



**RAG U16's Championship – Gogledd Cymru vs Cardiff Blues North
Sunday 20th September 2009 – Parc Eirias, Colwyn Bay.**

It was a fast and ferocious encounter at Parc Eirias, between two sides who were both very much ready for the battle. It was end-to-end entertainment, other than some repeatedly dodgy scrummaging throughout, but two early Blues North errors in front of their posts allowed Gogledd two easy penalty chances, which Lewis Barker (Mold) duly converted on 6 and 12 minutes, to give Gogledd a 6-0 lead.

Blues hit back immediately with a well-worked Try on the corner from Keiran Thomas (14mins) to bring it back to 6-5, but Callum Phillips pushed the conversion wide of the posts. More Blues errors followed, handing two more penalties and two more easy kicks to Lewis Barker on 17 and 21 minutes, but from the restart the Blues built up pressure on the Gogledd line and Callum Phillips forced through under the posts in the 26th minute, then converted his own Try to bring the scores level at 12-12.

More end-to-end play eventually found the Blues pinned back into their own 22 and the Gogledd backs worked well to find the gaps, with Jason Blackmore (Rhyl) running through the middle for the first try of the Gogledd Cymru season on 33 minutes, which Lewis Barker converted to make the half-time score 19-12.

Gogledd began the second half with more momentum and the Blues struggled to keep possession. A Gogledd breakaway from halfway by Mike Jones and Matt Richards (both Ruthin) resulted in Matt getting a good score in the corner on 39 minutes but Lewis Barker pulled the conversion attempt, to leave the score at 24-12. A bad fumble in the Blues backs led to a Gogledd line-out deep inside the Blues 22 and from the ensuing ruck, Maredydd Francis (Whitchurch exile) and Elliott Crowe (Llandudno) combined for Elliott to run a third Gogledd Try in the corner on 44 minutes. Dion Jones (Nant Conwy) fell short with the conversion attempt, leaving the score at 29-12.

The Blues piled on the pressure from the restart and after some far better defending from a Gogledd counter-attack, Blues made their way back up the field and Keiran Thomas ran in his and Blues second try on 50 minutes, which Callum Phillips converted well from the tight angle to bring the score to 29-19.

After a sustained period of Blues pressure, replacement Scrum Half Phyl Roberts (Ruthin) found a clearance kick to win a line-out on halfway. Gogledd kept possession from the line-out and Lewis Barker hoisted a long downfield kick which Blues wing Bradley Morgan caught well and offloaded to Josh Flye but Gogledd's Matt Richards was on hand to charge down the clearance and run in a simple Try on 58 minutes. Lewis Barker missed the conversion by the smallest of margins as he just pulled wide of the inside post. 34-19.

The Blues upped the tempo yet again and this time it was Gogledd who failed to adequately clear their lines and gave the Blues too much possession and territory. A late yellow card for infringement for replacement Gogledd Hooker Rob Evans (Wrexham) was quickly followed by a Blues Try from flanker Alex Jones on 68 minutes, but Callum Phillips pushed the conversion attempt wide and the game finished 34-24.

Gogledd had some excellent individual performances across the park, with Jacob Meadows (Pwllheli) captaining the side very well, Sam Backshall (Nant Conwy) outstanding on the wing and excellent performances from Dion Jones and debut Try-scorer Jason Blackmore. Elliott Crowe, with his tireless efforts throughout and an excellent and well-deserved second-half try, deserves special mention but it is Matt Richards, with his brace of tries and consistent hard work and running, who secures himself the Man-Of-The-Match accolade.

Gogledd Cymru now travel to face Cardiff Blues South at Rumney RFC, Cardiff on Sunday 27th September.

Bryden Lloyd
Manager – Gogledd Cymru U16's