

## Old Amplefordians RFC vs Cranleigh

Stinking, awful, rotten, terrible .....

.....is how I felt that day following an insurance Friday in the city. It was for this reason that I trod onto the hallowed turf of OAMG Motspur Park in a tardy fashion and missed the opening quarter. This must also be the reason why my eyes deceived me – that can't be G Tulloch once again gracing the ruggers field and filling out the new OA shirt so well? Why was everyone wearing different socks, including Sedgak ones!? Was that seriously Ben Pearce that chased down a winger and then had the wherewithal and athleticism to get to his feet and jackel for the ball? Why are there more than 4 supporters here?

I was beginning to panic and thought that I'd gone to the wrong venue but then I saw that Hardy was at prop and Muiry and Shep were making their combined 1256<sup>th</sup> OARFC appearance. All was well.

The rugby was real end to end stuff and was extremely entertaining to watch. The OAs have a formidable forward pack and the traditional ball carrying strength has been supplemented by a decent set piece. The backs kept it simple and looked good with ball in hand however fitness as well as defensive organisation was a serious issue. When the OAs were able to retain possession, Cranleigh could not live with them however when the OAs lost possession or failed to control field position effectively they were often exposed in the wide channels and Cranleigh were able to stay in touch too easily. The outside channels are the hardest to defend and require organisation and a strong level of communication which is impossible to achieve without training and/or knowledge of your teammates. It must be said that the Cranleigh centres were good offloaders so it was not an easy day at the office and the backs should also be commended for several heroic cover tackles which stopped Cranleigh from running away with the game but realistically the breaks should not have come so easily or so regularly.

My understanding is that the OAs have had makeshift backlines for every fixture thus far. They will get away with this at first as early in the season opposition back lines are not yet firing on all cylinders and our players are better. In the latter stages however, this will be a very different story from a defensive and attacking point of view. In this instance, Kennedy was introduced at half time (looking absolutely ridiculous with no socks on, DoD) and he did a great job of shoring up the defence simply through communication and energy however the real answer is the gelling of a regular and consistent squad that works on the skill at training. The forwards are not immune here, they were also at fault when numbering up in defence which caused the gaps to open up out wide. In attack, whilst the OAs have undoubted talent, this will only get them so far and as opposition sides work on their own defensive structures, the OAs will find it harder to be effective out wide.

In my humble opinion as the two time title winning coach that led the OAs to the heights of Surrey 1, taught most of the current crop all they know about rugby and invented train beers....a spine of backs needs to be put together who are committed to the one hour of training a week and the vast majority of matches. They have the players in the squad and there were some notable new faces in the team on Saturday so this is an eminently achievable and exciting task. If the OAs can do this then they will be unstoppable. The feeling within the club is the best we have seen in years and if they start to build properly, the Surrey leagues cannot hold them!

The OAs should also work on recognising when your teammate can't pass off the left, thereby trying to stand closer to them in those instances. Especially when it entails that absolute butchery of a try scoring opportunity...