

Colwyn Bay U11's Tour to Ireland
18th-21st April 2008



The U11's recently travelled to Ireland for their first rugby tour and it was a great success, mainly for the fact that 23 kids went and 23 came back...always a good tour objective at this age!!

Impeccably turned out and after an early start on Friday to catch the Stena HSS to



Dun Laoghaire, the crossing was excellent. On the boat, the kids did what they do best; spend money...on all sorts of tat that only kids can buy. The ginger wigs and tartan hats did an excellent trade.

With no game until the afternoon, a 'bracing' walk along the prom at Dun Laoghaire was called for, followed by a game of football in the park where Matty Humphreys managed to find several of the largest

onions you are likely to see (in a park?).

Then on to Willow Park School, famed for its prowess at Rugby and its regular production of Irish Internationals and British Lions, including Luke Fitzgerald and one, Brian O'Driscoll, who we were told was not even good enough to get in the team at that age!! Training 4 times a week and having an age and size advantage, this was always going to be a rugby lesson for our boys and it was in many ways, although help for the home team from some generous refereeing decisions didn't help the cause. That said, the boys played tremendously well, despite big defeats, never letting their heads drop and for periods of play dominating proceedings and making the home team realise they were in a game.



Great performances from Lewis Shaw, Adam Smith, Harri Chinery and David Edwards resulted in 3 tries for Bay, scored by Remy Shiel, Callum Teesdale and Glen Davies. All this, watched by former Irish International Des Fitzgerald who complimented the team's ability and resilience.

The party then headed to their base, the excellent Glendalough International Youth Hostel, in Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, where we were fantastically well looked after and fed. With the boys and the coaches given their rooms, the boys quickly set about unpacking, which essentially meant tipping the clothes out onto the floor and then telling us they couldn't find anything.

A reasonably early start after a late night for some with their midnight feasts, and a trip into Wicklow to play Wicklow RFC over two games. Another strong team but all in all very evenly matched with Bay and this resulted in two close matches. Despite Bay losing the first game 25-10, Wicklow relied on several breakaway tries, and we felt that Bay, overall, were the slightly better side. Bays tries were scored by Connah Harding and Jordan Edwards. Rhys Thomas, Gareth Mansfield (in particular), Nicholas Ingham and Andrew Teese all played very well against a bigger group of kids and easily held their own. The second game was equally as competitive and the game could have gone either way with great attacking rugby from both sides as well as solid and organised defences. As it was, a 15-15 draw was probably the right result, with Rory Russell, Remy Shiel and Callum Teesdale scoring for Bay in a nail biting finale. Will Murphy, Matty Humphreys and Luke Rawicki all stood out for Bay in this tight encounter.



After fantastic Irish hospitality at the club we returned to the YH, where seeing the boys were tired we asked them what they wanted to do. 'Football' was the reply so the next few hours were spent by the lake, playing with a funny round shape ball, as well as a good game of rounders and a bit of tree climbing for some. A BBQ was planned for the evening and thankfully all the adults, Aidan Shiel, Ian Stroud, Jon Shaw, Mark Mansfield, 'Ed' Edwards, David Edwards and Ged Murphy all helped out, else we would still have been there now cooking it !! The hard work was supervised by Martin Kane, who managed to avoid getting his hands dirty but directed

operations and mobilised the kids. Videos, game machines and a local girl guides group occupied the kids in the evening (only joking about the last bit), whilst there was a change of supervision and the coaches were allowed a well earned 'half' of Guinness at the local pub.

The kids were allowed a well deserved lie in on Sunday morning, so true to form they were all up and ready to go by 7.30am. The tricky task of locating clothes strewn on the floor was accomplished and packing completed. In fairness the rooms were left in an excellent condition, despite one child (nameless) managing to sleep all night on an unopened bar of chocolate, presumably meant as a midnight snack. I dread to think what the laundry people thought it was.



We then headed off back to Dublin to play Old Wesley RFC. Another fantastic welcome by head coach David Chandler (I'll have a pint of what he was on) who encouraged and entertained the kids. The boys then had two of the best games they have had all season in terms of evenly matched, attacking, skilful rugby; a credit to both sides. In the first game, Bay narrowly lost 15-10 with Bays tries coming from Adam Smith and Remy Shiel.

Matthew Patricolo and Kurt Taylor-Williams both played well up front in a fine end to end game. In the final game, again the standard of play was excellent and the game mirrored the first except that this time it was Bay who won 15-10, with Connah Harding and David Edwards scoring for Bay before Adam Stroud, returning from a nasty knee injury, scored the winning try to give Bay a perfect way to end the tour. Great performances were also put in by Scott Kane, Jack Morris and Jacob Trotter, making it a true team display.



After more great hospitality the team headed off to the cinema to watch Son of Rambow, where some of the smallest players had some of the largest cartons of popcorn you could imagine. The healthy eating continued afterwards at Burger King before returning to Dublin Port for the ferry home. Here, the team were met by Captain Eric Davies of the Stena Adventurer (Glens dad) and he proceeded to fast track us onto the boat, provided us with drinks and nibbles and then to cap it all, gave everyone a tour of the bridge, a unique experience for us all, where he showed us the impressive technology required to get us home. Despite the hundreds of dials, buttons

and levers, not one was pushed by any of the kids, although we adults may have 'tweaked' a few when no one was looking !!
A great end to a fine tour. The kid's behaviour was exemplary and wherever they went they were complimented on their dress and their manners, a fine reflection on them and the club. They should be proud of this and also the standard of rugby they played during all the games.

