

Shevington Sharks U11's vs Orrell St James U11's – Thursday 10th May 2018

I don't usually start my reports off with a title but that's what this match warranted so here it is, short but sweet & to the point....

Well That Was More Like It!

That's what this whole game felt like right from the start as our lads produced more of what we know they can in 40 minutes than previously shown in the 5 matches so far played, they basically started where they left off against Crosfields from 2 weeks ago with the defensive strength they demonstrated then but with added attacking adventure & played to their strengths, getting the ball wide where we have fast men who can finish things off, something that was wasted against Crosfields in the 2nd half. Starting a game with 14 players was also a bonus as it means they kept rotating & keeping fresh, helps with a couple of knocks that occurred also, nothing serious though.

Still we were up against a very accomplished & established Group A team in Orrell St James which is as close to a derby match as you'll get as they're just up the road basically, they had 20+ players to keep alert also but sometimes having too many works against you, too many exchanges can change the balance of a team too much, I don't think it did Orrell any favours really.

A beautiful clear evening for rugby this, not too warm for the kids but no wind & more importantly no rain, perfect conditions underfoot & a proper referee for a change, will be a lot stricter & that proved to be correct, they'll all have to get used to this as this will be the norm pretty soon.

The Sharks kicked off, 20 odd metres made, Orrell take the ball on 2nd bounce, pass inside, then starts the game long dropathon that inflicted them on this night, we now had possession in their 20 metre area, had the Sharks learned from the lessons from the last 15 minutes of the Crosfields game when camped out on their line & couldn't breach the try line defence, it seemed not initially as first Brody Lucas, then Leo Wadsworth, Harry Townsend & George Lowe all tried their hand at the direct route but Orrells defence kept it tight, on the 4th tackle the ball went to 1st receiver Harry T, over his head & fumbled & dropped, chance gone, so back to our defence to keep them bottled up.

I have to say at this point that throughout this game the Sharks defence was impeccable, only a couple of tiny leaks in the 40 minutes, but it was physical, brutal at times in it's ferocity & from the word go they had the Orrell attack under pressure, panicking them into a glut of dropped ball as young eyes glanced at the onrushing cavalry charge that just wouldn't stop, eyes taken off the ball & the refs whistle was well worked tonight. Our middle men, Tom Carter, Will Metcalfe, Brody Lucas & Harvey Sadler worked tirelessly & covered every blade of grass to ensure Louie Fairhurst at full back had hardly any work to do, Luke Gledhill & company ever watchful in the wide positions, the Orrell attack constantly running into a brick wall & the Sharks repelling everything thrown at them. The Orrell first attack saw them put a high kick in on the last tackle, easily dealt with by Ollie Fairhurst in the left corner, Orrell were offside from the first tackle & kept the ref busy, so up the field we went, first run had Brody running at the defence, the ball being bumped out backwards, Orrell stopped & hesitated but Leo picked up, swatted off two attempted tackles & was away, just caught on the line but had the strength & momentum to carry on over to score the first try, converted by Tom & deservedly leading 6-0.

Orrell came again, ball dropped on the 3rd tackle as Harry Brandon took a knock & had a rest. The Sharks speed at the play the ball had Orrell worried & they started to try every trick they know to foil the dummy half & his distribution, but the Sharks worked around this & kept getting the upper hand,

Orrell resorting to diving around the player of the ball to mess up the pass, they amazingly seemed to get away with this far too often.

Two more dropped balls and quick thinking by Harry T from dummy half to catch the still retreating defensive line with a quick pass to Sam Kelly, with at last a bit of space to manoeuvre down the right edge this time, in & out to dodge a couple of defenders, then what we've all been waiting to see & a clean pair of Sam's heels disappearing into the distance to score his first try for the Sharks in the right corner, he was never going to be caught, first of many we hope, Tom converts again & Orrell worrying now at 12-0 down.

The rest of the first half was a mixture of dropped passes, mostly by Orrell, penalties for offside, mostly given against the Sharks for being too keen moving off the line & angering the ref by arguing, but overall it was the choking pressure put on the Orrell attack which was suffocating & caused all sorts of panic & ultimately errors, the four Orrell coaches on the touchline were bubbling over with frustration & nearly apoplectic with disbelief at the number of errors. No more scoring so the Sharks turned around 12-0 in front.

More of the same & lots more of it was the instruction at half time & the Sharks didn't disappoint. George ran the ball well down the right from the kick off then had another probe towards the line, more advances by Harry T & Brody kept pushing Orrell further on the back foot, then a typical piece of opportunism by Ollie saw him squirm around from dummy half & slide over easily to take us further out, Tom did the honours again & in total command now at 18-0.

You could have forgiven the lads a little relax after that, but they have to learn there's no relaxing in a 40 minutes match, time to do that is when the final whistle blows. For the first time Orrell ran on to the ball & with their defence not set quickly enough, the Sharks sprang a small leak straight up the middle & wasted all the work that had gone before as Orrell scored under the posts, try converted so pegged back to 18-6 lead now.

The Sharks had to reply quickly & good approach work by Harry T, Brody & Will set them up for a shallow punt by Harry T on the last tackle, this found Tom running onto it in space but was cut down inches from the line so resulted in a turn over. Orrell dropped the ball again early in the count in their own half & the Sharks were at them again, an enterprising high looped pass from Harry B to Tom just didn't come off & another chance gone. Another dropped pass by Orrell near half way set the Sharks rolling again and in a sweeping set across the field from left to right, good strong running, great evasion, dummy half bullet passes then a move through 3 sets of hands eventually saw Tom cruise home for a well-earned try t which he duly added the 2 extra points himself so in front by 24-6 now, that was a move worth watching again & again!

Orrell swept downfield & a couple of penalties given against the Sharks for first a high tackle then a ball steal had them camped on our line, but again stifling defence resulted in an error, the Sharks then repeated the error after an enterprising passing move ground to a halt. Another magic moment then occurred & a move that didn't quite come off against Crosfields was attempted again & and worked a treat, after another ball spill by Orrell, Harry T was first receiver & attacked the line with Harlen Smith running on his left shoulder, he slipped a peach of a delayed short pass & Harlen steamed through the gap & went for the line, followed by shouts of "forward" & "come on ref" from the Orrell coaches, he was caught just short of the line by the speedy cover but flipped the ball overhead to Rhys Clayton who failed to drive over, Harry T then went closer until from dummy half Rhys would not be denied & twisted his way out of an attempted tackle & fell over the line, Tom kept up the 100% conversion rate & it was 30-6 now & in total control.

The Sharks slightly relaxed again to let Orrell attack us down their right edge as for once our defence wasn't spread wide enough, just a slight lapse & Orrell were in again to give them a glimmer of hope, conversion over & 30-12 now, surely not??

But back roared the Sharks, after another couple of ball spills either way, they enjoyed a massive stroke of luck as Harry T got Harlen away again but the fumble & pick up wasn't spotted by the ref so playing to the whistle Harlen spun in the tackle to release Leo down the left & he finished the try scoring by gliding down the left edge just as he'd started it down the right, Tom concluded a great evenings kicking demonstration with a 100% success rate, 6 from 6. You have got to take good fortune when given the opportunity as it'll go against you just as often the other way, the Orrell coaches weren't happy with it but they weren't very happy anyway, not a good day at the office for them.

The game ended soon after, 36-12 to the Super Sharks & well-earned & deserved it was, great communication & desire throughout the team, all working for each other, what a turnaround in just 3 games. This will only continue through if we get good team numbers like this, the more they play together as a unit, the deadlier they'll become, and all this with very little training practice in between games, with more of that they'll be unstoppable.

Within a few months literally they'll be expanding onto a full-size pitch & converting to 13 a side with even more transitional rules, more like full scale, full blown rugby league, they'll need all the heads & bodies they can get then, please get behind this team all you parents & make sure they all get to each game & just as important, the training sessions, that's where games are plotted & won essentially. Can't wait to see where this lot can go, it's mouth watering stuff.

Tom Carter for his all round contribution in every aspect of the game & Rhys Clayton for his never say die attitude throughout shared the MOM award but every lad contributed here & their heads should be 3 times bigger now, bigger bash hats needed, lol.

Up the Sharks!

Awards:

MOM: Tom Carter / Rhys Clayton