



HILTON COLLEGE

View from the
Dugout

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Sport is made alive through history and longstanding traditions. Traditional rivalries become measured by decades and in some instances centuries, with the fortunes of a team, club, academy or school mapped in the ebb and flow of successes and failures etched in time. History studied reveals the legends that inspire (teams, individuals or happenings of repute) but, to the same degree, it reveals slow change, evolution if you will, which, when carefully considered, teaches us as much about the past as it does about who we are now, and what we will become in the future. To ignore history is not merely to forfeit the richness it brings but, to lose the opportunity to learn and grow. We are lucky to be Hiltonians. As our impressive school marches purposefully towards its sesquicentennial celebration our deep history is always with us, giving cause for both celebration and learning.

This past Saturday 16 June marked a significant historical sporting milestone for us and our friends, Michaelhouse. This day marked the 200th winter sport fixture between our fine schools, a tradition that started in 1904...a fixture 114 years in the making! The event saw more than 10,000 people passing through the McKenzie gates – with thousands more logging in to watch the live streaming of the 1st XV rugby match from further afield. The occasion was also marked by collaborating on a special piece in the war cry rendition and through a commemorative rugby jersey decorated with the Fleur-de-Lys and the Michaelhouse emblem. All-in-all, this was a wonderful celebration of our proud history and the bond we share with our rivals. It was also a special day for the Black and White to savour, recording 13 victories out of the 15 rugby matches played and 8 victories and 3 draws out of the 14 hockey matches played.

As mentioned, history is also a wonderful teacher and the day gave us opportunity to reflect. In looking back one needn't go too far to recognize that success (thriving /winning) and failure (failing /losing) are in fact inextricably linked, surfacing at intervals throughout the past. So what do we learn from this? Well, if anything, our history should teach us the inordinate value of humility - that whilst we celebrate today (and we really should!) we, firstly, understand what it is like to be on the other side of victory and, secondly, that, there is no victory in the first place without a worthy adversary. For me, history made is nothing more than a celebration of humility.

HOCKEY

In the away fixture at Michaelhouse the “down-the-line” honours were shared between the schools with the Balgowan boys taking the spoils in the 1st XI match. There was an air of confidence, however, about our hockey boys this time around as they were determined to do better at home. They couldn't have got off to a better start on Friday with the two matches played (U16C and U16D) ending heavily in our favour, 5 -1 and 4 – 0 respectively. Some sublime hockey was on display with both teams playing a fluid passing game and creating numerous scoring chances.



On Saturday the good form continued in the morning session with the U14A closing out their exceptional season with a 1 – 0 win; and with it the achievement of an unbeaten season. Included in their incredible record (played 15, won 14 and drew 1) is the fact that they scored 60 goals and only conceded 6 in the entire season. Quite an incredible feat! Another team that deserves a mention is the 5th team who, although they have struggled this season, fired themselves up to record their first win (2 – 1) in an exciting match. The U16B also finished their season on a high in totally dominant form (4 – 0). The U16A, unbeaten in the domestic league, also completed their incredible season by dismantling a competent Michaelhouse outfit 3 – 1. This was unexpected but, then again, considering how much these boys have improved under Mr. Fairweather it was probably always on the cards.



Possibly our team of the day was the 1st XI. Our boys were hurting after our sub-par performance at Michaelhouse in May, a game in which we were deservedly beaten 2 – 4. This match did not only present an opportunity to correct that score line but also to finish off what has been a “stop-start” season on a high. The lads were incredibly focussed and we couldn’t have got off to a better start when early on we sliced through the House defence to earn a PC. This was expertly taken, with Cameron Pearce bulleting his drag flick into the back of the goal to leave Michaelhouse reeling 1 – 0. Strategic guile and intensity continued to reap rewards for us with numerous chances going our way.

Eventually, a defensive turnover in the midfield saw the ball expertly delivered to Cameron Pearce who calmly slotted the chance and boost us to 2 – 0. To their credit Michaelhouse, who had been reduced to relying on counter attacks and rare mistakes for possession, never gave up and they pounced on a loose pass deep in our half, converting through an exceptional individual effort to get back in reach (2 -1). The best way for us to respond was to keep attacking and that we did. A decisive run up the left flank led to a circle entry and, aided by deft passing, Ollie Christodoulou created space to deftly slam home a goal from a very tight angle (3 – 1). The second half was a more measured from the 1st XI.

Taking special care to prevent any soft chances we calmly took control of the possession and territory statistics. Picking our chances we eventually cracked the Michaelhouse defence code yet again with another well worked goal to Cameron Pearce, his third of the game. In the end the game ended 4 – 1 to an elated 1st XI - nothing short of an exceptional team performance

RUGBY



My day started by donning referee garb for the U16D match that was to be played at 08:00 on No. 2. This game turned out to be a very exciting match indeed! I would like to say that the fine display of running rugby had something to do with the match official but alas it can only really be attributed to the passionate and expansive play of the Hilton and Michaelhouse boys. The game started with a bang with Hilton scoring two consecutive long range tries – 2 minutes 30 sec into the game and the black and white were 10 points ahead.

Despite further dominance, some silly decisions led to a Michaelhouse score (10 – 5). Sustained pressure from the Reds then saw them draw even (10 – 10) and then, with their tails up, they finished the half in dominant fashion to go 10 – 15 up. Hilton were better in the second half playing much of the game in Michaelhouse territory but unable to get past their brave defence. With 4 minutes to go it looked as though it was all over. From a scrum the Michaelhouse scrummie ran almost the full length of the field only to be tackled short, but the ball was quickly recycled and a try scored (10 – 20). From the kick-off Hilton clicked back into gear. Receiving, they immediately ran through for a try of their own – which was duly converted (17 – 20).

With seconds remaining, last movement was called from the Michaelhouse restart. Jamie Evans, who had had a great game, rose to the occasion. Collecting the ball he pinned back his ears and sprinted up the left touch line, all the while outstripping the Michaelhouse defenders for pace. Needing to beat one more, he shrugged off the last cover defender and dived over the line for the winning try. A most dramatic end to an exciting game (24 – 20 the final score)!



The passion and determination displayed in the U16D team was evident in all our other teams. Massive “first slot” victories were secured by the 5th (51 – 0), 15C (34 – 12), and 14B (50 – 0) teams (The 5th team deserving special mention for finishing their season having won all but one match). The momentum continued into the next round of games with the 4th (31 – 0), 16C, (31 – 19), 15B (31 – 0) and 14A (54 – 3) all registering fantastic wins. Victory by the U14A brought with it the outstanding achievement of an unbeaten season. This team played 14 matches this winter scoring 435 points and conceding only 93; an indication of just how effective they have been on attack and on defence. In the final morning fixtures the 3rd (31 – 14), U15A (29 – 8) and 14C (24 – 12) rounded off excellent wins with our only loss at that point being the U16B (22 – 24). For this brave team it was “close but no cigar” for a second time as their previous result at Michaelhouse was also a cliff-hanger (26 – 27).

Our 3rd team has had a great season. Playing a simple but effective brand of rugby they too were unbeaten in all 9 matches played. Their success has also been the result of a wonderful all for one and one for all team culture. In the afternoon the U16A became our second rugby casualty in close fought war of attrition. Ultimately, it was House who were better at taking advantage when chances presented themselves. Try as we might, we just couldn’t work our way back into the game, losing narrowly 7 – 15. Our 2nd XV have been another “stand out” team this season, only losing 2 matches out of the 11 played. Their match was epitomised by excellent composure as they steadily wore down Michaelhouse with superior possession and gain line statistics. As the game wore on we controlled more and more facets of play and in the end we completed a clinical win 20 – 5.

The unbeaten Hilton College 1st XV may have been favourites coming into this final match but the history between these schools has proven that the games between these schools are always close. Michaelhouse were in fact the better team very early on. Playing more clinically, they earned early territorial advantage which tested our scramble defence just short of our try line. They converted this pressure into points after an exceptional drop goal from 35m out (0 – 3). Fortunately, it didn’t take long for us to reply when an attacking cross kick, purposed for their right wing, was gathered by Robert Mattison. He blitzed down the touch line, outstripping his opposite defender and the cover, to score under the poles (3 – 7). Thanks to brilliant defence by both teams, scoring was kept to a minimum with the only additions being a penalty to either side; 10 – 6 at half time. In the second half, the Hilton power-house started to impose their dominance on the match.

Our sustained territorial advantage eventually started taking its toll with the visitors having to make more and more tackles. Three successive penalties were justly earned and, fortunately for us, the hot boot of Gareth Schreuder gradually increased our lead to 13 points (19 – 6). Like a python squeezing its prey the pressure continued to build on the Balgowan outfit and eventually a patient build up put a ball carrying Grant Cousins in a one-on-one situation on their 22m line. Finishing like a pro, he handed off his opposite number and shrugged off another defender to dive over and all but close out the match (26 – 6). Michaelhouse never gave up and in the final minutes, following a succession of penalties, they scored a “tap and go” try on the stroke of full time (26 – 11).

In the end, however, it was all Hilton who not only achieved the “double” but completed an impressive record of 14 consecutive wins. More research needs to go into the history but I am told that our last unbeaten 1st XV was back in 1973 (before I was born!), which makes this the first team to achieve this accolade in 45 years. Not only will they go down in history as one of our most successful teams but, with so many of their matches going all the way down to the wire, they will undoubtedly be remembered for their courage and never-say-die attitudes. Well done boys!!



We wish the following teams all the best for the holiday festivals and tours:

- ❖ 1st XI Soccer at the Kloof Festival
- ❖ 1st XV Rugby at the Independent Schools U18 Festival at Kingswood, Grahamstown
- ❖ Tennis Club Tour to the UK
- ❖ Waterpolo Tour to Italy

We also wish all our Provincial Players and Staff who are representing our Province in the National Tournaments being held this holiday, all the best of luck.

Tony Shuttleworth
Executive Director - Sport