

## **Middlesex Festival Hat Trick for Teddington Antlers**

A total of 14 tries and five clean sheets saw Teddington U9's A team take the Marie Curie 2008 Middlesex Mini Rugby Festival for the third year running on Sunday March 9.

While playing tag the Antlers won the trophy outright in their first year and shared it last season with rivals Ealing in a close, high scoring final. Although this year's final was also tight, Teddington deservedly triumphed over Rosslyn Park with a mixture of driving forward play and a willingness to pass the ball down the line coupled with relentless defense.

The As started their defence of the title with a match against Ruislip's B team. Teddington were quickly into their stride, playing an expansive game which saw them 6-0 ahead early into the second half. At the point, victory was officially declared for Teddington but a gallant Ruislip team chose to play out the rest of the game as a friendly, showing some very good running and handling skills.

Teddington Antler's second game saw them up against a well-drilled, strong Ealing B squad. After their comfortable earlier win over Ruislip, the boys struggled to really impose themselves but were still too strong for their opponents, running out 2-0 winners at the end having enjoyed most of the territory and possession without converting many of their chances into scores.

The two victories saw Teddington pitched against a strong Saracens side in the quarter finals. An extremely physical but fair struggle ensued with both sides hitting the rucks and tackles extremely hard in a bruising encounter that saw a number of boys have to leave the field with knocks, only to return determined to see their side into the semis. Teddington matched the physicality of the bigger Saracens side and with the help of their more fluent passing game eventually turned pressure into points with a try in each half.

The semi-final against Bank of England was a far more free-flowing game and two tries in the first half provided the platform for a 3-0 Teddington win and a place in the final to face Rosslyn Park.

Rosslyn Park had defeated Ealing in a hard fought semi and Teddington were braced for another physical, close game if they were to retain the title. The match certainly lived up to its billing with two committed, but tired sides battling it out. After a period of sustained pressure which saw Teddington recycle ball quickly and set their backs free to gain good yards and put Rosslyn Park on the back foot, the reigning champions grabbed a try just before half time which was to prove vital.

Rosslyn Park started the second half in a determined mood but brilliant defence from Teddington kept them at bay and in the end The Antlers gained the upper hand again and were unlucky not to score another try to make it a more comfortable Bowl Final win.

Teddington A U9s proved at Imber Court that they really have embraced contact rugby and are now transferring last year's marvelous tag performances into displays in games that are a step closer to the 15 man game. The tackling and rucking were magnificent and this needs to remain so for the rest of the season which will see the side take on some excellent teams in a busy calendar of festivals.

The Marie Curie 2008 Middlesex Mini Rugby Festival was fantastically run by our club and praise should go to all the organisers, helpers, marshals and referees who ensured that a massive event ran so smoothly and the players who showed the right sporting attitude throughout the day.

Also thanks to David Strettle and Dan Frazier from Harlequins who were on hand to present the teams with their trophies and medals.

Squad: Laurence Wilson, Bruce Gilbert, Alex Roach, Alexander Cozens, Tadgh O'Hagan, James Meadows, Matthew Wallace, Toby Dutton, Tom Tossetti, Sam Sweetland and Miles Wakeling.

Coach: Michael O'Hagan

Report: Julien Cozens