence before sweeping the ball to the left. Harvey then took the ball with the choice to shovel it to the outside men or on take on the line; he chose the latter and stepped off his left to put the home team back in front. Ten minutes later he took the ball 10 meters his own side of half way from a kick and returned it to the opposition line. Chipping over the top Harvey regather before racing to the south east corner and suddenly the score was 26 - 17 to the good.

#### **[Harvey, Dave runs 050409D-2370.JPG]**

In between that and completing his hatrick, Harvey was responsible for arguably the most important play of the game. With the Highlanders in attack on the halfway line, the ball was spilled and Wests, seizing the opportunity, went into attack. The ball was chipped ahead with no less than four Pirates streaming through down the western touchline. With only Harvey to regather in the last line of defence, it looked as if the team from Concord would score and get back in the game. However, Gordon's fullback was able to regather, keep his feet and wait for the reinforcements to arrive.

That the Highlanders got out of that situation and then within 5 minutes the man of the moment again bobbed up when the men in tartan looked to be in a hopeless position to take an intercept and run 90 metres to put the game beyond the visitors' grasp was a testament to the way in which Harvey is growing into the role. That period of play represented a 14-point turnaround to Gordon and killed off Wests' challenge for the afternoon.

With 5 minutes remaining on the clock, it looked like the Highlanders would cross again. However, in front of the posts the forwards somehow got amongst the play and were

unable to shift the ball quickly or efficiently enough to get over the line. The ball was knocked on within touching distance of another 5 points. The referee blew his whistle and the ball landed in the hands of winger Lachie Mitchell. With the play stopped he was crunched from behind by Wests 6'6" lock, Damian Lloyd and Mitchell was bent in half from behind with a shoulder to his back. Whilst it probably caused apoplexy in the home coaching box, it was good to see skipper Seale and Ofa Faniga'anuku, who returned off the bench, point out to Lloyd that that behaviour was simply not acceptable. It was a crude and ugly hit and the big Pirate rightly spent the rest of the time on the sideline.

**[Seale, Kingsley -Lloyd, Damian scuffle 050409D-2505.JPG]**

As was the case in the first round, the game was finished with a sweeping movement down the left side, from deep in Gordon's half, with Keil delievering a long ball to David Alo who made metres before delivering to Matt McDougall, who grabbed his second try of the afternoon in a very competent display. The game finished 41 - 22 and was probably not reflective of the effort that Wests continued to put in all afternoon. However, the Highlanders' play was a little more polished and disciplined when it counted and they ran our worthy victors. The dominance on the scoreboard was only possible due to the ability of the scrum to get on top of its far bigger opponent in the second half before completely dominating. To that end it was fantastic to see Ofa return from injury to play some minutes in the second half. This season big things are tipped for the powerhouse

Harvey finished with a personal tally of 26 points for the day in a man of the match performance, which went some distance to securing a bonus-point victory to keep the Highlanders at the top of the table. Whether Harvey was keen to move from the position in which he secured the Catchpole medal is not known. However, his performance from the back and his combination with Keil and Preston are going to cause significant headaches for opposition defences. Keil is certainly slotting into his new surroundings with ease and with the start that he has had to the season Harvey may be in a position to win Catchpole medals in two different positions.

**[Keil, Josh passing 050409D-2375.JPG]**

This weekend sees the Highlanders travel to Sydney's northern peninsula to take on the Rats. It is a home coming for a number in the first grade squad, including coaches Fear and Dinning, as well as Byrne, Keil, Thomas, Nifo and Andrew Wiles in 3rd grade. Traditionally this is always a fierce game and it is unlikely that either team will leave anything on the park.

Both sides currently sit on top of the table with a maximum of points. Strangely, the ABC have not deemed this worthy of "match of the day" status. Accordingly, if you wish to see the best game in town, you will need to venture to Narrabeen to see it first hand. You will not be disappointed if you do. Be there to see the Highlanders take the points in what is a crucial game for the season.

The next home game is against the much improved Southern Districts on 18 April. Make sure that if you can't make it to Rat Park that you get down to support your team at the best ground in Sydney on Saturday week.

See you from the Cedric Pike Stand.

Georgie McHugh