

3V
CRUSADERS



YEARBOOK
2014-15



22 GAMES

10 COMPETITION

12 FRIENDLY

11 WINS

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

A few words from Gareth Lim



As another Tokyo Crusaders season comes to a close, the 25th since our early beginnings in 1990, please step back with me to look back and reflect on this year, our anniversary year. It has been an absolute privilege to have been associated with this club and to celebrate 25 years of rugby history.

But before I continue, allow me say a couple words of thanks. First and foremost to every player and supporter involved in this year's campaign. We could not have done without you. It has been an up and down season but a solid effort with 22 games, (11 friendly and 10 competition) and 78 different players donning the Cru jersey, these numbers are an achievement in themselves. Well done indeed!

My second word of thanks goes to the sponsors and club partners. On behalf of the club I would like to say thank you for your continued support. To Jason at The Meat Guy, to Travis and Kaori at Synergy Center Tokyo, to Stewart Bailey and his team at Geronimo's, to Tsubasa-san and his team at the Hangover, we offer our heartfelt thanks. Without you we would simply have no club.

My final word of thanks goes to the Tokyo Crusaders Executive Committee and Committee members to all staff and volunteers. You have worked tirelessly all year to plan organize and execute matches, competitions, team wear, an online shop and a social media and web presence that any professional club would be proud to have and I thank you for that. Today we recognize the work you have done from behind the scenes for your leadership and for generously donating your time and effort.

The Crusaders has been an exciting club to be a part of, this year was no different to others. We have consolidated our position both on and off the pitch and going into this Summer knowing we will compete in the First Division of the Tokyo Cup next year. Giving credit to the strength of our squad, the Cru has stepped up to play a stronger class opponent. We have built upon last season success and as 2013-14 Champions, teams have coming to us looking for games. The rugby season has been long and we without a doubt we have had a busy schedule. I recognize this is not without its challenges or controversies but overall I believe this is something of a positive differentiator between our organization and others. For me, we are passionate about rugby, about playing and winning games and I would encourage our new Cru Committee to keep booking in the games and socials. It will be up to us as a club to recruit and bring players in. If I may attempt to summarize the goals of this club for me it might read like this:

"To compete as a keen and competitive rugby club whilst providing

a community and network for players and members to socialize and enjoy camaraderie."

Lasting memories of this year have not only been on the pitch. One highlight for me has been the Meat Cup barbecue, raising decent funds for the club and having a great day out on base. Others were the Okinawa Tour/Summer 2014 where a motly Cru traveled to the Yomitan Beach Boys and tested ourselves against the marines. (We aim at hosting them in Tokyo for a re-match.) In our Winter, off-season had a fantastic ski trip to Nagano. Thanks in no particular order to Marc and Lowanne, Frank, Chuck, Yorkie, Jason Gall and the Yokota boys, Tooley (again), Jason and Sam of the Meat Guy and all that helped pull these off.

On a personal note, I am stepping down as Club Chairman and welcoming Tooley into my role. His new title and new title for the club will be Club President. On behalf of the Club I can say thank Tooley for your tireless efforts. The work he has done organizing games, fixtures and opponents is recognized. As is his work with the Shuto League, Tokyo Cup Committee and Japan Rugby Football Union. Now we must look positively to the future. There will be challenges and we must always continue to encourage new ideas but let's get behind our new manager Travis and the new Executive Committee. Hopefully we can attract new players and begin a new chapter in the successful story that is the Tokyo Crusaders RFC."

I have made some true friends since joining this club and having been involved in the Crusaders Committee since 2008, it has been an immense pleasure and an honor to have served as your Chairman. To see the Club grow and to have been on the Executive Committee working with Tooley and many of you during what I believe has been one the most successful periods in Cru history, has been an amazing experience. Yes rugby is "coming home." The 2019 Rugby World Cup being just "around the corner," and with the sport taking-off in this country, I have a feeling that the landscape for social and club rugby in Japan will be an interesting place to be in, bringing with it positive changes at club and amateur level. I would encourage all of you to get involved in any way. We are one of the passionate sports clubs in Tokyo and I thank you for making it. We rely on your support, your ideas and your voice to continue the Cru forward for another 25th years and beyond.

Cheers,
Gareth "Gaz" Lim

TEAM MANAGER'S MESSAGE

A Wee Note from Stewart Henwood



Last year I mentioned in my manager's report that we would be taking a step up this season and playing more challenging teams. This has been shown in the results. We have played 20 games, winning 13 and losing 7. We have also played a 10s game and two 10s tournaments - our own Meat Cup, and, for the first time, we were invited to join the Acorn 10s tournament. Our record for these games was 6 wins and 1 loss.

We went into the 1st Division of the Shuto League as champions but just couldn't quite beat the Tokyo Gaijin RFC, ending up in second place for this season, after a shock loss to another team who wanted to win more than we did. Once again, we felt that we were in with a chance against YC&AC RFC but as happened last year, one special opposition player made the difference and it wasn't to be. At the Christmas break, the trophy cabinet was bare, but we felt we had started our season well, and were satisfied that we had played some good rugby with more still to come.

In January, the 'Cru Ski Trip' was held in Hakuba, and by all accounts was a great success. I hope this tradition continues, as it's a chance for us to all get together away from rugby.

The second half of the season kicked off in February and we had lined up some new teams with a view to getting in some good practice for our Tokyo Cup campaign starting in April.

These teams were from Chiba and Saitama, and we knew very little about them. This pre Tokyo Cup warm-up was 'a mixed bag' with a few losses and a few wins. We have been struggling to get numbers to games since February, and I feel this is the reason we lost at least 4 of our games during this period. You can't win games if you don't have anyone sitting on the bench. Our Meat Cup 10s tournament was a great success, though, with everyone enjoying the sunny day out at Yokota Air Base. Embarrassingly, we won our own tournament.

The Tokyo Cup kicked off in April with our first game against the Hurricanes RFC. Once again we tried our best but couldn't quite make it. They moved on to the knockout stage, and we remained in our group to have a relegation/promotion match at the end. This tournament certainly is a lot of work for everyone involved, but it places us officially 'on the map' of Tokyo rugby, and I feel it is important for the Club to stick with it.

I feel that our season has been a bit of a roller coaster this year.

We have expected a lot, and tried to do so much, rugby-wise and socially. We have had players come and go. Some players have welcomed babies and others have had work commitments. We have had some really inspiring games, and yet we've had some games which left us lamenting what might have been... no, what should have been. We all have a passion for rugby and we want to play, but we also have to have a passion for the Club and its activities. We are amateur and volunteer, and without regular support, on and off the field, the Club will disappear, as other Clubs have done before us.

But looking back on our 25th season, we have had a great time. We have made new friends and have some great opponents lined up for next season. We scored 913 points, with 153 tries and 74 conversions. 515 were scored against us. We won 19 out of 27 games, including tournament games, and we are still in the 1st Divisions of the Shuto League and the Tokyo Cup. We are well known as a 'friendly' team and a good Club, with our good sportsmanship and giveaway MVP t-shirts. We were awarded the Best Team Award again this year for the Shuto League.

I've had a great 3 years back with the Cru, and I look forward to another promising season next year.

Thanks for the good times.

Cheers
Tooley

CAPTAIN'S MESSAGE

Comments from Travis Dixon



Firstly, I want to thank everyone who works tirelessly behind the scenes in order to make the Cru the fantastic Club it has become. A number of guys put in countless hours organizing matches, updating the website, getting sponsorship and recruiting new players, among other jobs. A couple of years ago I said we went from just a bunch of guys who play rugby to being a well-organised team. Now, with the hard work of the Executive Committee members and other volunteers we've gone from "just a team" to a fully-fledged Rugby Club! Cheers everyone for making this happen.

It's been a season of mixed successes. We came close to winning the Shuto League but a couple of off games where we didn't make the most of our opportunities perhaps hurt us. I'm already looking forward to next season so we can give this another crack. I like the healthy rivalry we're establishing between the Tokyo Gaijin as well and that's a fixture I'll be highlighting on my calendar for sure, as I hope everyone else will be doing too. We've managed to stay in the First Division of the Tokyo Cup thanks to a pretty gutsy performance late in the season also, so let's hope we can move further with that next year.

From our numerous non-competition fixtures we've also continued to establish and build good relationships with other clubs, which is fantastic for us. From where we were a few years ago when few teams wanted to play us unless they had to, it's now apparently pretty easy to find fixtures and we have clubs coming to us. This is because they know they'll get a good, hard, physical game and a lot of the Japanese teams relish that physical challenge. Thanks also must go to Tooley for working so hard over the past few years to get us into this position. I think this respect we have was most evident at the Acorns Tens Tournament we were invited to, where at the after-match we were made to feel a little like the honoured guests.

Off the field we've continued to be pretty successful, I think, as we generally are. The Ski-Trip this year was a bloody good weekend away. The Moustache Bash post-MacFadyen Cup at the Hard Rock Café in Yokohama was also another good night. We had a few other socials at our sponsors' venues and to be honest, the turnout could have been better. The Executive Committee is looking into ways that we can ensure the success of these events

in the future so we can continue to keep our sponsors happy.

We've welcomed a bunch of new players this season to who have made a huge difference to the club. There are too many to name here and I don't want to leave anyone out, but just know that we need to keep growing in numbers and having regular, loyal players to the Cru is absolutely essential and has always been my aim as Captain. I think we are doing a pretty good job of establishing a club culture that fosters this loyalty. Sadly, we've also said farewell to a number of players, as is always the case. I hope I don't leave anyone out here, but thanks to Galdric Porta, Phillippe Buzon, Evan Kerr, Jason Gall, Brandon Fought, Adam Birss, Paul Skurr, Paul Ralph, Brandon Rogers, ... You'll all be missed but we hope to see you again either on a rugby field or in a bar somewhere!

Next year I'll be stepping down and handing over the Captaincy to Tom Cocks. As Tooley steps into the Chairman's role, I want to take on some of the managerial workload and I know Cocksy'll do a great job leading the team.

Thanks again to everyone for making this great club happen. It's been an honour being the Crusader's Captain this past season and I'm looking forward to the future.

Cheers,
Travis.

POINT SCORERS



FIRST TO 100 POINTS!!
DOMINIQUE ADDAMS



FIRST TO TRY
TRAVIS DIXON



LAST TO TRY
ROB GALBRAITH

	Try	Conversion	Penalty	Dropped goal	Total
Dominique Adams	20				100
Pierre Sims	13				65
Macer Allen	11	1			57
Travis Dixon	9	13			71
Seth Robson	8	2			44
Rob Galbraith	9	1			47
Philippe Buzon	7	2			39
Steve Howden	6				30
Ian Miller	5	2			29
Paul Skurr	4	1			22
Brendan Gallagher	4	1			22
Tom Cocks	4				20
Jordan Dill	3	6			27
Clarence Lukes	3	2			19
Brandon Rogers	3	2			19
Galdric Porta	3				15
Pat Wheen	3				15
Alex Herrera	3				15
Takato Suzuki	3				15
Tsuyoshi Saimyo	3				15
Brett Wallbutton	2				10
Alex Howard	2				10
Roy McGrath	2				10
Dewayne Dortch	2				10
Josh DeWalt	2				10
Stewart Henwood	2				10
Curtis	2				10
Evan Hitchman	1	36			77
Jason Gall	1	1			7
Roy Yorke	1				5
Gavin Smith	1				5
Clive Callaway	1				5
Adam Birss	1				5
Roy Surita	1				5
Sho Nakashima	1				5
Matt Sparrow	1				5
Frank Saffery	1				5
Akira (opp)	1				5
Koichi Hirano	1				5
Jeremy	1				5
Ken Takase	1				5
Brandon Fought	1				5
Neil Howard		4			8
	153	74	0	0	913

Statistics

[illegible]

Statistics

[illegible]

PLAYER'S PLAYER

321's Collected from the Season

Top Ten:



NO₁: TRAVIS DIXON 38 POINTS



NO₂: DOMINIQUE ADAMS 31 POINTS



NO₃: ROB GALBRAITH 29 POINTS

- NO4: **GALDRIC PORTA** 20 POINTS
 NO5: **PIERRE SIMS** 17 POINTS
 NO6: **ROY McGRATH** 17 POINTS
 NO7: **PATRICK WHEEN** 13 POINTS
 NO8: **TOM COCKS** 12 POINTS
 NO9: **PAUL SKURR** 11 POINTS
 NO10: **PHILLIPE BUZON** 10 POINTS

Tokyo Crusaders RFC – All Jinjan RFC

63 – 12

By Gavin Smith

Last Sunday the mighty Tokyo Crusaders gathered for the start of their 25th anniversary season against All Jinjan RFC. It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining and the weather was sweet, yeah... The Cru turned up early and in force with a full squad and plenty of subs. After dusting off the cobwebs with a longer organized training, the starting 15 took the field.

All Jinjan kicked off the game just after 13:00, and it was looking quite evenly matched from the get-go. However, 10 minutes in, the opponent's confidence was rocked by a huge well-timed but no-armed tackle from Dom, which was penalized by a Yellow Card. 15 minutes in, and with 14 men on the pitch, Travis danced about and worked his magic to get the first try of the day, successfully converted by Ev. The Cru kicked up a gear and started chasing that extra bonus point, and at 24min some silky passing saw Rob cross the line for a try. This was followed up with another one (33Min) by an on-form Skurry whose pre-season running showed to be paying off. At the 38th minute, Van used his pace + power and broke the line to score a classy try after having had a great half, This was followed up right at the end of the half (40min) by Pat Wheen, aka "The Human Wrecking Ball", who decided he wanted a try, so swatted half the team away with ease on a half-pitch run. Evan was 5 for 5 on the conversion.

Half time = 35 – 0

The Cru went out to the second half with some fresh legs and the goal of not conceding any points. After a neatly placed kick by Ev to start the second half a pumped-up Shannon tackled the receiver in the air and was sent to the bin for 10min. With the momentum of the first half, the Cru continued to press their opponents and scored 3 more Trys (Roy Yorke, Rob

Galbraith & Travis) in the first 20min. After pushing at a fast pace for the first 60 minutes, tired minds started to show as we lost concentration and another Cru was sent to the Sin Bin (Pierre). All Jinjan took advantage of this and got their first try 60 minutes in. The Cru responded well with a quick push up the field to the opponent's try line, with numbers on the right, Gavin went for glory and broke the line to get a try (62min). All Jinjan were still pumped from their 1st try, and with a clever change of direction on their kick-off they capitalized to score their second of the day (65min). The remaining 7 minutes of the game was an even stand-off and saw Dom get a 2nd yellow for a high tackle, resulting in a dreaded RED card.

Apart from getting our first yellow cards in 3 seasons (4 in total !!),...overall, it was a good game and we showed a lot of team effort to keep the score to 63-12, considering we played about 38 minutes with 14 players, and 2 minutes with 13.



Player Points

5: Jason Gall
4: Macer 'Van' Allen
3: Travis Dixon
2: Roy Yorke
1: Matt Sparrow



Tokyo Crusaders RFC – Kichijoji Wild Turkey RFC

19 – 39

By Steve Howden

On the 21st of Sept, the Tokyo Crusaders turned out for their second Shuto game of the season against Kichijoji WildTurkeys RFC. Having won the league the previous year, expectations were high and the team arrived early to get in some much-needed preparation before the game. God – as a rugby fan – had decided to clear the skies so that he could get a good view of the match; a welcome break from the rains we had experienced the day before. The stage was set for a fast and expansive game of rugby and fortunately the crowds had turned out, with many wives, girlfriends, boyfriends (I think Sean Gibson must fall into this category now) and children volunteering as water carriers, linesman and cheerleaders.

Play kicked off at 15:10 and, unlike as normal, the Cru made a lethargic start as we struggled to get into the game. Within the first half hour, the team was down by two tries to nil. It became apparent that the opposition were a little stronger than their recent promotion from a lower league had suggested, as they were well drilled, hard-hitting and able to capitalise on our mistakes. The forwards took the game to the opposition and frequent smash-balls by our big pack – in particular from Pat Wheen, Paul Skerr and Jason Gall – eventually wore down the opposition's dogged defence and the Cru was able to claw one back before the break. It's worth pointing out that a night in a

hospital after the birth of his first son was not enough to keep the big man, Paul Skurr, away.

After the break, things started to improve and we managed to take the lead after two unanswered tries, both coming off the back of dynamic forward play. The last of these was Pat's second of the game as he stormed through the opposition defence and then demonstrated pace, sprinting 30m to the tryline before being caught by the defence, and also his support.

Unfortunately, this was as good as it got and the opposition upped a gear, scoring four more tries and a penalty to finish the game deserved winners at a slightly embarrassing 39-19.

The game saw some powerful play from our forwards and strong performance from the back-row, and fly half, Travis Dixon, who showed what he can do if not drunk or incredibly hung-over, and who also ended up getting the Opposition's vote for man-of-the-match. Big performances from Pat Wheen (the players' choice for man of the match) and Paul Skurr gave us hope for the rest of the season. But the game was characterised by far too many errors, with knock-ons and missed tackles occurring all too easily. Nothing can be taken away from the opposition, though, whom we hugely underestimated, but it is clear that we will have some work to do if we are to hold on to the Shuto trophy this year.

Player Points

5: Pat Wheen
4: Travis Dixon
3: Paul Skurr
2: Rob Galbraith
1: Jason Gall



Tokyo Crusaders RFC – Fevers RFC

50 – 15

By Ryuji Matsuzawa

One couldn't ask for a better day to play rugby as the Cru arrived in Mitaka for a friendly versus the Fevers – mild temperature, a rare Saturday game and the Captain's stag party scheduled for the evening.

Having played the Fevers previously, we knew that despite their old age (they make Tooley look like a school boy) the game would not be a walk through the park. They like to use their experience to their advantage and are solid with their set pieces. This day was no different and the Fevers put us to task when it came to scrums and lineouts. Not to make excuses, but it did not help when many in the Cru pack were playing out of position. Where we lacked in the set pieces, the backs came to save the day with several runs of end-to-end action from the trio of speedsters: Dominique (1st try of the day in the opening minute of the game + 2 more on the day), Pierre (also a hat trick), and Brett (completely broke a few defender's ankles for 2 tries and Man-of-the-match). Also, a try a piece from forwards Seth and Brendan for a final score of 50 – 15.

A few other notable events from the game as follows:

Gareth Lim getting on out in the wing in the second third and nearly had his first try, but bungled it as the ball must have bounced awkwardly off of one his many body armor pieces as he tried to ground the ball.

Matt Callaway and his father Clive stepping out on the pitch together – second Father/Son combo to play for the Cru this year. Matt did a great job at scrum half (Evan'd better watch his back!) and a very noticeable lack of the C-bomb being dropped for a change.

With a good win under our belt, off to Hamamatsucho we went for a Booze Cruise and shenanigans for Trav's stag. A lot of beers were consumed. Thanks to great organization by Derek and Gen, we were able to come away relatively unscathed and managed to offend only a few civilians, along with a booming rendition of "You've lost that lovin' feeling,...." to two passing ladies just after disembarking. I think Frank managed to keep his clothes on as well for a change!

Tokyo Crusaders RFC – GodDamns RFC

26 – 22

By Frank Saffery

What a nice afternoon for a jaunt out to the arse-end of nowhere to listen to the sweet humming of remote-control cars.

But, the Cru turned up looking fresh, with the exception of Mr Kerr who turned up after a Roppongi session looking bedraggled.

After some faffing getting a taxi or two, we sprang into action warming up and running lines and getting our lineout sorted.

With the herculean lifts of Brendan and Jason powering Frank to such a height the local air traffic authorities were past warning, things looked good.

The game kicked off to an unfortunate fumble, and consequently for the next twenty minutes we were on the back foot. However, the team pulled together and looked more like the All Blacks (under 12's) in defence. Some dubious calls from the Ref (the poor bloke was on his second of back to back games) meant we had to pick up our discipline and stop getting too wound up when things didn't go quite as we thought they would.

For the next twenty minuets, the score went to and fro with both teams punishing each other in their chosen area. The Crusaders clattering the ball up, and the Oppo doing what the Japanese teams do best and sprinting in every direction with super glue on their hands. Dom did have chance to show us his impressive bursting speed with a quality try. (Carlin Isles watch your back!)

After a half time pep talk, things started well with a gloriously set up try the first minute into the second half with Philippe going over after the forwards opened a gap like the parting of the red sea. The ever rock-steady boot of Evan slotting the conversion, keep an eye out for his new TV show starting next month – “The C Word”.

Even after Dom ran faster than the wind the whole length of the pitch followed by a plodding Evan and Frank, it still wasn't enough to stop a mistake and subsequent break away costing the Cru a try. However in reply to this, Pierre

stepped up and decided to show us that his ballet lessons are paying off with an awesome run, twist, double tuck, shimmy and step to score a try in the corner. With another balls-up on behalf of the Cru letting in another silly try, Mr Skurr decided it was time to go beast mode.

After collecting half of the Oppo players on his back, he smashed up the middle for a storming try just next to the posts; did somebody tell him there were chicken wings there?

Finally, with the Ref forgetting the time and allowing an extra 5? minutes' of play, (nobody knows, don't ask) the opposition smashed up against the Cru defensive line again and again. A mixture of players clattering them backwards before finally a turnover was in sight. With 4 knackered forwards destroying the opposition rucking attempt the ball was ours, and Mr C word himself then planting the ball so far into the neighbouring bamboo forest even Rambo couldn't find it.

A mention to some subs that unfortunately didn't make the field that day : Jonas Hult, Marc Sherrat and Roy Surita.

Also one to our injured players who came for support : Sean Gibson, Tom Cocks, Eric Wilkinson and Pat “I like to wear a pink dead-lifting thong” Wheen.



Player Points
5: Dominique Adams
4: Pierre Sims
4: Paul Skurry
2: Steve Howden
1: Brendan Gallagher



Tokyo Crusaders RFC – Tokyo Gaijin RFC

10 – 13

By Sean Gibson

Beautiful blue skies and cool Autumn weather greeted the much-anticipated clash between the Tokyo Crusaders and Tokyo Gaijin on Sunday, October 26, 2014 at 14:00. Opening kickoff was neatly gathered by Frank, whose forward pack immediately provided solid support. It was a theme that was to recur all day, as the support and recycling was particularly good. Following that, the ball went through the hands of the backs quite smoothly without many handling errors, with forwards at the breakdown in numbers. Defense for both squads was impressive as well, with some great tackles by the likes of Frank, Dominique, Rob, Seth and many others (everyone, really). Play went back and forth in the early part of the game, but twenty-one minutes in, had the opposition wing on the outside and he was able to get down the sidelines for a try and a conversion. It would be their only one. The Cru came back on the restart hard and fast, improving on an already solid performance. Our only weak spot was the scrum, though Skurry and Philippe at 8 and 9 respectively – of course – made the most of what they had, Skurry with his trademark run off the back of the pack and Philippe digging the ball out and getting clean ball to Travis, who's 'greased up deaf guy' routine, while still good, wasn't quite itself against a team such as the Gaijin. A yellow card for not being 10 meters back on a penalty 31 minutes in caused us to play down a man, but we were able to hold them to a penalty kick at the last minute of the half. Score at halftime Cru 0, Gaijin 10.

Second half, the Cru came out as feisty as the first. Soon back to 15 players and with a few substitutions in the forward pack and one in the backs, new-comer Ian Miller scored his first try twenty minutes into the half. The conversion sailed wide, but we were given a bit of a bonus in the form of a yellow card to a Gaijin player for falling on the man after the try. Score now Cru 5, Gaijin 10. Unfortunately, the gap was narrowed shortly afterwards when a penalty gave the Gaijin another three points. Not to be outdone, the Cru came back hard and Ian Miller crossed the line to touch down just seven minutes later, taking the score to Cru 10, Gaijin 13, with minutes to play.

The Crusaders never gave up and battled down to inside the oppositions 22 with a real shot at the win. It was just not to be however, as the ball was turned over and kicked into touch with no time left on the clock.

All in all, it was an incredibly gutsy performance that, despite the result, the players and supporters should be proud of. And the team spirit showed in the pub by 33 players and fans proved that they were. Special thanks should go to RJ Surita, Koki Yamana and Clive Callaway – those guys suited up but didn't get any game time. They're all deserving players, so will get a full game on November 2. Also, to Sean Gibson, James Payne, Gareth Lim and Cristina Barrao for coming out to support, and Aiko W. for her medical assistance and photography. Another mention to Rick van der Wees, who was visiting Tokyo from The Bassets RFC in Holland and chose to spend his Sunday afternoon watching our match and having some beers with us. Rick, come back any time.

Lastly, I think it was agreed by all that the referee (Adachi-san) was quite capable and competent. The penalty count seems to suggest so, with 11 for us and 13 against us. Not to mention the rather cool and 'funky' hairstyle.

Our man of the match (5 points) went to Dominique Adams. Some strong runs and great tackles all day. Well done, Dom. This seems to be something of a trend.

4 points went to Rob Galbraith, who was as scrappy as ever – some great tackles, disruptions and pilfers.

3 points went to Philippe Buzon at halfback. As previously mentioned, made the most out of a few shaky scrums and got quick clean ball to the backs every time.

2 points to Ian Miller. 2 tries on debut and that in only half a game after a four year hiatus. Thank you Ian and welcome to the club.

1 point to Travis Dixon Kato, newly married. Travis was his usual self – all over the park, making breaks, making tackles, doing everything that needs to be done. Yet another solid performance at number 10.



Player Points
5: Dominique Adams
4: Rob Galbraith
3: Philippe Buzon
2: Ian Miller
1: Travis Dixon

Tokyo Crusaders RFC – Acorn RFC

78 – 14

By James Payne

‘Wonder if it’s possible for an earlier kick off a little further away next week? I was thinking... Sendai at 7am?’

Frank ‘the Tank’ Saffery’s diplomatic team-wide email sent at 7:15am on Match Day.

To say the trek to the ground took a long time is an understatement, but boy, was it worth it.

A very large Crusaders team descended upon the magnificent Victory Ground at Soka University early Sunday morning looking forward to a good game of rugby. They were not disappointed. It was almost like summer had returned, with the sun shining and smatterings of local wild life in attendance. There to greet the men from the Cru was a determined and skillful group of gentlemen from Acorn RFC. Whilst the game was marked on the calendar as a friendly, the pre-match emails from Cru team manager/sometimes player Stewart Henwood warned that this was not a team to be taken lightly. How right he was...

Right from kickoff it was clear that Acorn had skills and guts to take the ball and run hard. However, a level head by big Jason Gall (a trait he was to maintain all day) meant that possession went Cru’s way and they were off. After some good recycling by the forwards (something they should be proud of – the boys had a great game in this regard), and some short pop-pass runs, the backs were able to get some quality ball from half-back RJ Surita and work their moves. The first try came through a strong run by Van Allen through the line at the 4 minute mark, which would be his first of two for the day. The next try took a bit more time – the new(ish) American recruit Pierre Sims showed the boys what a bit of time spent in the gym verses the pub can do, and crossed over after 15 minutes, in a fine display of athleticism. Despite some quality turn-overs won by Acorn, and some excellent play by their No. 8, and Wing, Cru kept a level head and got Van across the line for his second. Given some early mis-fires from the tee by Captain Travis Dixon (sorry ladies, he is now officially off the market), Van stepped up and kicked the first conversion of the match.

Following a quick try by Pierre, a sense of apathy took hold and the Cru took its foot off the gas. For this, Acorn punished them. They scored two excellent tries – the first was created by a burst through the Cru backs which was finished off by new Crusader Matt Gladue, who had volunteered to play on the Acorn wing. Fair play to the man, it was a great try, which was created by some solid set play and speed in the Acorn centre. With the try count 4-2 to the Crusaders, this easily could have been a point where Acorn wrestled back control of the game. Their scums were solid (not helped by number 8 Paul Skurr continually lifting his head looking for a solo try opportunity), and they were quick across the paddock. However (O’) Captain (my Captain) Travis Dixon, successfully rallied the troops, and got the lads to lift their heads and commit to their tackles. This was displayed quickly by full-back Callaway whose try-saving tackle would have made Superman hang his head in shame. Leading by example (he was excellent all day and would be rewarded with man of the match), Dixon scored a try in the

dying minutes of the half and successfully converted to bring the score at the whistle to 31-14.

The second half saw wholesale substitutions to enable all the huge 23 man Cru contingent to get a run. This included surprise inclusion Clarence Lukes, a veteran rugby player who apparently (from reliable sources), flies airplanes for the US Air Force. This is bound to come in useful for future games given Stew Henwood’s propensity to agree to games played on grounds 4 hours from Toyko. Moving on, another key substitution was Vice-Captain Tom Cocks who along with Seth Robson re-asserted leadership in the forward pack, resulting in more consistent scrums and breakdowns. However, the second half belonged to the backs, with substitute half-back Philippe Buzon getting fantastic ball out, resulting in a flurry of tries. Word on the street is that in his native tongue, Frenchman Buzon has a tendency to display colourful language during heated moments on the field (a common theme with Cru half-backs), but contrary to this, he played like a gentleman. The first try of the half went to T Dixon, followed by another two to Pierre and then a hat trick to Clarence Lukes. By this stage, the game was all but secured for the Cru. Acorn did not let this deter them and they dug deep to contest every breakdown. In the end it was not enough. Special mention should also be made of Paul Skurr who, after continually taking the back’s ball to show off his individual brilliance, finally crossed in with 17 minutes to go. He dominated the game all day and was determined for his moment of glory. Well, he got it – great stuff.

The final score was 78 – 14 to the Tokyo Crusaders. However the score line does not do the Acorn boys justice – they fought hard and consistently, were constantly in the faces of their bigger opponents, and should be commended for their guts and determination. Special mention and thanks should go to the referee Nagata-san who calmly oversaw a good clean game of flowing rugby, with the penalty count 6 for Cru, 9 against. There were no yellow cards.

The Cru man of the match as voted by Acorns was deservedly won by Travis Dixon. The Acorns men of the match were Susumu Ino and Fumihiko Oda. Clarence Lukes was voted best on the ground by his Cru team mates. Well done.

Post-match, the Cru members were especially happy for the hot showers. In true university spirit, Pierre was sighted practicing his robotic dance moves with the college hip-hop club. Rumour has it the Dean of Soka University is considering offering him a scholarship off the back of the dance display, along with his skills on the rugby field. We have our fingers crossed for the man who we understand wants to obtain a degree in home economics. Good luck mate.

Drinks were held at Tengue Izakaya near Hachioji Station, which gave the boys the chance to unwind and relax after a hard day.

In short, it was a fantastic day against valiant opponents, and the Crusaders players were happy to come away with the win. Thank you to Acorn RFC for the match, and we hope for a re-match soon.

Special player mentions

Firstly, to the new guys who came out to play. Thanks to Hiroki Tsuboi, Clarence Lukes and Greg Bolivar who came out for their first run. As mentioned, Clarence scored a very tidy hat trick for the Cru, and Tsuboi and Bolivar made themselves very handy on the wing. We look forward to further games with you. Special thanks to Matt Gladue, who, as previously mentioned, sacrificed his first game for the Cru to play for the opposition.

Next, to Matt Gladue’s son Easton and Clive Callaway’s son Matt who turned up were unable to get a run. Unfortunately the large turn-out by the Cru players meant they could not get on. Nonetheless, thank you for coming out lads, and we appreciate the commitment.

Best Call

Call of the day went to new father Paul Ralph which was made deep in the second half. Evan Kerr, who has astounded all with his hat trick of attendances this year, arrived with one of the strongest porn star ‘pool-cleaner’ moustaches this writer has ever seen (and this writer has done his homework in that regard).

Stewart Henwood could not help himself, and near the end of the 2nd half announced from the sideline:

‘Evan, what is with that moustache! You look like someone out of the 1970s!’

To which Paul interjected:

‘That’s funny Tooley, you’re the only person here who remembers the 1970s.’

Correct.

Worst Call

Goes to rested Australian International scrum half Evan Hitchman, who suggested that the writer back the Japanese horse Admire Rakti in the upcoming 2014 Melbourne Cup. Unfortunately for all involved (most notably Admire Rakti), not only did the poor horse lose the race, it died before the race even began. Talk about the kiss of death!

And finally...

And finally, a mention for No. 8 Paul Skurr.

Skurry has been playing for the Cru for 8 or 9 years now, and has been a decisive figure both on and off the field. He is leaving Japan to move to Hong Kong (one doubts it is for the purpose of joining the ongoing democratic protests). This writer for one has always enjoyed his company and willingness to openly discuss his net worth and bonus pool whilst simultaneously banging the drum at Geronimo’s for the 3rd time that night. Whilst he has promised to make an appearance now and again as an Old Boy, he will be missed as a regular Cru player. As a tribute, a few of his Crusaders team-mates have offered the following kind words:

(To be sung to the tune of ‘Flying Without Wings’ by West Life)

*Everybody’s looking for that something
One thing that makes it all complete
You’ll find it in the strangest places
Places you never knew it could be*

*He found it in a bar in Koiwa
All drenched in mayonnaise
Who can deny the joy it brings
When he’s found that special thing
When Skurry’s eating chicken wings*

“Paul Skurr: Japanese interpreter, gourmet, fly half...is there no beginning to his talents?”

“Skurry runs like a cartoon barrel with legs.”

“Get back in your laboratory, Dexter.”

And this writer’s personal favourite:

“Yeah, I’m going to pass on this...”

We have also included for the benefit of all a nice picture of Paul. And it is a wonder people are still surprised he got married. Best of luck in Hong Kong big guy!



Player Points

- 5: Clarence Lukes
- 4: Pierree Sims
- 3: Paul Skurr
- 2: Travis Dixon
- 1: Jason Gall

Tokyo Crusaders RFC – Olivers RFC

50 – 21

By Rob Galbraith

It was a Sunday and the sun was shining – this was the usual pre-text to a Crusaders Shuto League game of late and the 9th of November was no different. The Cru had suffered an agonizing defeat the previous week to the Tokyo Gaijin and in doing so, all but surrendered the Shuto League crown, and the question was... how would the Cru react and how hungry were they to claim second spot in the league?

Things didn't start too well, although some exemplary leadership by Ev Kerr (maybe it's the 'tache that gives him that extra sense of authority) meant we were able to navigate our way into the "stadium" (by climbing over the perimeter fence). The lay-out of the stadium didn't make for a productive warm up- I for one have never conducted a rugby warm up between a discuss circle and a javelin runway- there's a first time for everything! The rather limited space for the warm up left the Cru rather half-baked and Trav commented before half time that we would need to climb up a gear from being 50% conditioned before kick off to being fully committed to all aspects of the game.

Whether the team answered to the rallying call or whether the rather unusual warm-up conditions worked a treat, who knows, but the Cru were three tries to the good within the first 10 minutes. A try each through some trademark wing-play from Pierre and Dom was followed by a break by Trav who passed the ball onto Rob G who then flung it out to Seth in support to finish off a great team move. Olivers RFC were certainly stunned by the electric start but managed to find their way into the game with a try five minutes from half-time giving the Cru a slender 10 point lead at the break.

The second half started in many ways like the first, with a Cru try within 3 minutes. Pierre again showed some great foot-work and a dazzling turn of pace to touch down and Evan duly converted. Olivers briefly scored again to narrow the gap back to 10 but then came a period of Cru domination with three converted tries within the space of 5 minutes. A try a piece by Dom and Pierre to give them each a hat-trick and one by Clive who cut a neat line before touching down under the posts- his first try for the Cru. Olivers were rather gifted a try in the final minute when they took a quick penalty to scythe through an exposed Cru defence. The final score read Tokyo Crusaders 50

Olivers 21.

The game was refereed by Adachi-san who had refereed a few of Cru's Shuto League games and although we had grown accustomed to his strict refereeing (especially at the breakdown) we still conceded 15 penalties versus winning 9. This is certainly an area for improvement for the Cru and I include myself in saying that we need to learn to play to the referee better in terms of knowing which areas he is extremely strict on (whether rightly or wrongly in our opinion) and which areas he doesn't referee so strictly. That said, our attitude towards, and relationships with referees have certainly improved during the season!

Special mentions

A special note of thanks to all the supporters and club staff that turn out week in week out – without you the Cru would certainly not be anywhere near the club that it is. Tooley who pulls the strings from the sidelines; Aiko who takes care of the wounded, takes photos and generally cracks the whip when necessary; thank you to Clive's son, Matt, for running the line and thank you to the wives and girlfriends including Cristina who always provide much needed vocal support from the touch line. We were also fortunate to welcome a special guest, Christian Castro, who was over from Geneva and joined the supporters on the touchline as well as attending the after match function which took place at the Park Hill Restaurant near the stadium. A final note of welcome to Chris Cornute who played his first game for the Cru- an absolute giant of a figure and terrific asset to the team going forward, we hope to see you on a regular basis!

3,2,1s

With all eight tries being scored by the backs and a hat-trick for Pierre and Dom respectively it was a well-deserved 5 points to Dom and 4 points to Pierre; 3 points went to Frank who put in a try-saving tackle and was as busy as ever clearing out rucks and winning lineouts; 2 points went to Rob G and 1 point went to Cocks and Matt Sparrow both who had sterling games- some great steals and breaks from the former and some great lines and breaks from the latter.

Player Points
5: Dominique Adams
4: Pierre Sims
3: Frank Saffery
2: Rob Galbraith
1: Tom Cocks

Tokyo Crusaders RFC – Koryo RFC

19 – 39

By Paul Ralph

In the late autumn sun, to the incessant whine of the radio control car track near by, team manager Tooley, twenty six able-bodied players, a few injured players (including a coffee and vodka swilling Travis), and a few WAGs (including Derek), gathered beside a rugby field in Saitama for the last game of the 2014 Shuto League season.

After dropping two games earlier in the season, retaining the champions tag for a second year was out of grasp. However, securing second place on the table remained the goal. Between the Cru and second place stood Koryo RFC. Koryo, new to the Shuto league this season, were a club that had been in decline over recent years, having previously competed as high as the East Japan Division. But Koryo still retained a wealth of experience, game knowledge and skill, and prior to the game were sitting second on the table, the position the Cru were keen to take from them.

Tooley had spent the night prior with his abacus, calculating permutations of the points table, points for-and-against, and the best value nomihodai bars in northern Tokyo. The abacus beads told Tooley that the Cru needed to score four tries (to gain the bonus point), win by over 7 points, and drink in Ikebukuro.

While the Crusaders had a wealth of players (and unfortunately not all were able to take the field), Koryo were short on numbers, and had to recruit players from the game played beforehand to make up a full 15. Despite having a cobbled-together team, it was evident from the kick off that Koryo were fast and skilful in both backs and forwards. The Koryo backs possessed a slick, fast passing game, and were keen to give the ball space at any opportunity. Their forwards meanwhile were masters of the breakdown, and were prolific at stealing Crusader ruck ball. Koryo utilised these traits, turning the ball over in a ruck and quickly spinning it wide, to score the first try of the game.

The big Cru forwards were making ground however, when, near the Koryo try line, the ref blew his whistle for a penalty. Halfback Hitchman then proceeded to lambast his forward pack's ruck technique in a supremely cunning deception. For as everyone, Cru and Koryo player alike, turned to listen intently to Evan's critique of the ruck situation, misleading everyone as to who's penalty it was, Adam "the mind works quicker than the legs" Briss took a quick tap, and drove over for a try from '105' metres out.

After a retaliatory try from Koryo, the Crusaders finally started to play to their thoughtfully devised game plan – give the ball to Dom. Possessing the athletic ability that makes gym teachers swoon, Dom was able to make massive yards on the wing, scoring the next two tries. At the end of a half that had been to and fro, the Crusaders were up 21 -14.

If you've ever wondered what would happen if an angry giraffe was ever touched with an electric cattle prod, Tom Cocks on the charge gives a fair representation. Few can stop him (except of course the smallest guy in the opposition team), and Cocks barged over 10 minutes into the second half to score the

Cru's desired fourth try.

Koryo, in typical Japanese tenacity, would not give in and scored the next two tries (both unconverted). With five minutes to play, only Evan Hitchman's perfect goal kicking performance was keeping the Crusaders in front. The seven point margin that was needed had however been eroded.

Cometh the hour, cometh the man, and with a minute left on the clock Van "the Bus" Allen carried the ball over the line in typically direct style. Evan kicked the extras, the ref blew full time, the score read 35 – 24 to the Crusaders, and Tooley hoped his calculations the night before were correct.

Koryo 2nd five eighth/inside centre/#12 Mr Myonsun Lee, who personified the speed and accuracy of the Koryo back play, was awarded opposition man-of-the-match by the Cru, while Koryo named Dominique Adams as their man-of-the-match.

Following the match, and adopting the Sean Gibson method of navigation (follow the cutest local girl you can find), the team trekked back to the station, raided every combi on the way for beer and fried chicken, and made for the after-match function at the Shoya Izakaya in Ikebukuro.



Player Points
5: Rob Galbraith
4: Dominique Adams
4: Tom Cocks
2: Roy McGrath
1: Evan Hitchman

Tokyo Crusaders RFC – YC & AC

21 – 61

By Gareth Lim

On a sunny November Sunday the CRU made the journey down to Yokohama for the annual MacFadyen Cup. This game is one of the biggest fixtures on our calendar to honor Gareth MacFadyen, a Kiwi who played for the CRU between 1996 and 2000, and was tragically killed in 2000. This year it was a beautiful Autumn day as both teams took to YCAC's artificial grass. There seems to always be a quiet tension between our teams, this year was no different. You could feel it in the pre-match warm-up as they stared across the grass at us, almost as if to say, "What have you got?". At least it was nice of Referee Steve Lewis, one of the few blokes still around in Tokyo to have known Gareth, to say a few words before the game kicked off after having observed the 1 minute's silence.

The mood was upbeat, with both camps looking forward to the whistle. The CRU had enjoyed a successful 25th season



building its squad and finishing a close 2nd in Division 1 of the Shuto League. Similarly, YCAC, a team not to take the Mac Cup lightly, and who are already competitive in Japan East, had brought in some top-level players from PSI and the Japan Sevens national team to bolster their side.

The CRU welcomed back some of its lost sons for the day. Good to see Paul (big unit) Skurr and family again. He had spent a whole week in HK and now decided it was time for him to rejoin us for this game of rugby. Luke (all is forgiven) Bradley, swapped sides and played for us against his new team. There was a respectful minute's silence for Gareth MacFadyen and the game was underway. It also turned out to be a Mac Cup debut day for many of our lads.

Once again the CRU started strong enjoying most of the possession in the opening 20, with Skurry opening the CRU account with a good solo effort on 22 minutes, followed by an opportunist try on the 28-minute mark. YCAC equaled the score for 14-14 at half time. Pat (Mr. Invincible) Wheen, in shorts that looked painfully tight, led the charge up the field and stole valuable yards.

With the mood in the CRU camp strong at half time the CRU capitalized on some weak defending when in a split-

second a gap in the corner opened up and we capitalized, making a chip and chase solo effort from Rob (twinkle toes) Galbraith which saw the CRU take the lead after nine minutes from kick off.

With a shell-shocked and rather agitated YCAC now behind, how would the CRU respond? With the star player Jamie Henry sin-binned, could the CRU hold on? The CRU were fighting well, this early period saw Dom in fine form and Jamie Henry was growing agitated on the sidelines, counting down the clock to get on. He sought to make amends. With ball in hand he would lead the attack, running around, through and pushing the CRU back in a man of the match, solo effort seeing YCAC score seven consecutive tries in the second half. Alas it was not to be a CRU win this year, and we all adjourned to the bar and thought of what might have been, despite some brave CRU defending from all our back line, matching the physicality of the YCAC boys on most hits. Special mention to Dom Pierre and Clarence putting in some well-timed tackles. It was again Jamie Henry, their star player, who proved to be the difference between the two sides. On a positive note, our backs will grow knowing that that they have tested their skills against one of the best.



Player Points
5: Pat Wheen
4: Rob Galbraith
3: Tom Cocks
3: Dominique Adams
1: Paul Skurr

Tokyo Crusaders RFC – Shuto League Trials Team

31 – 24

By Alex Howard

Last week's electric buzz had come from the grown men playing with children's toys behind the pitch at Akigase; this week it came from grown men waiting outside Yanokuchi station wondering what sort of state Travis would be in. We knew he'd been out the night before celebrating Christmas in Shinjuku, so you could almost taste the tension as all eyes were fixed on the station entrance. Fortunately the Shuto Trial match had clearly brought the best (that could be expected) out of the skipper, and this week he wasn't topping off the previous night's efforts with liqueur and caffeine. With that excitement out of the way, thoughts turned to what was on the sporting agenda for today – it was clear, almost immediately, that we would be playing some form of rugby, but wildly differing ideas about what format the Trial match would take were floating around. Clearly Tooley had been playing mind games to rival Alex Ferguson in order to ensure a strong Cru turn out...



While the 17 Crusaders players debated the game format, the Shuto selectors had clearly sized us up and realised their trial team would only be able to cope with two 20 minute quarters of Cru power, before playing Tokyo Gaijin RFC for a further two quarters. We can only assume they didn't feel the need for fresh legs against the Gaijin, but either way, we now knew how long we had to impress the selectors and live up to expectations of us as the reigning champions of the Shuto league. Injured stars Seth Robson and Roy McGrath had clearly felt that a

Player Points
5: Rob Galbraith
4: Macer 'Van' Allen
3: Steve Howden
2: Dominique Adams
1: Alex Howard

Cru performance was in the offing and were on the sidelines to witness it first-hand. Evan Hitchman was also dragged away from recovery time after the AFL grand final with the

promise of a clipboard and being allowed to scream as much as he liked. With Aiko on the side of the pitch as well, we lined up for the kick-off knowing we had great support and were going to give the Shuto trial team hell for our allotted 40 minutes.

Much of the talk before kick-off was about teamwork and supporting the ball carrier, so it was no surprise when, after cleanly gathering the kick off, the Cru simply marched down the field with a 3 minute drive that finished with Dom going over for a comfortable try. We were 5-0 up before the other team had touched the ball, but this was a strong team we were playing against, though, with pace to burn in midfield. As they began to find their rhythm, our backline, with Matt Sparrow to the fore, were having to put in some shuddering hits to slow the momentum down. After the rep team had scored a converted try, Alex and Rob responded with converted tries of our own – gravity playing an enormous part in the former's score...

As the first quarter/half wore on, it was clear that the Cru were controlling the breakdown well, with the back-row everywhere in support, running great lines and ensuring quick ball for RJ to release the express-pace outside. Steve, Rei and Rob, take a bow! Dom finished off another sweeping possession to score his second try of the game just before half-time – ensuring the Cru went into the huddle leading 24-12.

At half-time, the deck was shuffled somewhat but there was no let up from the sideline manager, as Evan introduced the man-mountain that is Chris Cornute. Pierre came onto the wing where, despite a hamstring injury, he was still able to make everyone else look like they were running through puddles. That said, the nimblest set of feet on show during the second half was clearly during a dummy-and-break from the back of the ruck by one of the forwards – Alex showing the kind of gas that you very seldom see on a rugby field these days! Moments of skill like that were plentiful during the second half, and the trials team were also picking up the

pace a bit, contributing to a more even 20 minutes; two tries by the opposition and a typical "Beast Mode" effort from Van in response was the tale of the half. At the final whistle, the Cru could celebrate a 31-24 victory and a strong showing against the best of the rest from the Shuto League. The odd wobble/ridiculously high tackle aside this was a performance to be proud of, and the fact we won the penalty count 7-5 is testament to a controlled performance (as well as great reffing from Sideshow Bob's Japanese cousin Adachi-san).

Despite the game only being 40 minutes in length, the 6 Cru players who were trying out for the Rep team were all able to demonstrate to the selectors that they deserved to move on to the following round of trials—Rob Galbraith, Travis Dixon, Macer Allen, Pierre Sims, Alex Howard and Dominique Adams will all be back at Yanokuchi next week to represent the Cru.

Tokyo Crusaders RFC – Setagaya RFC

38 – 17

By James Payne

They say that a wise man once built his house upon the rock. I would like to go one better, and say that an even wiser man has built his shanty on the river next to the Edogawa rugby ground. This is because that man (whoever he is, I am confident he is not a frequent reader of these match reports) had front row seats to see the Tokyo Crusaders play their final game for 2014.

Leading up to this friendly fixture, there was some nervous chatter centered on the drain of some key playmakers for the New Zealand Ambassador's Cup scheduled the same day. Fortunately, these concerns were allayed, when a solid contingent of 21 Crusaders players arrived ready, willing and able at the ground. This is a testament to the depth that has been cultivated at the club. It was heartening to see a number of old faces which many of us had thought we had lost some time ago, whether it be to their home countries, naval skirmishes in the South China Sea, or venereal disease. Two such gentlemen (who could easily have been lost to any of the above) were big Brandon 'is that another tattoo?' Fought and Brandon 'Ricky' Rogers. It was great to have them back.

The opponent was Setagaya RFC. These boys looked hungry for the win, and were keen to spoil what has been in many respects a good first half of the season for the Cru.

The first half started well despite Cru losing the toss and kicking off against the (gale force typhoon) wind. However, a

quick turnover saw the ball secured by the men in turquoise, with hot shot American Ian Miller crossing over 3 minutes from kick off. The man has flair, and was not afraid to show it off to the appreciative, albeit smallish, crowd. Miller was able to get over again in the 12th minute, assisted by some creative play in the centres. The lads kept it together in the scrums, with some solid hooking from Yusei Shmoda anchored by Fought and Ryuji Matsuzawa as props.

The halfback Roy Surita scored a try two minutes later and with Rogers' second conversion (2 from 3 at that point) the Cru had developed a nice lead. Steve Howden at second five would score next, but it would take a few minutes of attack against a Setagaya defence which was developing momentum. This momentum, accompanied by some silly penalties given away from the Cru, saw Setagaya score their first try 29 minutes from kick off. This came as a bit of a disappointment to the Cru, as at that point the game had been in their favour. The frustration manifested itself in a few more penalties against Cru, with this writer being at the receiving end of a yellow card for not rolling away.

Now not to sound sour about it, but you should know that the person whom this writer was accused of not rolling away from was Gen Hirano, who was kind enough to be playing opposing hooker for Setagaya, so the desire to roll away was in actual fact palpable. Unfortunately, the referee did not see it that way.



Nonetheless, even with one player down, Miller was able with the support of some excellent work from Matt 'Captain Jack' Sparrow and Howden on his inside to get his hat-trick in the dying minutes of the second half.

The half-time score was 38 – 7. This was a healthy lead, however some of the boys were frustrated with the number of penalties being handed out, which, right or wrong, had diminished their effectiveness on the field. Following some substitutions, the boys took to the field again still one man down.

Straight from the whistle, the second half presented additional challenges for Cru. The penalty count was high (both for and against), and Setagaya took advantage of their, on average, better fitness to maintain possession and run over two tries in the half. These came at the 42nd and 60th minute marks. Between these two tries, the Cru were down another man when Rogers delivered an overly enthusiastic tackle and was sent to the bin for 10 minutes. According to his version of events, the opposing player had been a bit 'touchy feely' during a few earlier tackles: an accusation which having seen the man in action I can conclude is probably correct.

Setagaya threw everything they had at the Cru. However, despite the two tries and the penalties, we were able to withstand the attack. A factor contributing to this was the good talk on the field, especially by Sparrow who hadn't looked that angry since he was liberated of his pocket money during his first weekend out in Roppongi. Also the lock combination of Chris Cornute and visiting Englishman James Shaw meant that the lineout generally fell in Cru's favour. Cornute's high jump skills came in handy when he was able to steal the ball during opposition lineouts. And good defence from all players, including some excellent tackles on the wings by Clive Callaway and Sho Nakashima meant the score stayed low.



A final try by newcomer Sho Nakashima on debut brought the final score to 38 -17. It was a bit of a Forrest Gump 'STOP!' moment for the young fella, who as we understand was playing his first game of rugby ever and had to be directed as to when to place the ball. Good stuff.

The referee for the match was Kanetsuka san, who oversaw a penalty count of 6 for Cru, and 15 against.

Special mention must go to Ian Miller for his hat-trick. Also to Gen, Brandon and Domingo Rodriguez who played for the

opposition.

The MVP as voted by the Cru for Setagaya was Nakajima san. For Setagaya, their vote went to big Chris Cornute, who played a gutsy and spirited game, despite turning up in basketball shorts. That turned out to be the only option available, as the guy has legs the size of 44 gallon drums.

The 321s were 5 points to Miller, 4 points to Sparrow, 3 points to Galdric 'come on mate, you much prefer playing with us than those YCAC chumps' Porta, 2 points to James Payne (surely a technical error) and 1 point to Cornute.

The man with the clipboard was Evan Hitchman, who asserted himself early as a sideline manager not to be trifled with. Sean Gibson was present to provide moral support to the Cru, and was able to call upon his wealth of experience in matters such as overcoming stiff opposition, effective ball penetration, and knowing how to pound through the gaps. His presence, if 'only to watch', was appreciated.

The after-match function was held at everybody's favourite standing bar near Koiwa station, where the beer and crinkle cut chips (sorry Travis) were consumed with reckless abandon. No torn shirts this time though, which was nice.

The MVP as voted by the Cru for Setagaya was their No. 10, Nakajima san.

So all in all, a good game which ended in a victory for the Crusaders. But, well done to Setagaya who played a tough game and never gave up.

On a personal note, this will be this writers last game for the Cru as he is off to the UK. I was lucky enough to be made Captain for the game, and really appreciated the gesture (despite my knowledge of the rules being shaky at best). It has been a great year with the Cru, and I encourage anyone new to Japan to consider giving the boys a call to have a run. You will not regret it.

Player Points

- 5: Ian Miller
- 4: Matt Sparrow
- 3: Galdric Porta
- 2: James Payne
- 1: Chris Cornute

Tokyo Crusaders RFC – All France RFC Training

By Stewart Henwood

A clear blue sky, but a chill wind, as both teams kitted up out at the Edogawa Rugbyjo ground. It was supposed to have been a game of 15s, but due to a lack of numbers to make a 15s game competitive, it was turned into a joint training session with a game of 10s to follow. This was rather fortunate, as the rain from a few days before had waterlogged the pitch and unbeknown to all on the day, the keepers had decided to prohibit us from using the ground. No worries; we talked them into letting us use the area beside it, which, incidentally, had more grass than mud, which was the exact opposite of the rugby pitch!



Training went well, with Travis, taking the warmups, followed by Galdric taking some ball-passing exercises. We then split into backs and forwards and focused on the respective areas of training. The forwards called over the ref, who was trying to keep warm by running around the paddock, and he kept an eye on the legality of the Scrums and Lineouts. It was a

useful training as each team had an 'opposition' to train against.

After a short break on the hour, the teams threw on their playing jerseys and we kicked off with 3 x 10 minute 'halves' of 10s.

It wasn't really the situation where you'd keep score, but I did, and we ran in 10 tries to 1. Although, this is a little unfair to All France RFC as we had the numbers to make several changes, and they didn't. But to their credit, when asked if they wanted a 3rd half, the opposition replied with a resounding "Yes, please."

Several players made their 'debut' for the Cru; the list being Josh DeWalt, Tim McPeak, Tsuyoshi Saimyo, and Dwayne Dortch. Welcome fellas, and I hope you enjoy your time with the CRU, especially the long list of 15s matches we have coming up.

Just as we were finishing up around 2pm, the 2 teams who were booked to play after us, politely asked us if they could use the field that we had marked out beside the pitch because they, too, had turned up not knowing the the rugby pitch was unavailable.

All's well that ends well, and at the end of the day, I think it turned out to be a rather fruitful exercise. Better than a cancellation, I must say. As has been the recent Cru custom, we all retired to the 'Chinese Chippy Bar' for beers, chips and fried chicken, where we happened to meet a young lass having a quiet beer on her own (we soon put paid to that), who expressed an interest in the team and promised to come out to future games. Another assistant manager in the making?... who knows. Anyway, welcome a board Megumi.



Tokyo Crusaders RFC – Ichikawa Rush RFC

0 – 30

By Sean Gibson

Sunday, February 7 was a beautiful day in Ichikawa. Well, if you like cold, gray drizzle it was beautiful. But probably none of the 12 Crusaders who turned up that day were of that mindset. Yes, with a large chunk of the team away skiing, others foolishly scheduling their sex change operation consultation on Sunday, and a couple of others just hungover (I guess), twelve was all we could manage, including a last-minute phone call to Kosuke Yamamoto of All France RFC, who graciously came out to prop for us.

The opposition was flush with players (including a couple of former Top League players and a Waseda University player) and cheerfully loaned us three to make up the numbers. For some reason, though, they requested unopposed scrums. They also requested we not bother putting up the posts. No one seemed to mind. The game kicked off in typical Crusaders fashion. True, some guys are new to the game and don't yet know all the rules, but on this occasion it seemed people forgot you need to run towards the ball rather than away from it – Ichikawa Rush collected their own kickoff and touched down for a try shortly after. However, that little mishap would not go repeated for the rest of the day. Well, it couldn't really, as we would go on to be held scoreless and would therefore have no opportunity to field a restart. Ichikawa Rush were a gritty and determined opponent, absolutely fierce at the breakdown, being both quick and physical. Numerous turnovers at the breakdown (some forced, some just given away through lack of ball control) would be a huge factor in the Crusaders' scoreless outing).

At halftime the score was 20-0.

The second half, things improved somewhat, with the defense able to keep the opposition to just two tries. The penalty count was, amazingly, dead even with 9 for us and 9 against us. As the referee mentioned at the after-match, some of the inexperienced

players would do well to learn the rules a bit better. I imagine he was talking about offside and playing the ball on the ground. But despite the Kafkaesque atmosphere and our blank scoreline, our very first match against Ichikawa Rush was played within a friendly context and, I think, we came away with some good lessons for the next match.

Brandon Fought was, far and away, the man of the match, with numerous hit-ups and some big tackles. Jordan Dill, Dwayne Dortch, Matt Sparrow and Yusei Shimoda also deserve mention for their performances. Also meriting mention were our two new players – Thomas Harwood and Gordon Jones. Thomas is a student of 17 years old who put his youthful energy to good work, having a solid game and looking promising. Gordon is an aussie-rules convert. Despite it being his first game of rugby ever, he was a solid pair of hands at fullback and put in some good runs. Unfortunately, he took himself out of the game midway through the second half by trying to tackle someone with his face. The aftermath would have made a good poster for botox. In a bit of uncanny timing, Ricky arrived at that precise moment to take Gordon's place and with time enough to deliver one of his customary big hits.

After the post match (complete with Tooley's timeless T-shirt gag), we traveled one stop to our customary standing bar in Koiwa. Our favorite patron was there but this time the police were not involved. Looking forward to seeing you all at the next one.

Player Points

- 5: Brandon Fought
- 4: Jordan Dill
- 3: Dwayne Dortch
- 2: Matt Sparrow
- 1: Yusei Shimoda



Tokyo Crusaders RFC – KawagoeFighters RFC

50 – 0

By Tim McPeak

First things first, for a new player to the CRU, I have come to the undeniable conclusion that we only play on pitches with wind speeds over 100 knots. Passing was impossible, which suited the forwards just fine on this particular day. As if the wind wasn't bad enough, it also happened to be freezing.... again! Tooley and Tom were the sideline managers, and a few WAGs joined to watch.

The day got off to an unfortunate start, with Chris twisting his knee during warm-ups. 18 players came that day, and fortunately all were able to get significant playing time. Our opposition, Kawagoe Fighters, were not able to field a full 15 and pulled in additional players from the senior game that was played immediately preceding ours. Although the final score was not reflective of this fact, they were a skillful group that spent a good amount of time inside the CRU 22.



The first half started with the teams feeling each other out and also trying to gain feeling in their hands. Passes wandered around the pitch, but eventually the CRU figured out a simple yet effective game plan. As is usually the case, the CRU forwards towered above the opposition, and we leveraged that size advantage with Alex scoring 7 minutes in. A short 4 minutes after, Steve punctuated a nice run with the CRU's second try of the game. Galdric scored in the last minute of the half, but it wasn't the try that would earn him 5 points after the match, it was his tenacious hitting. On more than one occasion, but especially on one particular tackle in the first half, everyone was left wondering how anyone could survive such a hit. On this particular day, he looked like a man amongst boys.

Player Points

5: Galdric Porta
4: Roy McGrath
3: Brandon Rogers
2: Alex Howard
1: Josh DeWalt

The second half turned into the Brandon Rogers show. One can only speculate if he was just showing off for his girlfriend, or just trying to leave an indelible mark on the CRU as he nears the end of his time with the team. To start the half,

though, Quadzilla and CRU newcomer Josh DeWalt dragged a few Kawagoe players in for the first try of the half. 2 minutes later, Frank punched in another and the forwards again took the game into their hands. Alas, Brandon must have finally been able to thaw out his legs and scored 3 additional tries for the CRU bringing the score to 50-0.

Not to be outdone by a fellow back, Travis, with no prompting or invitation from Evan, kicked a beautiful ball from the sideline to end the game. Immediately, everyone grabbed their belongings and looked forward to getting into a taxi to get out of the cold. Of course, Tooley had other plans for the team on this day. So, we walked the 5km back the station, and were fortunate to stumble upon the Manshu Chinese Restaurant. As is typical, most patrons took one look at the group, immediately finished whatever it was they were eating or drinking, and departed hastily. We were joined by a few chaps from the opposition and proceeded to eat, drink, and actually behave. Opposition man-of-the-match was awarded to Mr. Ryutaro Oyama (#2). Their vote for CRU man-of-the-match was Brandon Rogers.



Tokyo Crusaders RFC – ChibaBarbarians RFC

12 – 24

By The Ghost Writer

It was supposed to rain, but thankfully it didn't. We knew we were going to be short, so we had organised three players from Koryo RFC to join us at Misato Ground. As has been a little too usual of late, we arrived at the meeting point desperate for people to arrive....

With a still-injured Sean Gibson arriving to be our 'touchy', Aiko as Safety Assistant, and Megumi coming back for her second game as sideline supporter, we were ready to go with 16 players by the kickoff, against a 'new' team, who nobody could remember the Cru having played before.

It was a bit of a tussle to begin with but, 17 minutes in, the opposition scored a converted try. We followed that up 3 minutes later with an unconverted try from Tsuyoshi, who was playing on the wing. However, all thoughts of running away with the game ended when, 2 minutes later, the opposition struck back with another try. For the next 10 minutes, both teams tried to add to their scores but were beaten by the half-time whistle. Score 5 - 12 to them.

The second half saw the ChibaBarbarians start to run away with it, scoring a try 9 minutes in and again on the 24 minute mark. Not having a bench to turn to was really taking its toll on an understrength Cru. However, a hallmark of all Cru games being "Never say die!", 'Johnny-on-the-spot' Tooley scored from a kick and chase by Myonjun (one of our friendly Koryo RFC ringers) and an opposition fumble over the line to make the final score a less embarrassing 12 - 24 to the opposition after Evan H had converted. According to all reports, it was Tooley's first try since coming out of retirement 2 and a half seasons ago!

Our vote for their MVP went to their No 12 - Mr Ishibashi, and theirs went to our No. 10 Travis Dixon.

The aftermatch function was held in the downstairs Ojisan bar near Matsudo Station with 15 present, including 2 WAGS, and 1 potential new assistant manager.

**Player Points**

5: Roy McGrath
4: Alex Howard
3: Travis Dixon
2: Alex Herrera
1: Myonjun Kin

Tokyo Crusaders RFC – TodaOverTheTop RFC

28 – 17

By Evan Hitchman

Tokyo Crusaders went on another early morning trek to the middle of nowhere, in the upper reaches of Saitama to face Toda Over The Top RFC – the current champions of the Saitama League. Knowing it would be a difficult game, it was great to see about 20 eager faces at the station for an early start, and we had a very strong line up on the day, including a few new faces and a few returning after long absences.

The game plan was simple as always; recycle our own ball, don't get turned over at the breakdown and **give it to Dom!**



After a scrappy first 15 minutes, we finally managed to get some clean, fast ball to the backs and Dom was released in open space, where he ran through half the Toda backline to score under the posts and put the Cru up 7-0 as the extra points were added. Another fantastic break by Pierre put the Cru in a great attacking position and, after forcing the mistake, a great break by returning veteran Roy Yorke led to Tsuyoshi scoring a fantastic try in the corner. Evan Hitchman was surprised when taking a sideline conversion that Travis Dixon didn't run in to steal his kick, and as the ball sailed through the posts the Cru were up 14-0. Toda were not making life easy for us though, and were very committed in the tackle and very solid in the scrum, where it seemed like they had 8 props! The grizzled veterans knew how to scrummage and, after losing Alex Howard after about 18 seconds (they were a great 18 seconds though!), we were left without any recognised locks – Evan Kerr doing a sterling job shifting into the tight 5 and Tsuyoshi Saimyo also outstanding in his shift to the back row. After multiple knock-ons and some sustained pressure from Toda, they managed to score off the back of the scrum and we went to the break 14-5 up. Matt Sparrow went down early doors with a knee injury and the Cru seemed to be dropping like flies, but luckily we had a

decent bench of 4-5.... and we needed every one of them with Dwayne, Thomas, DJ, new boy Neil Howard (as if we didn't have enough Howards with Alex and Andy already!) all making a positive impact in the second half.

Toda made a good start to the second half and scored down the right hand side after multiple penalties put the Cru on the back foot. Midway through the first half, Dom scored another great individual try to put us up 21-12 but, to their credit, Toda kept at it and after a few more confusing decisions from he who shall not be named – with a very interesting interpretation

of what the “gate” was, what “coming in straight into a ruck”, “offside lines” at the ruck and also policing the opposition forward pack from “Toda Always Over the Top” – we could only sustain the pressure for so long, and some gallant and aggressive defence finally gave way when Toda “scored” in the corner with the ball neatly placed on top of Alex Howard's hands!

The last 10 minutes saw Toda throw everything they could at the Cru defence, but it held firm, and a great kick from Neil “Why the bloody hell did you kick that fo..?!..... Great kick mate!” Howard saw us in good field position and locking up the game by going back to the simple

game plan ofgiving the ball to Dom. He duly delivered and scored a great try, beating 4 or 5 as we went on to win 28-17 in a really enjoyable game of rugby. A standard “Henwood for 25” Izakaya post-game function was held and we went home bruised and battered, but most important of all.....with our wallets and phones! Or should that be victorious?! No idea!

Special mentions to Takuto, returning after 3 years, who had a strong game, to Roy McGrath who was a beast in the pack, Galdric – who showed his true Cru spirit by turning up for the first half and then going straight to the airport to head overseas, and to Alex Howard for kindly stepping up to the plate and fulfilling Ev's quota of F's and C's for the week!

Player Points

5: Dominique Adams
4: Roy McGrath
3: Travis Dixon
2: Evan Kerr
1: Alex Herrera

Tokyo Crusaders RFC – Matsudo RFC

28 – 17

By Glen Taylor

“They wanted to play against the Crusaders, not just because we are physically big, but because we never give up till full time.”
- post-game comment from Captain Travis Dixon.

It was a beautiful, sunny early morning in Matsudo, Chiba. The Tokyo Crusaders had their third ‘annual friendly’ match against Matsudo RFC. Head to head is for the Cru (2-0) in previous meetings. Our opponent was very hungry for a win against us. By the time the Cru arrived at the venue around 9am, the opposition were just finishing their warm-up with 25-30 players on the field. And the Cru, on the other hand, barely had 16 players, because it's very difficult for some cru players to make it to a 9am meet-time from West Tokyo or Kanagawa.

The team was missing their try scoring duo of Pierre Sims and Dominique Adams as well as a few key players. A few players were ‘pushing themselves’ despite having injuries from previous games.



The first 20 minutes went in favor of the Cru. After we held out inside our own 22 meter line, Jordan Dill and Takuto Suzuki outsped the opposition to score, giving the Crusaders a 14-0 lead at the 15 minute mark.

Perhaps the Cru was luckily helped by the many knock-ons by Matsudo in the first 20 mins, but because the Cru were struggling to organize their defensive line with a different line-up than usual, Matsudo started to attack with confidence. They are well-drilled and good at securing the ball, and play well phase by phase. Matsudo scored 5 tries by the end of the 1st half. The half time score was 31-21 to Matsudo. I assume Matsudo thought that as long as they took up the ball strongly, they could break the Crusaders' defensive line. And it seemed that their confidence grew as they added 2 tries and 2 conversions by 5mins into the 2nd half (45-21 to Matsudo at 41mins).

Crusaders on that day had many reasons they could have excused a lackluster performance : only 16 players - missing many of our 1st-string players because of such an early game, 3 players started carrying injuries, and we lost another 3 players due to on-field injury, sin-bin, and having to leave early to attend a touch-judge course.

But the Cru didn't drop their game. Captain Travis stood up

and performed outstandingly in offense and defense. Takuto, Dill and Philippe followed and the Cru scored three tries in a row. With help from Neil Howard's precise conversion shots, it went into a 5-point game with 7 minutes to go. Despite Matsudo scoring the next two tries and finishing the game with score a 57-40 to them, all the 16 Cru players fought well to the end.

A special thanks to Amber Bair (Nate's gf) for helping out as water-girl and photographer.



Player Points

5: Travis Dixon
4: Takuto Suzuki
3: Jordan Dill
2: Frank Saffery
1: Kenji Sugawara

The MeatCup Match Report

By Travis Dixon

Recently the Tokyo Crusaders, in association with the Yokota Air Force Base, hosted the Second Annual Meat Cup, proudly sponsored by The Meat Guy (meatguy.co.jp). It was a cracking spring Saturday when the five teams turned up at the Yokota Gates. Unfortunately, despite the best-laid plans of Jason and Sgt. Tooley, there were a few hiccups and a number of players and support crew were denied entry.

Nevertheless, those that were allowed on the base made the most of it, and with a reduced competition of four teams, it made the competition even fiercer, as the Tokyo Crusaders, All France, George Washington and NTT Hibiya/Fuji competed for the coveted Meat Cup.

The first match between the Tokyo Crusaders and All France was a pretty one-sided affair from the get-go. The Crusaders caught the kick-off and scored from the opening phase. It was pretty one-way traffic for the rest of match, with the final score being 8 tries to none. Try scorers for the Cru were: (Dominique, Travis, Travis, Steven, Philippe, Van, Pierre, Ken)

The second match was between George Washington and NTT Hibiya/Fuji. Your faithful correspondent would love to be able to tell you what happened, but he was too busy organising the acquisition of more beer than you could shake a stick at from the local NEX, so he's got no idea. But the final score was a GW victory, 3-2, in what was I'm sure a closely-fought match.

Similar story for the next match, as All France made amends for their early loss against the Cru and came back to beat the GW 6 - 3.



Now, you'd think I'd remember this next game better as I played in it, but to be honest I don't remember a whole lot. In the spring sunshine, the beers were going down pretty quickly and Marc and Laura had the BBQ fired up with all sorts of excellent BBQ meats from the meat guy, so there were a few distractions in the way of the rugby. I do remember, though, that the Crusaders carried on their usual pattern of dominance with storming runs from Dom and Pierre (who both picked up a double in this game). It seems 10s is a pretty good format for these two to showcase their talents with ball in hand. Philippe and yours truly also picked up a try a piece to finish up 6 - 1.

Then there was a game between All France and NTT Hibiya/

Fuji, the former claiming the victory 5 - 3.

At this point I'd take a moment to commend the excellent referees for the day, Mr. Yoshioka and Mr. Lee. Both did a fantastic job and kept up with the fast running play all day. Arigato!

The next match-up was between the Cru and GW. This is always a great grudge match, as the GW have been a generous supplier of players to the Cru over the years and both clubs have established an excellent relationship, but come kick-off time, both sides are always out there trying to send a message. Fortunately for the Cru, we had more depth in the bench which means we had a bit more juice in the tank in the later fixtures. A good example of one of our impact players off the bench is Curtis, who played his second ever game for the Cru. The first, I hear, ended in an unfortunate knock to the head, so it was good to see him give it another go. Considering it was his second attempt at rugby, I'd say he did pretty well to bag a double in a convincing 8 - 0 victory for the Cru. (Tries to: Macer, Philippe, Alex, Jason, Dominique, Jeremy, Curtis x 2)

Moving onto the finals, the GW won the plate by a default, as the heavy knocks and all-day running took its toll on NTT Hibiya/Fuji and so they could not field a team for their final match of the day (or they were more tempted by the beers and BBQs, which is an equally excusable reason for a default).

The final was between Tokyo Crusaders and All France. One again, the backs ran rampant and scored plenty of tries, while the forwards did their job up front and put in some heavy hits and won good turnovers. Speaking of which, I'll take a moment to express my gratitude for having our own Gaul, Gauldric, on our side during this encounter. All day he put in some fierce hits and didn't spare any when he was playing against his fellow countrymen in the final. The end score for the final was 8 - 1, in favour of the Cru, who raised The Meat Cup at the final ceremony.

Crusaders Try Scorers were: Dominique 5, Pierre 4, Travis 3, Steven 3, Philippe 3, Alex 3, Macer 2, Curtis 2, Ken, Jason, Jeremy, Galdric, Koichi.

We wrapped up the day with the grand prize draw which raised a very healthy contribution to club coffers.

Huge thanks to all who purchased tickets, donated fantastic prizes and support the club with sponsorship:

- The Meat Guy
- SYNERGY Center
- Geronimo Shot Bar
- The Hangover
- TwinTips Ski/Snowboard school
- Two Dogs Taproom
- Club 360
- Propaganda
- Brian Joseph - Golf Instructor
- Johnny Oliveira - Kick Boxing Instructor

In all the day was a great success and will allow us to aim for even bigger and better things next time around.

Tokyo Crusaders vs Hurricanes RFC

7 - 15

By The Ghost Writer

A reasonable meeting time of 11:30 at the station saw most of the Cru arrive on time. The stragglers were met by Eric W and sent by taxi to the Sankei Misato ground asap. Tooley had arrived on his Papachari and had put up the team tent. We had organised our 23 players for the official team roster, and arranged to have the required 9 ?! sideline staff present by the official Prematch meeting time of 80 minutes before kickoff. Names were checked against the roster, gear was checked, including sprigs and fingernails. The 'rules' of the day were explained and the staff were told their duties. The first game of our 2015 Tokyo Cup campaign was upon us. and we were ready for it.

So were the Hurricanes....

We had come up to the 1st division with these guys last year and this was the first time to actually play them. Their forwards looked a bit bigger this time. Kickoff was scheduled for 13:40 and we had 40 minutes of 'arm wrestling'. Their forwards were big, strong, and mobile. They were quick on the ball at the breakdown and they also exhibited a few 'tricks' at the lineout. We tried, to no avail, to use our power and size in the forwards to try and take it up through the middle..... nothing worked. Losing No. 12, Neil H, after 20 minutes to a knee injury and No. 8, Roy M, at the 36-minute mark was also an unfortunate diversion from our game plan. The scores were 0 - 0 until 2 minutes into 1st half injury time, when the opposition ran in for the first points of the game. Half time score 0 - 5.

In the second half, the battle continued. Neither team was really taking control, although the Hurricanes were slowly chipping away at our defenses. We were trying to get the ball out wider to our speedy wings but the opposition were blocking that by targeting our centres. Their backs were very good at seeing how far they could push the 'offside line'. We saw them run in 2 more unconverted tries at the 45 and 37 minute marks. We had lost another player, Philippe, to injury with 15 mins to go. But the Cru never gives up and Dominique, bless him, finally got the ball and made some space for himself, running away to score our only try right on full time to save us from a downtrou. Travis converted, bringing the final score to 7 - 15.

The penalty count was 8 for us and 11 against. The general feeling after the match was that we had done our best but

were outplayed by a better team on the day. The Hurricanes RFC advance to the knockout stage and up the ladder, we stay in our group and face a relegation/promotion match. At the aftermatch, and still on good terms, both teams promised to have a friendly match next season.

Our vote for their MVP went to their No. 10, Mr Oikawa, and theirs went to our No. 7, Galdric Porta.

321s were Galdric Porta - 5 pts, Travis Dixon - 4 pts, Pat Wheen - 3 pts, Pierre Sims - 2 pts, Alex Herrera - 1 pt

The aftermatch function was held in the downstairs Ojisan bar near Matsudo Station with 13 present, including Neil M's 2 kids.



Player Points

5: Galdric Porta
4: Travis Dixon
3: Pat Wheen
2: Pierre Sims
1: Alex Herrera



Acorn 10s

By Stewart Henwood

By Saturday lunchtime, we had an awesome lineup of just 2 guys. Pulling the pin was not an option. The panicked e-mails went out and we managed to scrape together 11 guys, including a visitor from Italy. The weather was great; not too hot and not too cold.

In true Cru tradition, we arrived a little 'fashionably' late, but our 1st game was the 4th of the day, so no worries there. But, how about the table of dignitaries wearing ties and blazers? How about the teams fielding line-ups of 25 players or so? Oh dear, lucky we didn't cancel our attendance that morning, it would not have reflected well on the club.

We quickly got organised but started to worry about what we had got ourselves into. Young, fit, and fast players were everywhere.

We had 5 university Club teams : Takushoku U, Keio U, Soka U, Waseda U, and ICU. We were one of three Club teams : the Cru, Acorn RFC, and Kurumi RFC. The draw would be split according to winners and losers of the first 4 games. We did not want to go into the losers' group; we needed to win our first game against Acorn.

8 minute halves, with a 1 minute break. Our first game was tight, but we won 24 – 19 with 4 tries (2 converted) to Brandon, Van (2), and Steven. This game saw a welcome return to the pitch for Eric W, who had been out for a season with a now-healed shoulder injury. Our Italian friend, Andrea D was on the bench.

The losers' group played their semifinals, followed by the first winners' semi. And then it was our turn again. Could we play, nay, did we want to play another game (Final) after our semi..... Well, we were up against Keio. They looked sharp. In the morning they all turned up with ties and blazers, even their managers were wearing ties and blazers, albeit with skirts, which made them look.... well, very prim and proper (just my type. :) The general consensus of the team was to dump Tooley, and get stylish looking young university ladies as managers for next season.

It was great tussle, one I thought we could have won..... but we didn't. We lost 5 – 10, with our try coming from our rampaging centre, Van, who created probably one of the most memorable moments of the tournament by carrying a 'tackler' on his back for a dozen yards or so! The spectators also loved our powerful runs, and get-out-of-my-way hand-offs and fends that have become a very powerful weapon in our arsenal of late. Andrea made his debut for the Cru, coming on for the second half.

All in all, I think we made a good account of ourselves and seemed to impress everyone with our style of rugby and good clean play, except perhaps Travis, who got penalised for blatantly pushing a player out of his way in the contest for the ball. Travis's defense was "Well, he pushed me first!" Yes, Travis, but he was a little more discreet. It caused quite a laugh on the sidelines. :)

I reckon we actually could have won the tournament if we had had 3 or 4 more of our regular players.... Nevermind, there's

always next year. I hope we get invited back.

The aftermatch function was held on the 13th Fl. of a Soka University building. There was food and beer, and the requisite speeches. We certainly felt underdressed as everyone was in their No. 1s but us. We also found out that the day's dignitaries included the Vice President of the Japan Rugby Union, and the Chairman of the Top League ! Not to worry, we were still the last to leave and were handed a couple of 'travellers' for the train on the way out.

A great day, capped by Tooley and Trav being left alone by everyone to quietly get smashed in an Izakaya over the remainder of the evening.

321s went to : 5 points : Macer 'Van' Allen, 4: Galdric Porta, 3: Steve Howden, 2=: Travis Dixon and Rob Galbraith

The eventual winner of the tournament was Takushoku U, beating Keio U by 12 – 7



Tokyo Crusaders vs BlueLions RFC

76 – 14

By Steven Howden

On 27th April the Cru 'amassed' to take on the BlueLions RFC in our second game of the Tokyo Cup. Despite only losing narrowly in our first game of the tournament, the peculiar workings of the Tokyo Cup (a PHD in Applied Mathematics required to fully understand it) meant that, as we were in the bottom group, we were already facing a relegation/promotion play-off match. The outcome of the day's game would dictate whether we were playing the first or second-placed side in the Division below.

The evening before the game, expectations were high as the email exchanges revealed a strong squad for the game. However, as the Cru assembled at the local train station, numbers were already dwindling and we were left with a team of 16, with at least a couple of those being supporters who would be forced to come back from injury/retirement. Nevertheless the team was still confident and ready for the challenge ahead.

As is required in all Tokyo Cup games, we turned up the habitual '2 hours' before the game, parading in line and having our finger nails checked. It was clear that the opposition team were having a harder time than us of getting the numbers for the game and it looked like we might be playing 7s instead. They assured us that more would join and the game would go ahead. But two minutes before the game, with only 14 players, they were forced to concede the Cup game 35-0, and we instead played them as a friendly encounter, 14 vs. 14. We would be lying if we didn't admit that we were fortunate here; finishing the game with just 14 payers ourselves, with Matt Sparrow realizing no amount of tape would keep his knee in its socket.

As ever, the Cru started the game slowly, spending much of the first 30 mins camped in our own 22. We did manage to score the first try against the play, with Tom Cocks bull-dozing over to score the first of his 3 tries, getting on the end of some slick forwards play. The opposition responded with two tries back to back, benefiting from a lack of organisation from the Cru (as we put most of our efforts into complaining to the ref) and their superior speed in the break-down.

By the end of the first half the Cru had managed to pull back another two tries and we led at the break 17-14. We were confident that we were getting into our rhythm and could put into action our game plan of doing the simple things well and trying to build phases; something we had largely ignored for the first half.

The second half saw the Cru

stretching their legs and running in 9 tries without response to finish the game 76 points to 14. Four tries from Seth Robson in his first game back for a while, were of particular note as well as three tries apiece for Tom Cocks and Rob Galbraith. Some would say they benefited from some exceptional play from the scrum half (and definitely not the author of this article), who made his first appearance in that position for almost 20 years.



At the 60 min mark, with the heat taking its toll and some of the venom waning from the Cru's attack, our super-sub and Club manager, Tooley, handed his clip-board to Marc Sheratt, pulled up his socks and endeavored to provide fresh impetus to the Cru's play. Late in the game he scored a solo wonder try, being handed the ball 5 metres before the line and managing not to fall over to put the ball between the sticks.

In the end the game served as a good run-out and practice game for our relegation match in our efforts to survive in the top Division of the cup.

Player Points

5: Rob Galbraith
4: Tom Cocks
3: Travis Dixon
2: Steven Howden
1: Seth Robson

Tokyo Crusaders vs Otowa RFC

24 – 33

By Brendan Gallagher

With the Cru set for another early match, the day began in unfortunate circumstances as management realized we'd have to scrape together a side of 15 due to last minute cancellations and no-shows. Fortunately however, two of our French comrades met us at the pitch in eager fashion ready to join us in battle against our common opponent (first time for everything). Now that we had 15 "players" our management and captains would surely earn their keep lining up a side filled with 13 forwards. While most of the Cru was playing out of position (The 'Two Towers of London/Sheffield' stayed at home in the 2nd row) and we formed a back line that would rival most packs in weight; our youth-rugby days were quickly drawn upon to highlight the versatility embodied by most of the Crusaders.

Strategy was limited at best and to compound items, it was our first time to ever play an obviously apparent well-drilled and well-disciplined all-Japanese opponent. Otowa RFC got off to a quick start scoring in the first 10 minutes on the back of a turnover and nice set-play from their backs before punching in another try soon thereafter to jump out to a 12-0 lead in the first half. Being the on-the-fly adjustment manager that he is, Tooley recognized an underutilized Rob out in the wings and he swapped his own 'speed' for Rob's defensive prowess helping to limit our opponent's dashes through the middle. The out-of-positioned Crusaders finally settled in and after some great scrummaging and ball work from Philippe at scrum half and Travis at fly, the ball ended up on our newly found speedsters in the backfield and some quick passes from Seth to Galdric to Brendan ended up with a nice easy try for the Cru just before half time.

The 2nd half began in similar fashion to the 1st as the Cru found themselves on their backfoot giving up a try in the first 5 min allowing Otowa to extend their halftime lead. However, some inspiring runs by Rob and Seth quickly changed the momentum and wisely the ball was sent out to the speedsters in the centers/wings and Brendan managed to score his 2nd try of the day (maybe some of us weren't out of position after-all). Continued scrummaging and strong defense from our forwards as well as quick balls allowed for a beauty of a try from Seth cutting right through the defense like a hot knife through butter, knotting the score at 19 a piece midway through the 2nd.

The steamy day appeared to began weighing on the Cru's overly alcohol-hydrated bodies as Otowa was able to stop the momentum and countered with an impressive try of their own. Another dazzling try from Seth late in the 2nd kept the score within a conversion but Otowa was able to string together enough phases and nice ball movements from their backs to seal the victory in the waning minutes. The game ended with Otowa RFC on top 33 points to the Cru's 24 with a well played effort from both sides on a beautiful Sunday morning.

Some Highlights:

The Pitch was incredibly well-manicured and maintained for a grass rugby field.

Seth and Brendan each scored 2 tries, Travis was 2/4 on conversions.

Sean Gibson made his return and his durability was tested early on the opening kickoff, but put together a full game's effort in his return.

Jason Gall played his last game for the Cru before his departure from Japan. Well done Jason, and you certainly will be missed.

Aftermatch function was held in the local clubhouse as well as a nijikai at an izakaya in Omiya.

Many thanks and love to our support staff, including Megumi, who managed Frank's beratement when supporting injured opponents to still hydrate the Cru in efficient fashion all day, as



well as Tom Cock's dad for help with match statistics. As always, many thanks to all supporters/family that give up part of their Sunday to enjoy a day of rugby with the Cru!!!

**Player Points**

5: Rob Galbraith

4: Travis Dixon

3: Seth Robson

2: Jason Gall

2: Philippe Buzon

Tokyo Crusaders vs Fuji Club RFC

26 – 19

By Rob Galbraith

Following the Cru's default win against the Blue Lions in the previous match, the game against Fuji RFC, who finished second in Division 2 of the Tokyo Cup, would decide who would be plying their trade in Division 1 next season.

The Cru turned up in good numbers for the finale of their season; also the final game for Galdric and Philippe who would be returning to France after a short spell in Japan. As we turned up for the Tokyo Cup pre-match meeting, there were audible gasps from the opposition at the size of Van and his crop top. Credit must go to our shirt manufacturers for making shirts that are able to expand so much!

The pre-match talk centred around possession and retaining as much of it as possible given the searing heat. Sadly this seemed to fall on deaf ears and on top of giving away significant territory in the opening quarter we seemed to lack composure when in possession leading to some uncharacteristic errors. Despite dominating territory, Fuji rarely looked like scoring and the Cru defence held out. Shutting Fuji out did come at a cost however as Cocksy was carted off to hospital with a lacerated finger after twelve minutes. The first significant foray into the opposition half led to the first try of the match. Tsuyoshi slicing through the Fuji defence and then several phases later Evan was on hand to score and convert. The Cru were starting to exert themselves and their second try followed five minutes later; Philippe spotted an overlap and made a sniping run around the ruck before offloading to Van to score under the posts. The Cru probably shaded the lineouts in the first half but were completely dominant in the scrum pushing the opposition back at will.

A couple of substitutions were made at half time and the Cru started the second half as they finished the first. Trav scored following some quick ball to make it 19-0. At this point Fuji had a mountain to climb. However, as the Cru set pieces began to fade, so too did their dominance in open play. Fuji were starting to find gaps and they had lots of pace out wide to take advantage. They scored their first try. The Cru seemed stunned and from the proceeding kick off a staggered Cru defensive line led to a break from Fuji and although Van was able to bring down their attack Fuji scored a few phases later. It was now a 5-point game.

The Cru that chased the next kick off were akin to a wounded beast. Trav drove back their attack (to cries of "sugoi na" from the opposition) and Galdric joined in a strong defensive effort. The Cru won possession and from a ruck close to the touch line Philippe spotted another overlap on the blind side and Rob was on-hand to score with Evan converting.

The last 15 minutes were no easy ride with Fuji running in a try against a tired looking Cru defence. This was followed by the sin-binning of Philippe and the Cru were hanging on. Despite the best efforts of Fuji, the Cru held out to claim a valuable victory.

Final score 26-19.

A big thank you, as always, to all the staff and supporters who

turn out week in week out for being Cru's "16th man". It was great to see old boys Jonas, Ashley, Derek and Mo coming out and also a special mention to Mike Galbraith for taking Cocksy over to the local hospital.

21 Cru members headed for the post-match entertainment which took the shape of a nomihoudai and some nibbles at the local izakaya and a French themed sing-a-long led by Mike Galbraith.

And Finally...

As mentioned at the outset, this game was Galdric and Philippe's last competitive game for the Cru. Both have been a valuable asset to the team on and off the pitch. We will miss their skills and tenacity on the pitch as well as their friendliness off it. Bon voyage boys and we wish you all the best.

It was also Ev Kerr's last turn out for the club. Ev always seemed to effortlessly juggle all night Roppongi sessions with Aussie Rules and the Cru and has been a great servant to the club. We'll miss his efforts on the pitch, his jovial nature, his mammoth Movember efforts and his help in getting the walking wounded back in shape. I have a feeling he may be back on the streets of Roppongi before too long...

Finally, the game was also Tooley's last competitive game as Team Manager. I'm sure I won't do him justice in this short piece but he certainly deserves a mention. Tooley has been fundamental in taking this club forward over the past few years and the club would certainly be in a much worse place if it wasn't for all the time and effort he has invested. For me, he is the face of the club and his attitude embodies much about the club- its friendliness, competitiveness as well as its emphasis on inclusiveness and good sportsmanship. He must have the most patient and understanding of wives and I'm sure he has a lot of brownie points to make up over the coming years! Tooley will continue to help the Cru next season but will step down from his current role.



3,2,1s

5- Philippe. Created two tries single handedly- his awareness and speed of thought always has the opposition on the back foot and his quick delivery out to the backs is exceptional. As

mentioned, he's been tremendous for us and we wish you well.

4- Travis. Good ball out from the scrum half is no good unless the fly half makes the right decisions. Travis really ran the game using the wind well to kick for territory as well as breaking the gain-line where there were gaps. His defence was colossal and I have no doubt that his defence when chasing our kick-offs towards the end of the second half was a huge contributor in winning the game.

3- Galdric. An absolute colossus in the back row. Together with Travis, Galdric really shut down any Fuji attack towards the end of the second half. Defensively he is a rock; always driving back the opposition where they came from. Offensively



- Player Points**
- 5: Philippe Buzon
 - 4: Travis Dixon
 - 3: Galdric Porta
 - 2: Rob Galbraith
 - 2: Kyal Hill



he is always aware of the spaces around him and creates overlaps just through the number of players it takes to bring him down! All the best mate and I'm sure we'll see you soon.

2- Rob. Managed to bag a meat pie courtesy of some slick play by Philippe down the blind side! Got myself a nice farmer's tan out of the game but was grateful when the final whistle went!

1- Kyal. Really great to see him back again- one reason why we were so dominant in the scrums. Really puts in the yards around the park and really effective with the ball in hand. A pretty slick front-peel lineout almost came off!





