

## Rylands Sharks U11's vs Shevington Sharks U11's – Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2018

I wasn't as enthusiastic compiling this compared to the encouraging performances the Sharks had shown in their first three games of the season, this head on meeting of **Sharks vs Sharks** was mostly a day to forget & as was described on the day as "just a bad day at the office", there will be times like this but hopefully not too often. Our Sharks ran into a full complement of high class Ryland Sharks U11's with our team woefully under-strength with just 9 players present on the day, they had loads of interchanges & our side had none, any knocks or limps or worse & they'd be down to 8 or less, thankfully that didn't happen much, it was our kids pride that was hurt more than anything, their upset faces at the end told a loud tale, they weren't used to being on the wrong end of a score like this & hopefully that will go some way to stopping it happening again, they should banish the memory of this now as soon as they can.

The first 2 sets of the match provided the overall pattern that would continue throughout, Rylands kicked off & the Shevvy variety of Sharks didn't make a great deal of yardage over the first set of 6 tackles, basically sticking to runs up the centre of the pitch & were easily dealt with by Rylands, they dealt with all Shevvy kicks on the last tackle quite comfortably & made it look like they had far more players out there than we did, they positioned themselves really well, hardly gave an inch all morning & instinctively knew when to get the ball wide after sucking the Shevvy defence into the middle & our Sharks couldn't handle the pace, Rylands moved the ball from left to right in a series of moves up the field into acres of space & scored easily out wide on the right edge. Thus began a procession that continued on & off for most of the 40 minutes & after a couple of these were conceded that's when young heads went down & it was hard to raise them again no matter how loud the encouragement. The Shevvy lads did have their moments & went close on several occasions but in attack they didn't use their own brand of quick hands & pace out wide & seemed to concentrate on trying to blast holes in the middle & attacking the same spot so Rylands just built a wall that was virtually impregnable, their wide men moved off the line so quickly to cut down our options so effectively, just frustrating our guys.

6 tries were conceded in the first 20 minutes & only one of the 9 tries in total wasn't converted so goal kicking was another main strength. The Shevvy kids did step it up in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half & really bust a gut to get over the line, Bailey Gerrard tried to scoot from dummy half close to the line several times & only desperation & last gasp defence wrestled the ball clear from his grasp, Harry Townsend, William Metcalfe & Harry Brandon ran hard at the line as Harlen Smith had in the first half but the defence held firm & steady, more frustration, in the end only 3 tries conceded in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half was a minor victory so was encouraging at least, the final whistle was most welcome for our boys I think.

If you watch the accompanying video it will be clear that there wasn't a lot wrong with the Sharks performance, they just got into some bad habits that they couldn't seem to correct. Having only 9 players on a wide pitch meant no dedicated full back was possible, so any initial line break meant they were just watching numbers on backs of shirts disappear into the distance, no second line of defence to rely on. The fundamental difference between the sides was that our Sharks surrendered whenever the ref shouted held & were still retreating as Rylands were allowed to play the ball quickly & were attacking & menacingly moving forward before our lads could face up, consequently our defence was never set correctly & too many of our retreating defenders were easily brushed off like a turnstile being walked through & no second phase in place. It needed a cool head to get them to lay on for the obligatory 4 seconds to let our defence get back & set, then at least have a one up & one down on each Rylands runner to give us a chance.

On the other side our lads didn't struggle enough to get up & play the ball quickly to give our runners a chance & we surrendered too meekly & slow play the balls & dummy half passes too deep gave Rylands all the time in the world to get off the line with speed & smother all our chances.

There were some bright spots as we tried to get the ball out wide but most last passes just went astray & chances fizzled out, it wasn't for want of trying but just nothing was coming off today & we were facing a truly well organised team. Final score 52-0. They've just got to get back in the saddle now as quickly as possible to put all this behind them & make it a distant memory, & when we face them again later in the season, well you never know??

### **Up the Sharks!**

#### **Awards:**

Parents MOM: Bailey Gerrard

Coaches MOM: Harry Townsend