



# Tokyo Crusaders 2016-17 Dearbook





Club President

**Evan Hitchman**



As Season 2017-18 comes to a close there are many highlights to look back upon in what has been an extremely successful year for all associated with the Tokyo Crusaders Rugby Football Club. We were crowned Shuto League Division One Champions again, for the second time this decade and broke our duck against rivals Tokyo Gaijin beating them for the first time in many years. The second half of the season also saw highlights with strong performances seeing us reach the final of the Champions Cup for the first time.

Like other amateur sporting clubs we are only as strong as our volunteers and supporters and this year. They help out every week on and off the field, behind the scenes to ensure that the season runs smoothly. Thank you to everyone who helped out this season, especially to the very understanding wives and girlfriends who allow us (albeit reluctantly!) out every Sunday to pull on the famous light blue of the Crusaders, despite the fragile state we come back of a Sunday evening after a night at the Chippy in Koiwa!

Thank you to our loyal sponsors who have supported us through the year. To Meat Guy, Kinetikos, Geronimos, Hobgoblin and The Hangover - your support is greatly appreciated and we encourage all Cru and the wider Tokyo Crusaders community to enjoy some great snags and steaks at The Meat Guy, a few cold ones at Geronimos, Hobgoblin or The Hangover and head over to get back into shape after all that at Kinetikos Gym!

Special thanks and appreciation to Reece, our Team Manager who has done a sterling job keeping the team going and getting a side out each week. Thanks also to Tom, our club captain who is standing down after two successful seasons, to Matt and Sean who have been stalwarts of the club, attending and helping out at every event and in many ways.

A final thanks of course goes to you, fellow Crusader! You keep coming out on a rainy Sunday morning in the middle of nowhere to play some rugby and have a beer with your mates (maybe chips with mayonnaise as well!). I thank each and every one of you for your efforts this year and also in advance for your continued support and commitment to make next season an even greater success for the best expat club in Japan - Tokyo Crusaders Rugby Club! For it is YOU who make this a club, not just a team.

I look forward to seeing many familiar and new faces don the famous light blue next year in 2017-18 as we head towards our 30th season and the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan.

Yours in rugby,  
Evan Hitchman



Team Manager

Reece Morgan

It's been a funny old year for the Tokyo Crusaders, mixing the heights of Shuto League glory with Tokyo Cup demotion, and losing to All France. All France. The length of this season has left bodies in ruins and livers disintegrated - and with tour still to come, there's no rest for the wicked.

Our opening loss to AllJinJan didn't set the tenor particularly well, but we rallied and stormed the rest of the cup. The final against Koryo was one of the best games that the Cru has ever played, and we continued that solid form through the Champions' Cup, with players demonstrating greater defensive strength and adaptability than I've ever seen us show before. Such a level of performance can't last forever, though, and exhaustion soon set in to derail our Tokyo Cup run. Still, there's plenty to take away from the year: Hiro's first ever try; Ev somehow making us lose an uncontested scrum; the arrival of a certain 11-inch long, double-ended black friend...On top of that, the Gibson range of blazers, jewellery, and leisurewear has made us instantly recognisable, and now we can bring high fashion to the Matsudo ojisan bar.

We've had a lot of difficulties this year, but morale remained high through to the end. It's not been easy from the manager's chair, but I'm thankful for everyone's ability to support each other and plug away, even when the day seemed lost. All our socials, whether organised or impromptu, kept us glued together, and remain the cornerstone of our little operation.

I'd like to extend my thanks to everyone who turned up to play, to support, or simply to stand at the side with a Sapporo in hand (I'm looking at you, Andy Howard).

Next season will bring new challenges and there will be some large changes within the squad and the club's culture, but I'm confident that we'll not only manage, but bring about even more success in the future. Deus vult, gents. Deus vult.

This season has certainly felt longer than normal, largely due to the success we enjoyed in the Shuto League. This meant that we spent the early part of 2017 focusing on the Champions Cup rather than skiing and working off our Christmas timber. Consequently, we've reached some new highs, winning the league for just the second time and reaching the final of the champions cup for the first time ever. We've seen lots of players come and go, as we always do. However we had a more stable and consistent squad turn out in the first two thirds of the season. I think this underpinned our success and if we can do the same next season then I'm positive we can do just as well. But whatever happens, the Cru remain a solid group of mates and a fantastic place to play your rugby.



Club Captain

Tom Cocks





Despite an incredible lack of planning on Cocks's part, the time had finally come for the Crusaders to abandon Japan for foreign shores. With gumguards, beer money, and tour stash in hand, eighteen intrepid souls made their way to the somewhat less-than-upmarket side of Itaewon, before a glass of warm milk and an early bedtime. After all, there were several games of 10s to play the next day, and the Cru didn't want to tarnish its hard-earned reputation for decorum and propriety.

### Match 1: Stars and Stripes

The first game of the day saw the Cru take to the field against the military, in a clash between the two most terrifyingly ginger captains that Asia had to offer. Less than a minute into the match, a lapse in fringe defence allowed Reece to slip down the wing and under the posts for the first try of the day. Matt Sparrow then began his reign of terror over the uprights, slotting the first of his perfect sheet. The rest of the first half went by without much action: the typically military style of the S&S was enough to shut down many Cru attacks, and they were rewarded for their efforts with a try right on the whistle.

The S&S boys took advantage of the brutal hangovers now assailing the Cru and scored soon into the second half. The Crusaders, succumbing to their usual issue of giving away every penalty under the sun, turned to BoJo himself for the killing blow – after a hard few minutes of work and lovely hands to the wing, the furious man-child rocketed over the line, with John Gorman neatly slotting the ball to claim the first head of the day. Score: Cru 14 – 10 Stars and Stripes (MVP: Pedro de los Santos)

### Match 2: Kera Select

As the scent of pizza and chicken roused a comatose Ed Downer, the Crusaders flipped their jerseys inside-out and faced off against Kera Select. From the very start, new boy Hamish proved up to the challenge, catching the kick and bullying the opposition back several metres. However, the lack of fitness, talent, and motivation afflicting the rest of the team allowed Kera's already-notorious centre the space to thunder through the defence...before doing it again within two minutes. Realising that they needed to put on a show for Japanese pride, Joe unfurled the man-bun, and Skurry Bill Williams gave him the space to zip past the opposition winger and full-back. A few minutes later, after big pushes by Gibbo and Basi, Reece rolled over the defence for his second try of the day. Needless to say, Sparrow slotted them both before the first-half whistle blew.

With Frank 'Changed Man' Saffery bringing his highly vocal style of play to the pitch, the Crusaders immediately went on the offensive: new boys Sean and Andy, along with renowned no-show Ben Vickery, put in some sterling runs to draw close to the Kera line, before Foster snatched another for himself with his traditional lightning-fast plod. Elated by their success, the Cru let their attention wander, and the Kera centre came flying in again to score one more for team pride. Score: Cru 21 – 17 Kera Select (MVP: Austin Taylor)

### Match 3: Seoul Survivors, Round 1

Realising that the final would be a Cru vs. Survivors fixture anyway, the Cru put out a token defence led by the old shogun himself, Tooley, to weather the pre-final storm. Despite great play from Seth and Paul in the forwards, nothing could stop the force of nature that was Dieter, slicing up the Cru wings with phenomenal speed.

MVP: 5pts Foster, 4pts Hamish, 3pts Joe, 2pts Reece, 1pt Cocksey / Skurry

Jul.15 - Report by Reece Morgan



Little of note happened, aside from Tooley almost scoring a try – if only the gas had been there – and Foster’s physics-breaking kick that went absolutely nowhere and didn’t even bounce. Although the Cru didn’t net a point, it was worth the pain to see the Survivors captain yellow-carded for...kicking the ball? Score: Survivors 33 – 0 Cru

#### Match 4: Final (Seoul Survivors)

With the big guns well-rested(ish) and the jerseys flipped round for the last time, the final of the Tokseo Cup began in true gaijin conditions – cold and wet. As expected, it was a physical affair from the beginning, with missed tackles letting the Survivors slip around the wing and into the Cru try area. With some mighty pushes forward from Cocks and Hamish, the game slipped back into the Survivors half, allowing walking-wounded Joe to end his Korea career with a charge into the try area. Sparrow then made the conversion from a truly remarkable angle, a display of ability that saw him fined later for showmanship.

Despite Seth and John doing their absolute best to get yellow cards early in the second half, they somehow evaded punishment, and what followed was almost ten minutes’ worth of scrums. Exhaustion setting in on both sides, the game wavered between the two teams, until the Survivors managed to step in once again. The Cru came back strongly, taking scrums against the head and getting the ball into the hands of Ed Downer...who proceeded to knock them on, every time. Needless to say, it wasn’t long before the Survivors came back for one last try just before the final whistle, and the Tokseo Cup was over.

Score: Survivors 19 – 7 Cru (MVP: Dieter)

After a solid sing-song on the bus and the intake of ‘fluids’, the party moved over to the Survivors’ clubhouse, where the Cru were treated with mind-blowing hospitality and thirty whole chickens.

Unfortunately, what happens on tour stays on tour, and so those tall tales must never be told (until we next hit the chippy). However, what must be said is a massive thank-you to the Seoul Survivors, who organised everything and were fantastic hosts from the first hours until the end. We look forward to their return tour to Japan: not only because we’ll give them a kicking at 15s, but also because we’re desperate for a return-return tour, to see if we can get trending on Twitter again!

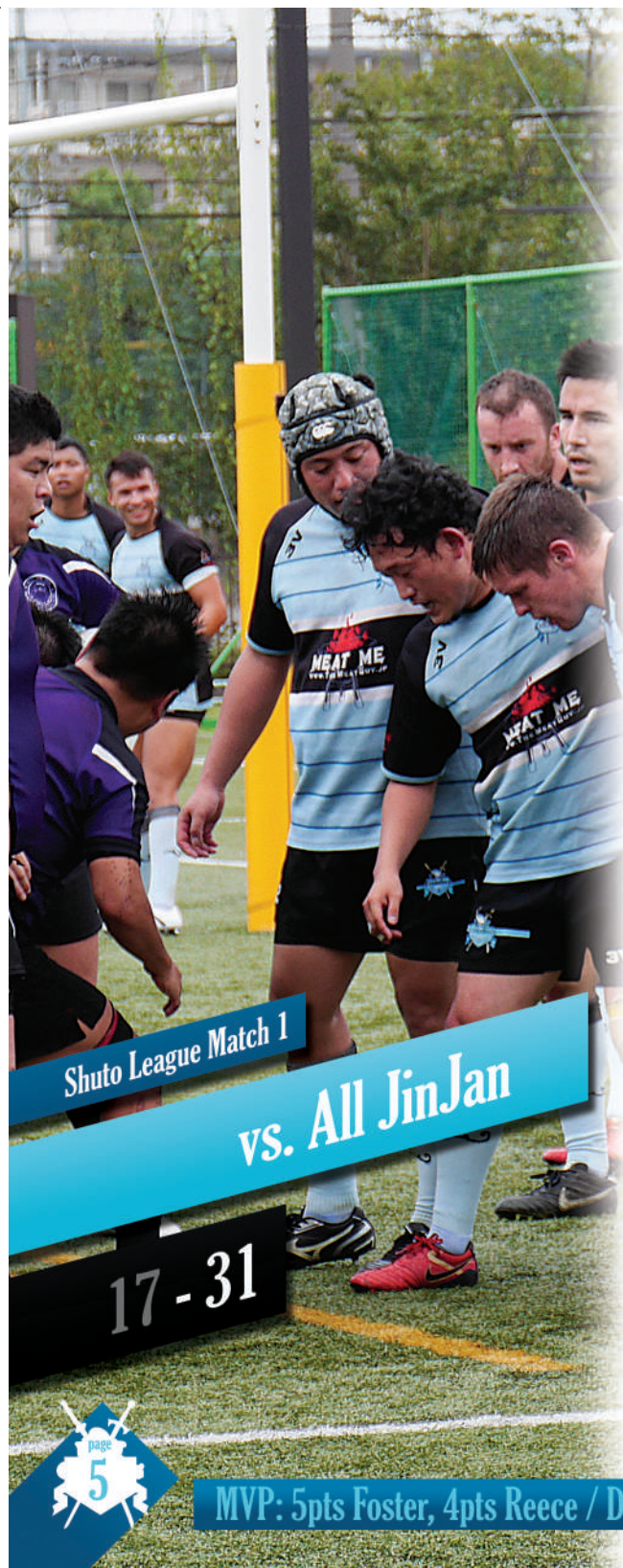
The Cru also mourns the loss of two of its best: Paul ‘From Paris With Love’ Martingell and the incomparable Basi. Both will return in future, but until then, gents – have a cracker, and we’ll miss you. We also hope to see Hamish, Sean and Andy come back for another run out in Crusader blue.

Thank you also to the boys on tour who resisted the urge to ride the plastic horse, and finally, to those gods amongst men who first developed the idea of that perfect game...

The Danger Chop.







Sunday is a rugby day. Fueled by McDonalds and combini Boss coffees, the boys began the walk to Nijjuku Mirai Koen. Now, as most were focused on the game ahead, it was near impossible not to be distracted by Hitchman's haircut. Never in my life had I ever seen such a perfect balance of hair care product and grace. More than one high-school girl stopped to take a photo with him; yet the boys still made it to the field in time to strut into a slow warm up. As the starting 15 were named, a few Crusaders rookies were fortunate enough to don the black and blue; big welcome to Tavis (That's not a spelling mistake, it's not Travis), Yuuki, and Dylan.

The game quickly got into the grind as the Cru started to play hard-nosed rugby early on, with the forwards rumbling up field. There was a quick scare for children on the side-line early into the game, as a wardrobe malfunction left Reece nude from the waist down as he evaded a tackle. To everyone's relief, his enormous quads shielded all his gear from view. This show of girth may have been enough to deter the opponents' counter attack, as Captain Cocks was able to use his massive physique to shake-and-bake his way into the promised land. With an impressive kick from Matt Sparrow, the Cru saw an early lead of 7-0. The lead was short-lived however, as a break in the line and fantastic pace led to a fast response by the tenacious AllJinJan.

The cru put pressure on the ensuing kick, and after a big hit, Reece took a loose ball and rolled for a while before the ball was secured and rucked. Owen was hot that day, digging into the sloppy rucks and firing out missiles. One such missile found its way to the always-impressive Sebastian Forastiere: after a summer of lounging on beaches, a rejuvenated Seb used his footwork and head-down running to weave a glorious try through a solid defensive line. A missed kick put the score to 12-7 for the Cru. After kick-off, AllJinJan forced the ball deep into Cru territory. Due to some positioning errors, Joe found himself at the fly-half position, and a kick had to be done: only he knew that he had never performed a successful kick during a game, and this would just add to that tally. A deflected kick was thankfully scooped by Reece and brought out of danger. After a quick phase, the new kid Dylan showed what he was capable of. Fending off about a third of the opposition before seeing the deck, he set the Cru up in optimal field positioning.

This fantastic field position was short-lived as the referee saw a potential infraction in the ruck, and gave the opposition the ball. This momentum switch gave AllJinJan enough of a boost to put two quick ones in before half.

The second half had the boys fairly frustrated, and this frustration showed in the physicality. Early into it, a yellow card was sent toward the new back Dylan for a tip-tackle. Frustration gave way to more penalties, and AllJinJan used their golden boot to slot a penalty kick and ran one outside for another try. They almost had a second try, had Yuuki not flattened the largest player on the field for a try saving effort – a hit so big that the opposing team had to give him a standing ovation in appreciation. The only other second-half note in favour of the Cru was when the man-bear-child himself, Matt Foster, said “not today children” and took one up the middle by himself. One that led to a conversion that Sparrow wouldn't miss (without a tee, I might add, because he's got that swagger).

Following the match, the dedication was further embodied by a ruthless invasion of the Ojisan Bar where two unnamed males proceeded in a testosterone fueled game of “slaps”, where the question was answered – “two or three fingers?” All in all, it was what the boys needed to iron out the kinks. A much different result awaits the Cru in their upcoming league matches.

MVP: 5pts Foster, 4pts Reece / Dylan, 3pts Cocksey, 2pts Owen, 1pt Joe, Tavis

Sep.11 - Report by Joe Flagler



We will fight them on the beaches; we will fight them in the...bogs? I'm sure Winston Churchill never had an issue raising an army, although he did have the luxury of conscription. After turning up in the middle of nowhere to play our friendly, we noticed a lack of many things – among which were water bottles (well done Sparrow) and players. Another issue is that, of these brave 13, about 10.4 were forwards. It seems backs don't like to get their hair wet.

After our small but hardened team had slogged it to the ground, we were delighted to notice the opposition already running lines like a well-oiled Messerschmitt, waiting to down our lumbering B52 bomber. We also took note that the field was under three feet of water and resembled the Somme, and thus we decided to borrow a Japanese spy (big thanks to Jin-san from Toda Over The Top for stepping in and playing an excellent game). At 14 men, we were looking like we would need to borrow one of the oppo, but our very own Lance Corporal Lim – fully equipped in body armour – stepped into the fray (Has anybody seen him since the game? Did he drown in a trench?).

As battle commenced, our heads truly in the water, we noticed that our simple game plan was holding fast in the more-than-horrid conditions. We may have been fatter, older and certainly less fit but we were showing our grit and determination. The one option line-out being fed by our centre-turned-fly-half-turned-eight-turned-hooker was a magnificent sight to behold, and the oppo didn't stand a chance against our superior war machine. With lines being run and tackles being made, we were rewarded with an excellent try by Taku and the faithful boot of Mr Hitchman to take it to seven ahead. Then the onslaught and bombardment began, so we dug ourselves deeper into our trenches determined not to let a point slip. Our scrums were as sturdy as a rock, and with a splendid turnover the whistle went for a spot of no-man's-land respite.

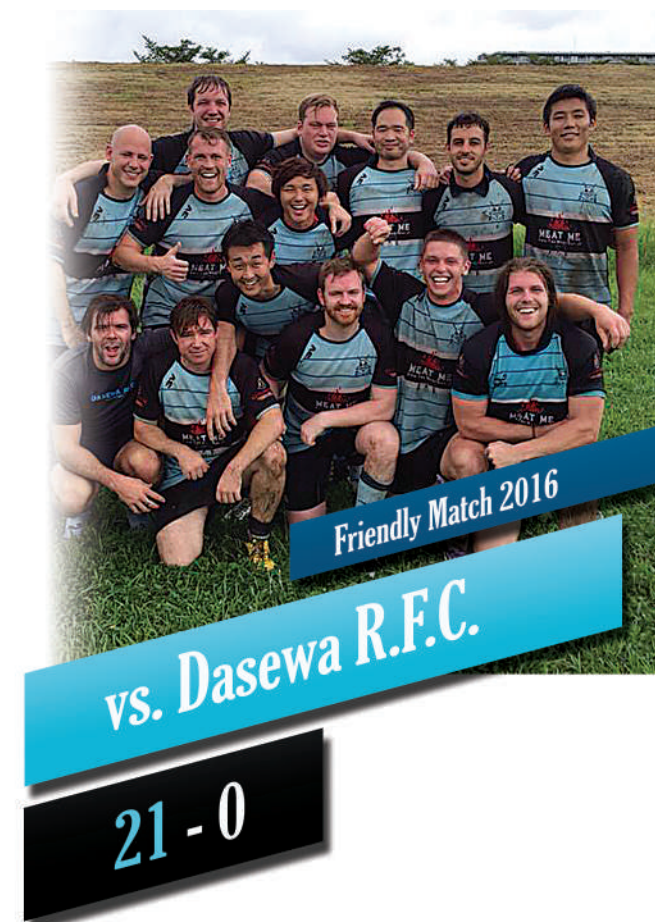
At half time reinforcements arrived, stinking of booze and looking worse for wear. You guessed it: the Auzzies had blessed us with their presence in the form of Logan 'the Drunken Destroyer' Melville.

We were now chomping at the bit to get back out to the battlefield, with the resolve to not let the oppo cross that chalk line and cause damage where it hurt the most, right between the posts. The whistle went and instantly the Drunken Destroyer took the ball in hard and fast, dicing through barriers and mines like a hot knife through butter. He was followed closely by our own Boris Johnson lookalike who, when given the ball, exploded from half mark hurtling so fast both teams stopped and watched in awe as this behemoth of a man ran like a steroid-abusing gazelle. This culminated in one of the best try moments I have ever seen, and was followed by salt-to-the-wounds in the form of Mr Hitchman: conversion slotted.

Once again, the cannons started and the bombardment began. We had to keep our heads down, scrums strong, line-outs simple and our defence had to take a battering to hold out, waiting for our opportunity to counterattack. Runner after runner, minute after minute passed and we stood strong. Particularly, Sgt. Sparrow, who had a brilliant try saving tackle to make sure that the scoreboard favoured us. After what seemed like an eternity, an opening was spotted by our very own Argentine frat boy Sebastian, and with a final try and conversion to boot the whistle went. We were tired and wounded but we were victorious – to the bar with us, to drink and be merry.

One final point: the American Military were a no show. It turned out that they had gotten lost, ended up at the wrong side of the wrong river watching the wrong sport. Well, at least we avoided friendly fire!

**MVP: 5pts Joe, 4pts Logan, 3pts Seba / Foster, 2pts Reece, 1pt Sparrow**



**Sep.18 - Report by Frank Saffery**





We knew it was going to be a tough match, but with a great ground and changing rooms, we almost felt professional. It was a lovely sunny day, though, which wasn't good news for the many gingers amongst us. We had a great turnout, with a full team and six subs – like I said, almost professional. We took the kick-off, chased it down and within 3 minutes our dancing Argentinian (Seb) was over the line, with our singing Sparrow on hand to slot it between the posts for an extra 2. Great start. We had some great forward moves and we kept hitting them close to the ruck and breaking the line, ending in Taku from the wing putting another score on the Turkeys. Sparrow-san again slot it between the uprights to make it 14-0 after less than 10 minutes. We could taste the winning beers already! More good forwards moves put us in a great field position, and a few breaks of the line from the backs and big boy Tavis (a.k.a 'who is Tavis?') was over for his first try for the Cru. Unfortunately, Sparrow's leg must have been a bit tired from his last conversion, and missed.

During the next 10 minutes, the opposition had a bit more time on the ball, but we fought hard and put pressure on them to make some mistakes. One great bit of play was where Sparrow – nowhere near the ball – called "MARK" when Taku caught it in our 22 and the ref allowed it. We weren't sure of the rules, but we thought that refs know best, so took it and cleared our lines. We worked the ball up the pitch with the forwards and this turned into another Cru try from Tomo, and with Sparrow's leg feeling better we were up to 26-0. For the next 10 minutes we took our feet off the gas a bit and our Captain Tom Cocks knocked the ball on: rather than admit that the shovels that he calls hands couldn't catch a cold, he decided to blame the ball and asked for it to be changed. What's that saying about a bad workman, 'always blames his...'? Not to be outdone, Foster and Reece joined suit and gave the opposition some easy possession. They converted this ball in hand to a try and made it 26-5. In an effort to redeem himself, Cocks got himself a try just before half time to make the score at the break a tasty 33-5: pretty awesome for 35 minute halves.

The midday sun was beating down hard and we were all a bit tired, but loving the scoreline and hungry for more. We made some changes and got back on the pitch for more pillaging. Again, we got off to a great start by Tavis getting over the line for his second try to make it 38-5. We were having some great scrums and really good open play and off-loads; the opposition were quick at the breakdown but we were able to keep a handle on things. 15 minutes into the second half we were a whopping 45-5 up, thanks to a cheeky try from our number 9 Owen, with help from Sparrow getting the conversion. THEN, someone I don't know who gave Foster the clip board. We got on some fresh legs all at once, and Anthony and Chris came on for their first game of rugby ever; Owen, Ev and Cocks came off, and Hiro came to tighten the pack. As many of you know, they don't teach these public school boys a lot when it comes to maths, so we had 13 players on the pitch, then it went to 16 then 14, and a further five minutes later we returned to 15. As you can imagine, all kinds of abuse was hurled Foster's way. With a lot of changes to the pack, the opposition took advantage and managed to get 2 tries on us at the end of the game, making the final score 45-19. All in all, a good result and great to see some new guys on the field. Foster was our MVP as voted by the Turkeys and Sataki-san was our vote for their best player.

After a quick shower and a "watch where you're swinging that thing, Frank" we hit up the Dan Mariya izakaya for some food and beers. The highlight of this was Evan getting lemoned (golf-balled) by his son, starting a chain reaction with me getting golf-balled with half a jug in my hand, and Tavis getting the same but with a full jug of beer, having to down it in 1 (nearly). This made people start to hate this game and after Tavis chugged his jug, he decided to throw the lemon out of the window...except the window was closed. Good work! We moved on from here after playing the pee game (which I think Evan won) to the Hub where Foster tried to pull but was yet again unsuccessful. Hang in there mate, it's a numbers game. Great day, great results, good food and beers with the lads: this is what Sundays are all about!

MVP: 5pts Seba, 4pts Foster, 3pts Taku, 2pts Tavis, 1pt Reece

Sep.25 - Report by Edward Downer



This weekend, we had the pleasure of welcoming an old friend back for a guest appearance: Sunday would mark the return of Bassi. It would seem that some of the Cru were eager to get started and had a “quiet” drink with the Bavarian Braumeister. Throughout Friday evening, night, and well into the following morning, some were lucky enough to receive a running commentary of the boy’s night out in Roppongi, including Foster dancing in an empty bar and making some new friends; incoherent ramblings; and a picture of super-chlamydia patient zero. So, arriving at Akigase, it was no surprise to see that Foster was still a bit of a state from Friday night’s excesses and was happy to be our super-sub. Bassi was there, Jagermeister in hand, fresh as a daisy! Ed... nowhere to be seen.

We were keen to be ready for our opposition this week as we remembered that the last time we met, the game had been a hard fought win at 39-24. From the kick-off, the opposition came out of the blocks quicker than the Crusaders, scoring the first try. This was the result of a chased penalty kick – the Tokyo Doctors taking the early lead, but only by 5 as the conversion was missed. Desperate to make sure we didn’t have another game like we did against AllJinJan, it wasn’t long until the Crusaders brought the scores back to 5 – 5 with a fantastic pick-and-go from Tomo, breaking through the defence before being put down over the line by Tavis. The try was converted, Crusaders leading 7 – 5.

From here on the Crusaders dominated the score line, which is not entirely indicative of the flow of the game, but the Crusaders capitalised on opportunities arising from opposition handling errors. The back line put in some solid tackles – notably so from Owen and Dylan. Not to be outdone, Bassi would show us one of the reasons we have missed him, as he put in a monster of a tackle, when defending a penalty tap-and-go on our 5 metre line. Seb was the next to score, kicking the ball from the ground into hand with his Argentinean footballing flair, before taking it over the line for another try. Taku scored the final try of the half with some fantastic running, and support play – both him and Tsukasa working their way around the defence. The score at half time: 19 – 5.

For the first ten minutes of the second half, the Tokyo Doctors threatened to score, camping out in the Crusaders half for the duration. Rob was to turn the tide though, as he broke away from the back of a maul, down the blindside, and scored under the posts. After some more earnest defence from the Crusaders, and a ridiculous one handed interception from Joe, the Cru made their way up the field once again. This time Yuki was the man to score, ploughing through the defence and storming 70 metres (... well, 30 metres really) down the centre of the pitch. Two minutes later, after some nice passing and footwork from the backs, Dylan managed to slip through the Doctors grasp and put another 5 points on the board.

After making the poor bugger run touch for much of the game (sorry mate!) the Crusaders then welcomed a new player – Callum – to the team. Finally, as my mum was present at the match, I was keen to get a try for myself, and after calling for a switch with Joe, I was a greedy shit and dummied, scoring under the uprights. Sorry Joe, I owe you one.

Tokyo Doctors MVP – No. 8, Mr. Kinoshita

Tokyo Crusaders MVP – Tomo

Tavis' choice MVP - The server at the izakaya who brought us 10 beers in 3 mins every order.

**MVP: 5pts Tomo, 4pts Taku, 3pts Dylan / Cocksey, 2pts Joe, 1pt Seba**



**Oct.02 - Report by Matt Sparrow**





This weekend was a break from the Shuto League, which meant the Cru were able to accept a flattering invite from the SanTama representative team.

We were freshly attired in the newly arrived blazers that Gibbo had organised so the boys were looking glorious, and with more than 90% of the blazers being suitable clothing for a bipedal primate, it's fair to say that Gibbo had done us proud with the order.

It was great to see Logan back in the team, fresh out of a Hong Kong prison cell, and it was also great to welcome new boy Elliot to the team: we're not sure which prison cell he had come from, but given that he managed to scare the opposition fly-half into falling over just by running at him, it must have been fairly notorious. Speaking of prisons, Dylan might find himself having to answer a few questions from Tokyo's finest after murdering the opposition 13. Seriously, that guy got pounded harder than the inspiration behind Franks 'VII' tattoo.

Even Logan must have felt bad for the guy, because he enacted vigilante justice on Dylan; running straight for him with the ball and smashing him into touch with enough force that Dylan's nipples are now probably as wonky as his latest conquest's. Surprisingly, that wasn't the most amusing of Logan's antics during the game, because at one point he dropped the ball, politely exclaimed 'whoops', picked up the ball again and promptly mashed the opposition flanker.

The match itself got pretty spicy at points, with a few fights breaking out here and there; Joe drop-kicked a guy, Foster got beaten up by a dwarf, and Seb had to be forcibly restrained from going Falklands on the ref.

Due to the out-of-the-way nature of the match, Reece had decreed that the match fees should be put behind the bar at the nearest Hub. Although I wasn't there for it, I have been told I should include a couple of things in the match report; the first being 'Amy Winehands'. Now I don't know what the rules of 'Amy Winehands' are, but I'm guessing it's where you tape two bottles of wine to your hands and then see how much heroin you can take before you die. Die, or lose your bag in a taxi, I'm not sure which. The other thing was 'Reece falling down the gap between the train and the platform'. That seems pretty self-explanatory. And pretty funny.

I probably should mention that we won, which was a great victory. Not just because we had beaten the best that the SanTama league had to offer, but also because of how keen the referee was to allow the other team to win. Normally, it's bad form to complain about the referee, but when he penalises you for knock-ons when the opposition is in possession, or penalises Joe for a high tackle when the other guy was jumping for the ball, or keeps the clock running for an extra 5 mins when the opposition are within 1 score of the win...anyway, we won, and it felt great. See you for the next one boys.



With a later than usual kick-off, due to the venue being changed mid-week, you may have thought that our collective mojo could have been soured. That, however, was not the case: our mojo was sweet as ever.

This was a must-win game for us if we still wanted a chance of earning a medal. We started off strong by attacking hard and fast, keeping the ball alive as much as possible. We did, though, lose possession after a strong start when Foster – undoubtedly the most handsome member of the Cru – threw an inch-perfect pass to the opposition. This blunder was quickly rectified by Gibbo, going in for a well-deserved try. This early try opened up the flood gates with Dylan, Foster, Seb, Yuki and Taku all scoring tries before the half was out.

Olivers did, however, manage to get one try in before the half was out. The score at half time was 39-5.

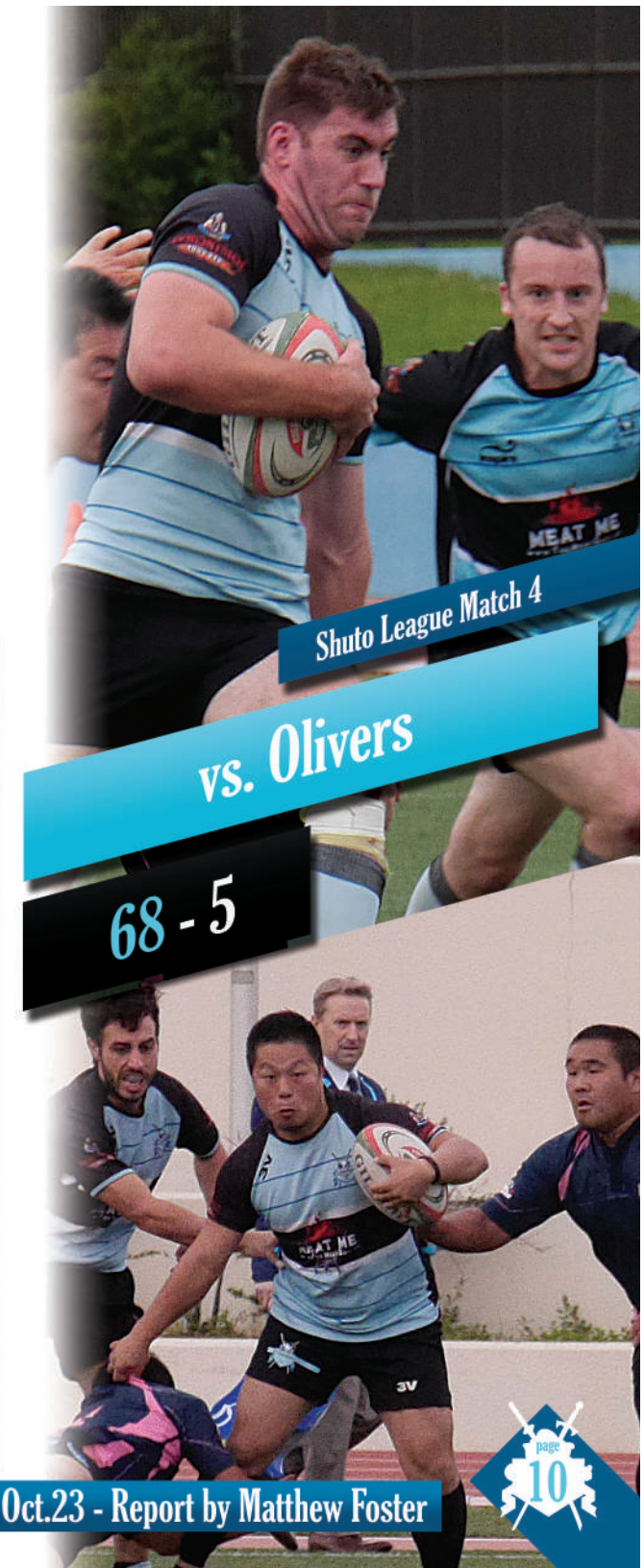
The second act continued the momentum built up in the first act, with Taku going in for his third try shortly after kick-off. Shortly after, Dylan followed suit and added another to his try tally. Not to be left out of the try-scoring fun, Kashi called upon the power of the gods with good hair to gain follically-induced powers to go in for one more. Not to be outdone, Dylan went in for two more tries before the final whistle, bringing his personal total up to four. However, the usually graceful Dylan was plagued by a sudden case of leg cramp, after being set up nicely by one particularly handsome forward.

The final score was 68-5. Points of note included Frank getting smashed back 20 yards, but then going on to seek revenge in form of almost beheading someone with a handoff; our very own physical specimen of a winger failing to 'colour within the lines'; Prof. Joe (having a great game as always) somehow not dropping the ball, even though it seemed to have a vendetta against him; Gen making a 50m break only to be held up on the line (to be fair to him he had just come from a long shift at work), and Ed Downer hitting a ruck.

Post-match formalities were held in the Shin-Koiwa chippy.

The opposition MVP was their number 10, Mr Itaru Konno. They voted their MVP as Mr Matthew Foster.

We would also like to thank the referee, Mr Ono for his good work.



MVP: 5pts Dylan, 4pts Joe, 3pts Gibbo, 2pts Foster, 1pt Tavis

Oct.23 - Report by Matthew Foster





Last year's Hallowe'en weekend was a monumental time for the Crusaders. After kicking off with a match against the Okinawa Beach Boys, everyone smashed Roppongi and consoled laughed at Ev while Australia lost the World Cup Final. 2016 couldn't have been a more different affair, with the squad tucked up in bed nice and early in preparation for one of the season's biggest games. Owen put down his nail varnish; Frank opted for just one bottle of wine; even our most formidable sex pest briefly broke off his search for a midget bar. In the morning, a massive black-and-blue contingent took over the information booth at Omiya station - we even had subs for the backs! - and the boys made their way over to the ground.

Both teams soon took to the field - the Cru, raring to undo eight years of losses, and the Gaijin, keen to bring their own brand of physicality back to the pitch. Kick-off started in predictable fashion, with a few quick runs leading to a scrum. The Cru pack, featuring some serious mass, held strong and set the unusually rapid (Sparrow excepted) back-line up for some punching runs. Battling their way up the pitch, the Cru spent ten minutes protecting their own ball beautifully, before setting Joe up for a smash through the centre to score the first converted try. The Gaijin turned the heat up - particularly the linesman, whom the ref threatened to walk if he didn't stop his back-chat - and their pack assailed the Cru defence. A quick turnover flipped the game's fortunes, and after some work up the pitch, corduroy-wearing juggernaut Matt Foster flopped over the line for another Cru try.

With Dylan's legs cramping and no Olivers player on hand to massage him, the Cru made some quick switches and brought Lawrence in from the wing. Leading with gusto, he offered a beautiful chip-and-chase kick: it would have been even more spectacular had it not smashed Frank in the face, leaving him wobbling like Building 7 before the thermite kicked in (it has been claimed). The Gaijin weren't happy to be down, and quickly responded from a kick-off fumble by scoring and converting one of their own. Luckily, egghead Tomo went from zero to hero, daring to pick-and-go by himself and supplying Cocks with some try time. After a quick conversion from Taku, the half-time whistle blew, leaving the score at 19-7 for the Crusaders.

At half-time, some replacements were made - new boy Keita strolled onto the pitch, his terrible moustache predicting what many Crusaders would offer for Movember. Instantly at home in the Cru badge, he blazed straight through the opposition, leaving the bewildered full-back in the dust to score the first of his monstrous hat-trick. After the forwards punched some holes into the Gaijin defence, the homing Sparrow himself rolled over the line before converting it himself, a performance of such decadent show-boating that he earned himself a punishment pint. The Gaijin responded quickly, with big boy Bati stealing a loose ball to earn another try for the opposition.

After a brief half-time rest to moan about his ankle, Reece and Foster again swapped front row duties and the restored pack made an instant impact, smashing the scrum and setting up Keita for another spectacular charge into the sunset. At this point, both sides were getting tired: the Crusader back-line was still full of fire, but the forwards were flagging, and vice-versa for the Gaijin. Indeed, the Gaijin hooker managed to pull off a try of his own and they were on the verge of scoring again. This potential loss of pride rallied the tired Cru defence, and some big hits later led to a turnover. The ball found its way to Keita, whose final try and the conversion by Neil closed the game out at 43-21 in favour of the Cru.

With eight years of losses brought to a close, the boys went for some quiet jars of Ribena at the local chippy, quickly causing an evacuation of the bar with a rousing chorus of the Crusaders chant...or was it Chicago Department Store?

MVP: 5pts Keita, 4pts Joe, 3pts Cocksey / Dylan, 2pts Rob / Sparrow / Tomo, 1pt Reece / Tavis

Oct.30 - Report by Reece Morgan



On November 5th, the Crusaders found themselves with a rare free weekend. Nothing on the cards save for time spent with loved ones, volunteering at homeless shelters, and failing on Tinder, until someone had a realisation – ‘hang on lads, Japan are playing at Chichibunomiya on Saturday. Who’s down to dress like pillocks and get shamelessly drunk?’

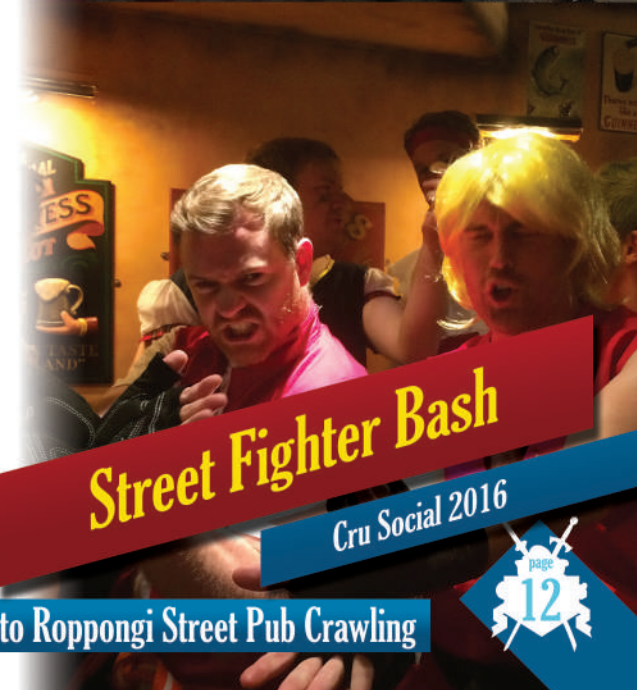
Dropping their responsibilities and donning the costumes of their favourite Street Fighter characters, a squadron of the Cru’s most seasoned cretins took to the stadium. Special mention must go to Owen Morris, who was in costume before he’d even arrived, doing some action shots for a magazine while dressed like Akuma. The boys were so convincingly dressed that they even made their way into some promotional footage for the upcoming World Cup, giving a hearty ‘come on England!’ when requested to cheer on the Japanese team:

Argentina’s sodomy of the Japanese squad passed in a haze of Strong Zero, and before long the boys made the journey to Shibuya. The decision was made to stop at every conbini on the way, which led to the wonderful discovery of a cheap bitter melon. Remembering their training from the Korea Tour, the boys soon began an impromptu training session with the unwieldy fruit. Luckily, the plucky melon made it to the Hub unscathed, surviving repeated headbutts from random members of the public. Unfortunately, Foster – his work clothes ruined by copious amounts of green paint – scared all the women away with his godawful Sakura costume, and the boys made their departure.

Hitting the famed 300-yen-bar, the night quickly ramped up, soon claiming its first victim. Needless to say, the troops rallied, and made their way to Roppongi where shots were sunk, chicken nuggets consumed, and Sparrow continued his recent form as a massive liability. The Cru looks forward to celebrating the end of the Shuto League in similar fashion at its upcoming Christmas Bash.



The New Challengers



Street Fighter Bash  
Cru Social 2016





November 13th was a date that had loomed ominously in the Tokyo Crusaders' calendar, as we were scheduled to play Komaba WMM, and knew how capable they were from their outings at the Shuto League Tens as the Watermelons. Hoping for a diminished and/or depleted Komaba squad on the day proved to be wishful thinking. Komaba arrived in full force, with a four-post tent, several supporters and at least one attractive water girl. The Cru was not outdone in this department, as we turned up in our Number Ones: several of us were wearing our flashy club blazers. And we had a tent. We may have had fewer supporters but we had a bit more class, on the face of it. However, that was not very much use on the pitch, unfortunately. Though some valiant defense kept the opposition scoreless for the first fifteen minutes, their tenacious probing proved fruitful and they began breaking the line and scoring tries – on average, one every five and a half minutes up to half-time. On our side of the ball, Mighty Joe managed to break the line and score a try with 6 minutes remaining in the half, and a Matt Sparrow conversion made the score 7-28 to Komaba at half-time.

The second half proved less rewarding for the Crusaders, unfortunately. Though Komaba's tries came at greater intervals, they started earlier. Not only that, they converted every single one of them, as they had in the first half. A tiny bit of pride seemed to be salvaged in the last five minutes when Jackie sped down the touchline to score in the corner, but this was negated shortly afterward when Komaba struck back with its ninth and final (converted) try to make the final score 63-12. Though the scoreline was less than ideal from our perspective, the game was not without its flashes of amusement. Tavis's temper got the better of him in the 2nd half and he was granted 10 minutes to rest up on the sideline. This seemed to be a theme, as Reece took his ire out on Cocksy for accidentally stepping on his toe with a somewhat camp slap to the back. Along the lines of aggressiveness, Brett must have been summarily unimpressed with Komaba's tackling ability because he flattened Frank at one point, harder than the opposition had or would for the rest of the day. Perhaps that's what caused Frank to later have a storming forty meter run, only to end it by passing to the opposition. Having been forced to play with 14 players for ten minutes also seemed to affect our counting ability, as it took a good three minutes to sort out a couple of subs, as if we couldn't count to 15.

After getting cleaned up at the clubhouse and having a few customary beers and curries (Hiro had a couple of bowls of ramen), it was off to the Omiya Station area for some harder drinking. The journey to the station was made all the more amusing by the bus driver's wearing a waistcoat in stunning Cru colors. He must have known we were coming, as it was the waistcoat version of our increasingly famous Cru blazers! After the usual sing-singing and golfballing at a cheap standing bar it was on to round three at the local Hub. Joe immediately impressed us all by showing how he could flip a pint glass in the air and then, spinning around and reaching behind his back, let it crash to the floor. Just kidding, he didn't spin. He just kind of watched it crash to the floor. But this was the point at which Jerry shined. He gets my MVP vote for sure. It seems that volunteering to drink everyone's golf-balled drinks as well as his own, at the first bar brought out a tremendous spirit of generosity in Jerry. Besides offering financial donations to the club before he got to the Hub, once there he extended his generosity to sharing his lunch with us. We expressed our lack of desire but Jerry was insistent. So he left it on the table for us. Then the floor. Not content with that, after he was carried outside, he shared it with everyone walking by. All that generosity must have worn him out, because he had to be carried to the station by Brett and others, which took a considerable amount of time. But he got a third wind because he then proceeded to share with everyone on the train. Well, he tried, but they scattered away and he was relegated to putting it into his gym bag for later. There must be more to the story from there but I doubt we'll ever know.

MVP: 5pts Joe, 4pts Reece, 3pts Tavis, 2pts Cocksey, 1pt Brett

Platinum Honorable Mention: Jerry

Nov.13 - Report by Sean Gibson



The Cru arrived for their annual match with YCAC full of confidence, after their great showing in last year's conga-line fixture and their complete dominance of the Hard Rock café patrons opposition. Crusaders had finally ended a barren run of 7 years of consecutive – and sometimes heavy – losses in this fixture, earning a well-deserved win in 2015 by 38 points to 29. The Cru were hopeful of keeping the 'Mac Cup' again, to fill out an ever-growing trophy cabinet at our Team HQ at Roppongi Hobgoblin.

The annual game between Tokyo Crusaders and YCAC is a memorial game to remember Gareth Macfayden, a No. 8 who turned out for both the Cru and YCAC for many years, before he tragically died in an unfortunate accident in 2001. Since then, both clubs have played an annual fixture in his memory, affectionately known as the 'Mac Cup' with the Cru winning the first game 6-5 and YCAC holding an overall lead in victories 12 to 5. As is usual, and unlike friendly matches or training at Koiwa on a Sunday morning, we had about 40 players put their hands up as available for this prestigious fixture. Come kick-off time, we had a strong Crusaders outfit ready to try and retain the Cup on this most special of days.

International Referee Steve Lewis was unfortunately injured the week before the game, so we were lucky and appreciative of the local Kanagawa referee who was able to step in at late notice and allow the game to go ahead. A minute's silence in memory of Gareth was held impeccably and then it was down to business. Every member of the Cru looked ready to go, with fire in their eyes and minds switched on thinking about the first conga-line/order of 8 jugs of rum and coke/time we get asked to keep the noise down tackle or hit up of the day.

Brendan G had the earliest ever substitution in a Mac Cup game coming off with a head injury after about 30 seconds, to be replaced by Gen. YCAC started the brighter of the two sides and dominated early on, jumping to an early 12-0 lead through some soft defence and too many turnovers. We lost Seb to another injury mid-way through the first half, which hurt us at the breakdown and made things harder for us, losing his frenetic work-rate and efficiency at ruck time and in the loose. Lawrence bagged a much-needed try before half-time, and we were still in the contest at 5-12 down.

The second half started in a similar fashion to the first, with too many turnovers and the Cru not looking threatening enough with the ball or asking questions of the YCAC defensive line. Another try to YCAC made the score 19-5, before Lawrence was able to capitalise on a period of Cru dominance to score near the posts and bring us back into it at 19-12. YCAC quickly put paid to any Cru comeback with 3 more tries to put the result beyond doubt, ending with a 36-12 deserved victory to regain the Mac Cup.

Solid performances were put in by all, but we just weren't good enough on the day.

We'll need to step up our game after the Christmas break, and know what it takes in attack and defence when we play stronger teams such as YCAC. Matt Foster was named MVP by the oppo and we had plenty of jugs, beers and cheers in the YCAC Sports Bar with our teammates and opponents as we celebrated the memory of Gareth one last time, until we do it all again in 2018.



**Tash Bash**  
Cru Social 2016



Nov.19 - Report by Evan Hitchman





Normally, the Crusaders take an easy fixture on the first weekend of December, as the final friendly of the year. But this year, the Cru still held onto the Shuto League title race the following week, and so they opted for a tough fixture against Tokyo No.1, Superman RFC.

The last time that the Cru met Superman was back in the spring of 2014, after winning the Shuto league and progressing to the Champions' Cup. Superman outran the Cru 48-5. While the Cru won Tokyo Cup Division 2 in the spring of 2016, Superman won Division 1 for the first time in their club history.

On the same day, four Crusaders players were sent to the Shuto League representative team: Matt "Captain Jack" Sparrow, Joe "Thor" Flagler, Yuki "Yokozuna" Adachi, and Akihito "Japanese Hulk" Kashiwaba were all missing. By Thursday, we only had 10 players down to attend the match. The team called out for aid from afar. We thank all the helpers that came out to play: Sean's mate Seun, John Anderson from All France, rugby league player Hiroshi, and Gaku and Mitsuyoshi from Gen's high school OBs club.

It was the Cru's first time back on the Edogawa south side after construction. But there was no grass on the pitch: no green, all mud, except for some horrendous black wood left on the field. It might have embarrassed Ev Hitchman, affecting his line marking. He couldn't get the centre-line straight. The crappy field condition made both teams knock the ball on many times, feeding both sides' opportunities to practice scrums, and taking away any chances to score. A dozen scrummages ruled out our tighthead Hirokatsu, who had been engaged in drinking heavily at his friend's wedding party the previous night. Superman scored a try at 20 mins, but the Cru answered with a try by Brett, neatly stealing the ball at the line-out. Half time: Cru 7 - 7 Superman.

Despite the slippery condition, Owen, Tame and Jun organized the mid-field well, and often thrashed the opposition defensive line. Doug, at fullback, effectively gained meters by counter-attacking. Frank, Foster and Reece were being powerhouses as usual and making strong carries, with quick ball recycling from support by Gibbo and Chris. Travis came on at half time and made several storming runs, breaching the opposition 22m on occasion. However, our very own Keita, who has been selected for the national team's 7s training squad, thrashed the Cru defensive line and helped Superman to win the game. He made a huge contribution to the Cru's victory over the Gaijin some weeks ago, with four tries: now, he gave the same nightmare to us.

According to Superman's head coach, they were close to the 1st XV. Excepting the three tries from Keita in the 2nd half, the Cru fought evenly against the Tokyo no. 1. The Cru will have the chance to meet Superman twice again, in the Champions' Cup and the Tokyo Cup. It will be exciting to see how the two teams clash when they go head-to-head with their top squads.

It was still a mystery why we found the double-ended black dildo on the riverside. Presumably, it was from the college lacrosse girls who were on the field before us? Anyway, the dildo has been respectfully added to the Cru kit bag, along with several pink golf balls.



Dec.04 - Report by Glen Taylor



The 11th of December, 2016. The 'final' of the Shuto League 1st Division. The top two teams were to battle it out for the honour of being champion...and we, the Tokyo Crusaders RFC, were one of those two teams; last year's nemesis, Koryo RFC, the other.

After a longer-than-usual wait to see the points table posted, it had become clear that the Cru had played themselves into honours contention, standing at 24 points: second place, behind Koryo on 28. A maximum of 7 points were up for grabs, and we had to take at least 5 of those while denying Koryo even 1. A tall order at the best of times...

We knew what we had to do, and it was a very switched-on and pumped-up bunch that assembled at Tatsumi Station around 12:30. The mood of the day seemed to be 'go hard, or go home'!

This writer must confess to turning up late to the 14:20 KO at Tatsumi Ground (held up in Yurakucho getting his first ever 'smart phone'), just in time to see Jim A's 2nd try on the 16th minute, his first being just 9 minutes into the game. That's BS! It can't be.. but yes, the sideline assured me that we were already 2 tries up. Koryo had just had two quick tries scored against them and they seemed to be a bit shell-shocked. And then it was 3 (Jim A again, for his hat-trick only 23 minutes into the game); then it was 4 (Matthew F), and then it was 5 (Keita S) just on half-time. Koryo were trying, but the magic had gone, and they never recovered. Spectating from the sideline were Cru stalwarts Paul S, who had just flown in from HonKers and come directly to the ground, and OB Ryuji M, who both noted that the Cru were having 'one of those games'

Who stood out? Who was the hero doing the damage for the Cru? No-one in particular. The whole team were playing out of their skins. The front row of Reece M, An Y-S, and James C had gained ascendancy in the scrum. The locks in Frank S and Tom C were making powerful breaks up the field and creating 'go-forward'. Not to mention the back row of Rob G, Brett P-S, and Matthew F, who were all over the place in support. Basically, support and urgency were the factors that were putting Koryo to the sword. Incredibly, the Cru were up 33-0 at half-time thanks to the kicking of Matt S, who had put away 4 out of 5. So far, so good; mission accomplished. But a half still to go.

We had plenty of players on the sideline eager to get on and show their stuff, but that age-old mantra stuck in the mind: 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'. Only 1 half-time change.

15:12 saw the restart, and just 1 minute later Jim A waltzes over for his 4th of the day. This is testament to the luxury of having a halfback who runs the support lines of a centre. The 2nd half saw the backs come to the fore with tries to Dylan N-M, whose jinking runs, sideways, backwards(?), and all over, were confusing the hell out the opposition, not to mention his own players. Another try to Keita, who seemed to be frustratingly 'cooling his heels' on the wing, but will be remembered more for his amazing pass to...where? And to put the final nail in the coffin, a deserved try to Tomohiro T, who coming into the centres at half-time had up until that moment been known as the guy who had knocked on several times with the open line in sight. White-line fever, or just desperate Koryo defense?

**MVP: 5pts Mr.A, 4pts Foster, 3pts Brett, 2pts Lawrence, 1pt Joe / Reece / Cocksey / James**

**Dec.11 - Report by Stewart Henwood**





**Shuto League 2016 Final Standings**

Tokyo Crusaders	31 pts
Koryo R.F.C.	28 pts
All Jin Jan	24 pts
Tokyo Gaijin	22 pts
Tokyo Doctors	6 pts
Kichijoji Wild Turkey	4 pts
Olivers	1 pt
Nerima Club	Promote next season

**After match Cru Social 2016**

page 17

Speaking of defence...how do you play a team like Koryo and hold them to zero? Massive hits by Joe F out in the centres, Lawrence M and Jim A shutting down their No. 10, wings Gaet C/Keita and Dylan and good ol' 'safe-hands' Tsukasa K at the back shutting down Koryo's runs wide. They couldn't score through our backs, and they certainly didn't look like scoring through our forwards. Replacements were made in the second half, but the guys coming off the bench, Tavis S, Edward D, and Chris 'dazzle-the-opposition-front-row-with-his-teeth' Ford slotted in seamlessly.

Final score, an amazing 59-0 with Matt S slotting 3 out of 4 in the 2nd half.

We had taken the maximum of 7 points, Koryo had come away with none, and we stood clearly atop the League with 31 points as undisputed 2016 CHAMPIONS!

Not that it was all plain sailing, there was plenty of silly stuff to go around...

How about Rob getting away with a high tackle only to be smashed a split-second later? Lawrence's atrocious kick into touch (did it in fact go backwards)? Brett tackling Reece instead of the opposition, and Frank then pulling him out of a ruck thinking he was a Koryo player? Even Koryo bizarrely threw the ball out directly into touch.

Our vote for Koryo's MVP went to their No.10, and theirs went to our No. 8 Matthew Foster.

The aftermatch was held in the usual place when we play at Tatsumi, the Dan Mariya Izakaya, one station back. The Pub with the nomihoudai and the peeing-metre game in the urinal. Needless to say, good-natured shenanigans followed, with everyone but "Don't you #\$&# dare!" Gibbo losing their shirt pockets. A new 'game' was introduced where everyone had their scalps stabbed with toothpicks to see if they really would stand up...WHY?!

And to top all that off, outside the HUB, some random guy 'encouraged' his girlfriend to kiss the rather large dildo that now seems to be present at all major drinking sessions. Seriously, we should have got her number.



2nd Shuto League Title (2013, 2016)



'Twas the week before Christmas, and Shinjuku Hub  
was filled with Cru missing a good British pub.  
The committee had finished their meeting at last;  
Ev got the pints in. The die had been cast.

Gibbo and Reece snuck away from the crowd  
to go don their costumes before things got loud.  
The latter, a reindeer with oversized quads;  
the former, a whore set to milk Santa's rod.  
The pack soon arrived - a mob made of fools!  
Tables bedecked with cold Moscow Mules:  
old Skurry was wearing used pants on his head,  
Ryuji was wishing he'd stayed home in bed.

As pints were imbibed, the evening grew dim.  
'To the Hangover, then!' cried Tooley within.  
The taxis were summoned, and the Cru made their way  
to hit up the bar and ruin their day.

The idiot group soon streamed through the door  
and young couples on dates were rocked to the core:  
who were these brave souls? These gods amongst men?  
'The Shuto League champions,' we told them, 'again!'  
At length, the fish and chips finally arrived.  
Roppongi beckoned to those who survived.  
Our social sec breathed deep, and burst into song.  
With Ed at the helm, just what could go wrong?

On Tooley! On Gen! On Joe, Gaet and Neil!  
On Gibbo! On Owen! John, don't break the seal!  
On Adam! On Skurry! On Akiba, quick!  
Nomihoudai for 10 at Vivo, you dicks!

Alas! What happened that cold winter night?  
The unruly mob...had been put to flight!  
Just four noble souls went onward in glee  
while Gibbo engaged in degeneracy.

Ed, Owen and Reece then propped up the bar  
while Neil plied his trade. He'd soon head afar,  
leaving the Cru and his brothers behind,  
dear memories ever stuck fast in his mind.

The boys did their best, but ran out of steam.  
Then, the bartender smiled, his teeth in a gleam.  
a clear voice rang out, 'Boys, don't look so glum!'  
The large, flightless bird we call Sparrow had come.

Crushing cans, chopping pints,  
they bowed out in style,  
eating their breakfast kebabs with a smile.  
They cried out as one when  
the sun showed its light,  
'Merry Cru-mas to all! And to all a good night!'

His eyes, how they twinkled! His words, how they pleaded!  
His ginger hairline - my, how it receded!  
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry.  
Clearly the bastard was pumped to get merry.

It was time to smash Gmo's, and the troupe made their way  
to go bang some drums and to greet the new day.  
Next, onward to Train Bar, Neil's favourite place:  
'It's my last night in Tokyo. Let's end in disgrace.'  
Just three were now standing: two men looking queer  
with the third in a skirt and dressed like a deer.  
They kept with tradition, astonished the crowd...  
and belted Billy Joel's 'Piano Man' loud.

Crushing cans, chopping pints, they bowed out in style,  
eating their breakfast kebabs with a smile.  
They cried out as one when the sun showed its light,  
'Merry Cru-mas to all! And to all a good night!'



Dec.17 - Shinjuku / Nakano-Sakaue / Roppongi Pub Crawling





Friendly Match 2017

vs. All France

22 - 32

page  
19

MVP: 5pts Joe Lucas, 4pts Reece, 3pts Sparrow, 2pts Gibbo, 1pt Ander

Nous sommes arrivés le matin avec une grosse gueule de bois. Frank n'a pas arriver. Nous avons 16 joueurs en bonne santé pource match. Certains des joueurs n'étaient pas ivres!

La composition de l'équipe était :

Garçon invisible : Evan

Garçons rapides : Makinde and Taka

Un autre jeton american : Ander

Jeton américain : Joe

Gingembre et garçon poilu: Owen

Gingembre garçon: Sparrow

Gros garçons: Ben, Gen, Hiro

Grands garçons : - Brett, Corey

Chuhai garçons : Reece

Blindside Flanker : Aurelien

Garçon qui aime regarder les autres hommes par derrière: Brett

Le jeu a commencé, et peu de temps après les croisés ont obtenu leur premier essai du jeu. Joe a intercepté le ballon et a marqué un essai facile. Yes ! Even Americans play rugby ! Evan a converti l'essai. Crusaders 7-0

Toute la France a ensuite marqué 2 essais. Ils ont dominé le ruck et ont déchiré les Croisés un trou du cul nouveau. All France 10-7.

Puis de nombreux joueurs sont blessés. The Crusaders started dropping like flies, one injury after the other. Brett dut s'en aller en raison d'un rectum distendu, Gen a été remplacé en raison de botulisme et Owen contracté la lèpre qui reposait dans son oreille tombant ogg!

Nous avons été très chanceux d'avoir de nombreux joueurs japonais du match précédent rejoindre notre équipe, y compris M. Goto qui a marqué un grand essai pour remettre notre équipe en tête. Nice try Goto-san!

Evan a donné un discours stimulant et a imploré les joueurs de ne pas kicker. Ne pas frapper le ballon. Evan: "Why did you kick for f#&% Sake!". Chaque fois que Evan a obtenu le ballon il a donné des coups de pied la balle. Evan est un midget et nous ne devrions jamais lui donner le ballon à nouveau, sous peine de mort.

Toute la France Rugby Team a marqué un essai de plus avant la mi-temps pour reprendre la tête. C'était la faute d'Evan.

Au second semestre, nous avons continué à faire pression sur la ligne d'opposition. Reece était dans beaucoup d'espace et serait sûrement marquer un essai. Il a appelé à droite, à droite, à droite, à droite - et bien sûr que le nain de gingembre a passé à Corey et la balle a été abandonnée! Sacre bleu! Evan please learn your left from your right and get those ears cleaned so you can pass to a wide open Reece and the rest of the entire team instead of passing it inside to an unsuspecting flat-footed forward on the blindside! Travis a rejoint le jeu pour ajouter un peu de comédie. Première fois que j'ai vu quelqu'un jouer au rugby en pyjama. Travis et "Long Johns" - ooh la la!

Joe et Reece ont marqué quelques bons essais pour garder le score proche, mais la France entière était trop forte. Tout le club de rugby de France a gagné une victoire méritée dans ce jeu 32-22. Thank you to All France for the game. They certainly were the better team and enjoyed a deserved victory.

Jan.29 - Report by Francis Hitchman





So the CRU gathered for the first game back after a limp performance against All France, faced with a stern test against PSI Supersonics. Last year we had lost a relatively close battle against a mix of Tokyo Bay and PSI – with no bench – and a few players having played on the Saturday as well. This year, it was a straight PSI team, undiluted by Tokyo Bay. PSI are a 7s outfit that feeds the Japan national 7s team, and are typically armed with terrifying amounts of gas. We knew that if we were to offer them any kind of resistance, then we would need to play an intelligent 15-man game. Keep hold of the ball, make yards with a bigger pack, keep them on the back foot and basically play some horrible rugby!

We rocked up to Shin-Shibamata station with a solid squad of 20 players on what looked to be a nice day for a game. Spirits were high and Corey's usual eclectic mix of 80s battle anthems got the juices flowing during the brief stroll to the pitch. However, we arrived at a lumpy, farking cold, dry dust-bowl with no lines marked and a savage cross wind. Also, the PSI squad seemed to be there in force, with practically all of the 'ringers' that frequent the Tokyo amateur rugby circuit, including Japan 7s international Jamie Henry (the Crusaders' nemesis and No. 1 target for a drive-by shooting) plus two monstrous Tongans to boot. They also sported the wee ma,n James Corbyn, and the Roppongi ladies' (and not to mention Tokyo tanning salon's) favorite, Dylan Nakamunemile-something-or-other...I'll refer to him as Dyldo from here on in, as it's more fitting.

...and lastly, Jackie rocked up and got stuck into his usual solo warm-up, although this time with a baby's dummy in his mouth. If anyone has an explanation for this, I'd be very interested to hear it... So – those high spirits I mentioned earlier were royally shat on. Thankfully, under further investigation, it appeared that the two monstrous Tongans were drunk and on the back end of a rough night in Roppongi's Seventh Heaven, so had little appetite to play. Dyldo put a Cru shirt on for the first half, and Corey dutifully put on a PSI shirt as they were a man down. Due to the lack of a full front row from PSI, we were forced to accept non-competitive scrums to our disadvantage.

Anyway, play got underway and – as suspected – the conditions were horrible. The ground was cold and hard, people's boots were filled with stones and the cross wind made for a very messy game, as well as blowing dust into everyone's eyes. Nonetheless, we stuck to our game plan, tucked the ball under our jerseys and made some hard yards off our usual phase play, which worked well. It's been too long to remember exactly what happened, but we went over the line in muscular fashion 4 times in the first half – scored by Foster, Reece, Sparrow and Brett in that order. Sparrow slotted 1 from 4 conversions, blaming the conditions for his wayward boot (because as we know he's normally like a laser guided missile...!). One kick from under the posts incredibly managed to stay under the posts! However, whenever PSI did manage to get their hands on the ball, the danger lurking in their back line was released and our scores were countered by 3 rapid tries which were, to be honest, far easier on the eye. We took a 22-17 lead into the break and could be relatively happy with our work. I would love to end this match report there and not mention the second half but unfortunately it did actually happen...

So, I'll keep it short: basically, through a series of careless penalties, knock-ons and turnovers, we enjoyed far less possession in the second half (in fact it was about 5%). Consequently, PSI unloaded all over us like Peter North in his pomp during the 1990's. Keita and Jamie Henry literally skipped their way through our back line, running off Dyldo at pace (shamelessly wearing a PSI shirt now). While it was galling to play against, some of the speed, lines and criminal side steps on display were very impressive (not from Dyldo, obviously). Notably, both players have now signed top league contracts and so shouldn't be able to inflict any more pain on us. We shipped 7 tries without reply and to add insult to injury, Corbyn slotted 6 out of 7 conversions!.....I guess the wind must've died down in the second half, eh Sparrow??

A few talking points over our ringo-his and katsu curries were as follows: – Brett's clothesline tackle and numerous other misdemeanors – Jackie having a torrid 80 minutes, including a dump tackle from Dyldo, a slap from Reece, a near boot to the face from me and then a glorious charge down the wing, only to be hauled back for stepping into touch...by a grinning Reece! – Foster doing his usual 'Mate, I've got to go off, my knee f\*cking wrecks' speech at 50 minutes because he can't be arsed to play anymore.

**MVP: 5pts Reece, 4pts Foster, 3pts Brett, 2pts Cocksey, 1pt Sparrow**

**Feb.12 - Report by Tom Cocks**

**Friendly Match 2017**  
**vs. PSI**  
**22 - 64**



**Cup Winners' Cup Match 1**  
**Edogawa league Champion**  
**vs. Black Eye's**

**40 - 26**

**RESERVES**

Aurelien Thillay	Brendan Gallagher
John Gorman	Hirokatsu Mori
Junior Misumi	Tavis Satin
	Corey Carter

page 21

Feb.19 - Report by Brett Pentland-Smith

The opening round of the Champions Cup saw the Cru take on the Blackeyes at Inagi Nagamine – a ground notorious for its warm-up area, akin to a children's sand pit. Despite it being the heart of winter, they were lucky enough to have clear skies and no wind. A perfect day for rugby.

Coming off 2 hard losses in friendlies, the Cru were up for a big one. All the big men pitched up (except Downer), and they were well-focused to take on a champion team. Receiving the kick off, it took just 2 minutes for the Cru to make their first break. Jimmy took the ball down the blind side of a ruck, shaking off 2 defenders and running into space. Looking over his shoulder, he found a lock flanker running a great line on his inside. Like MJ of the past, he attempted to lob the ball over the defender, only to be slapped backwards. The keen flanker, however, was not to be outdone: Brett scooped the ball up and ran in the final 20m, untouched, to score under the posts. The Cru never lost the lead again.

Within 20 minutes, the Cru stretched the lead to 21-0 with a try to John and a second to Brett. At some point, Owen got white line fever and bamboozled himself out of a try, and Joe thought he was back on a football ground, administering a forward pass not unlike Peyton Manning. Meanwhile, as predictable as Gibbo's intentions in Thailand, Reece went off with a stuffed ankle, giving the big man, Brendan, a run. Tavis also came on for Kashi to add some grunt to the pack.

Despite being up on the scoreboard, the Cru were still giving away penalties aplenty. At half time, they had given away 7 and received just the 1. Furthermore, the Blackeyes were still playing hard and fast rugby, never giving the Cru an inch they didn't deserve.

The first few minutes of the second half were all Blackeyes: they managed to cross the whitewash in the fourth minute. Three minutes later, Frank decided to behead one of the smaller guys which cost him 10 minutes in the bin. To add insult to injury, they scored another 5 pointer to make it a 9-point game. In danger of trying to coast to the finish line, Cocks had to galvanize the men and keep them going. Sparrow threw a few strong words in there too. It seemed to work as, even with a man down, the fresh legs of Tavis crashed over to add another five to the scoreboard.

After 10 minutes of really intense arm-wrestle type play, Blackeyes tried for a chip into space at the back. The man of debut, G-Sup, went back to collect. Under pressure and with very little room to maneuver, he managed to break the line and then run in an 80m try – easily the try of the game! Just 3 minutes later, G-Sup made another break and scored under the post. At 40-12 and just 10 minutes or so to play, the bench was switched out giving everyone a run. As it tends to happen, this opened up a few holes that were exploited quickly by the Blackeyes, who ran in another 2 tries. At the final whistle, the score read 40-26 to the Crusaders. A hard-earned victory!

Foster, despite not scoring any points, had been menacing around the park and so was crowned MVP by the opposition. 3-2-1's went to G-Sup, Foster, Joe, Jimmy and then Brett, as voted for by the lads themselves. Okonomiyaki was waiting for the lads at Dotonburi and few pints were put back to celebrate a great win!



Recommended song while reading 'Fever for the Flavor' by Hot Action Cop

The day was Sunday, the day after Saturday, and the Crusaders had barely arrived at Shin-Shimabata station...unlike our TeamSnap roster had suggested. Hangovers were in the air, and bathrooms were horribly put to shame.

While walking to the Edogawa Pitch, we noticed the weather was less windy than our last meeting against Jackie and his Queens of PSI. The lack of wind gave the Mighty Cru a breath of life, as we could take on anything that Allah brought to our feet. Conversations were full of life as many topics were discussed: pro-league rugby upsets; pope porn, planning for the Taiwan tour, and Foster watching gay porn with his mate when they were kids.

We finally arrived to the pitch and began our transformation into rugby players. We could see our opponent in the distance, preparing for the Champions Cup that we both so eagerly needed. The warm- went as planned until Sparrow forgot to have us open the gate - a vital part of every game, necessary for our success. We thought that demise was surely in our future, until we saw a bike in the distance. Was it Travis? Reece? No it was our very own Tooley, riding in looking like a Pee-Wee Herman wannabe, coming to our rescue to help paint the pitch (which was very straight if I might add, almost like a circle).

The game kicked off and we went from a friendly Sunday to the middle of a war field. We scored right away with Shinichi, letting Nerima know that we meant business. We had to pick up the weight for some of our more experienced players, as they were not among us: one in particular was Reece "My Ankle Hurts" Morgan. It was a brutal fight during the first half with John, Dylan the Dildo, and Tavis promoting our score even further. Nerima even tried to dwindle our force by kicking Matt Sparrow in his Frankfurter, crippling him for a few moments. 5 minutes before the half, Matt "I Need a Break" Foster went down momentarily for his knee, which he shook off right before the whistle blew, leading us to half time.

The second half started like a shart. Nerima clearly wanted that W, but even as much as they tried, we held on. The match continued and for every mistake we made, Nerima capitalised and made us pay for it. After a ruck had been formed, Corey "Balls in my Face" Carter did just as his nickname says: he caught a ball in his face, making a familiar slapping sound that a preteen would know from certain movies on the internet. The ball went back and Nerima stole it, getting a try almost instantly. We managed to maintain our lead, and Nerima never came back, and so we finished our game on top as planned. We named our MVPs Dildo from the Cru and the scrumhalf from Nerima (which we named incorrectly - go figure).

The Game had been won and we went to enjoy some drinks in Tooley's backyard. Key points from the bar are as follows:

62 yrs old Tooley

Mighty Joe Young enjoying maybe a little too much

Rob never finishing his Buffalo

Tavis never doing a Buffalo

Frank's boots literally falling apart on the pitch

Tongue Punching Mother Theresa's Fartbox

Signing out here. This message has been brought to you by Corey "Balls in My Face" Carter.

And remember...wherever you go, that is where you are.







It all came down to this. With two strong sides – Blackeyes and Mandala – trampled underfoot, it was no surprise that the Tokyo Crusaders and the Tokyo Gaijin would meet in the Champions' Cup final. The gaijin derby would take place once again, promising a brutal 80-minutes of forward-focused physicality.

Although the Gaijin squad seemed...remarkably different from usual, the Cru were unfazed, selecting their finest 15 for the clash. The tension could be cut with a knife as the two squads warmed up at opposite ends of the pitch. The whistle soon blew, and the match began in earnest.

As expected, the game kicked off with storming runs from the Gaijin half, and equally brutal hits on the part of the Crusaders. Dylan put in the first crippling hit of the game, laying the full-back low – to his credit, he was soon back on his feet for the duration. After about ten minutes, some speedy play from the novel Gaijin centres took them over the line for the first converted try of the game. Losing composure, the Cru started to give away penalty after penalty, with Alex Herrera unfortunately receiving a yellow card. Capitalising on this drop in manpower, the Gaijin came flying in hard, but quick rucking and textbook tackling kept the ball away from the Cru line, often being turned over from spillages. Shortly after Herrera returned to the pitch, an overlap gave the Gaijin an easy opportunity to score their second try of the day.

Keen to get onto the scoreboard, the Cru managed to steal the restart, and after some set-up rucks, BoJo Foster built up a head of steam from miles behind play: when he caught the ball, not even the flying Fijians could stop him rolling in for a try. The next fifteen minutes passed by as a stalemate, with both sides ruining excellent breaks with foolish errors. It was an absolute war on the pitch, but a joy for the spectators to behold. The half-time whistle blew with the Gaijin leading 14-0.

The change of halves held much the same, with two opposing squads feverishly making breaks, falling back, and waging war across the middle twenty metres of the pitch. A missed tackle allowed the Gaijin wing to slip through a score another try. At this point, frustrated by the referee missing offences that the Cru considered worse than Herrera's yellow, a new fire was lit under the boys in blue, and the team that trounced Koryo reared its head once again. Rob broke through the centre for one, with another following shortly after. At this point, the notoriously short Gaijin temper saw Tavis carted off to hospital after a brutal elbow to the face, the referee shaking the opposition player's hand before giving him a red card. Hmm.

MVP: 5pts Foster, 4pts James, 3pts Cocksey, 2pts Luke, 1pt Brett

Mar.19 - Report by Reece Morgan

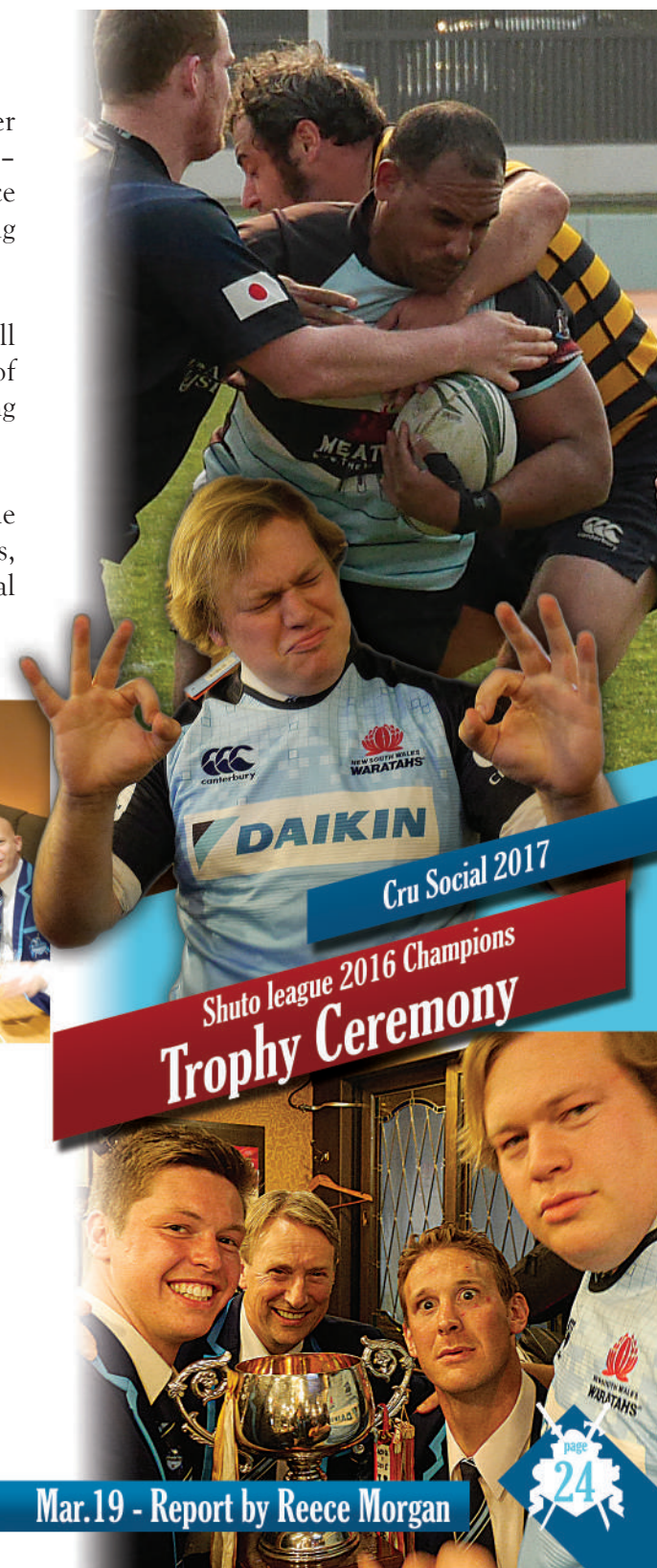


Incensed at this, the Cru soon rolled back in for another try, leaving the score at 22-19 in Crusader favour. Another error let the Gaijin through again, taking it to 26-22. Breaking their way down the pitch, it came to the last play – although the Crusaders felt on the verge of taking victory, the referee called the ball trapped in a ruck...just as Reece was about to pass it out. The whistle blew, much to Crusader chagrin and Gaijin delight. At 26-22, after storming performances from both sides, the Gaijin took victory.

If there's one true winner from the day, though, it must be the fans. Treated to Kanto's true gaijin derby (sorry, All France!), it was a game replete with massive hits, textbook scrummaging and hard running lines. Both sides came out of it with one thought on their minds: what a game. With one cup apiece, the two sides clearly look forward to meeting one another in the Tokyo Cup, for the deciding match of the 2016/17 season.

After the game, given that Monday was a holiday, the Cru opted to go large. The Four Horsemen made their way to the Shuto League Awards night, sweeping the board and claiming the trophy. After the Hub rendezvous with crying girls, plenty of chu-ing and a Loving Feeling being Lost, things carried on into the night and the foundations for managerial roasting were laid (in a manner of speaking).

The Gaijin MVP was one of the Yokoyama twins. We look forward to seeing them on the pitch again!







The Crusaders are a cursed bunch.

For another year running, the weather gods saw fit to drop the spring warmth for a day, and assault the Akigase rugby pitch with biting wind and furious rainfall. Most Crusaders recoiled in horror; the British amongst us felt a warm nostalgia for the days of high school rugby. Nonetheless, the pull of meat and beer was too strong, and the squad soon descended on Nishi-Urawa station and its well-placed umbrella vending machine.

Upon arrival at the pitch, it was clear that the other squads were slightly more sensible than us that morning, with a large chunk of our opposition contracting debilitating illnesses and realising that they had unmissable commitments. After some confusion, and Genta changing the running order for no clear reason, it was decided that the teams could borrow players from one another. All France and the Tokyo Gaijin joined forces; Ottawa and Toda cycled between one another, and NS Ruggers found themselves bolstered by half the American military.

#### Game 1: vs. NS Ruggers

Completely forgetting that they were supposed to have warmed-up, the Cru were hit hard by the NS Ruggers onslaught. Pinned down from the off, and too cold to run around, it was only a couple of minutes before the opposition breached our try line and took the first points of the game. As the wake-up call sounded, the Cru returned with renewed vigour – Tom Cocks enjoying his new placement in the centres – and a storming run from Foster saw their first try, Sonny Bill-ing the ball to Reece just before the try line. As NS Ruggers realised that the Cru were going to just plough through with the forwards all day, they turned their attention to breaking the rucks. However, returning scrum-half Steve Howden passed it out wide to Owen, who ran in and converted one of his own.

Play resumed in much the same way. After several set-ups from Rob and Mighty Joe Young, a pick-and-go saw Reece barrel through the centre, only to be stopped shortly before the try line. Returning the favour from earlier, a reluctant pass to Foster saw the ball roll in for the third try of the day. At this point, the pace of 10s rugby finally caught up with the boys, and a classic Hirokatsu fumble saw NS Ruggers break down the wing for a second try of their own. After a quick bosh from Joel, Rob struck back by putting another try in for the Cru shortly before the final whistle.

#### Game 2: vs. All France

The question of 'where the f\*\*k have Junior and Yuuta gone?!' was answered when Toda took the pitch, stealing our boys back. In punishment, we made them play immediately after they came off, and put them to task against All France and their Tokyo Gaijin support. Play was broadly similar to the NS Ruggers game, with Foster, Rob, and Good Joe putting in shifts around the pitch, Aurelien taking to second row like a duck to water, and Hiro running miles behind play trying to catch his breath and keep his ramen down.

A shout-out must go to Jake here, making his Cru debut while on holiday from the States. For a mild-mannered and eternally smiling chap, he was ruthless in the tackle, flattening the All France backs and doing some mighty charges of his own. As the Cru racked up tries in quick succession, Jake found himself at the back of an overthrown lineout near the 5m line. Snatching it from the air and rolling some poor bloke over, he stormed in for a debut try with a grin that said 'I'm just happy to be here'!



## Gondor Calls for Aid

Given the slightly devastated numbers of the other squads, we did our best to help out. Jake, Good Joe, and Jon Ball in particular put in big shifts for the opposition squads, as mercenary as the Crusaders of old. Big hits and big runs – the kind that, for some reason, rarely happen when they play with the Cru(!) – were rife that day, as the awful conditions slowed the opposition to a crawl. Cheers to everyone who helped out, and made sure that the games went smoothly.

## Decisions, Decisions

All six round-robin games had been played, and the finals had been set. Ottawa would clash with NS Ruggers; All France would play the Gaijin, despite having ten men between them; and, of course, the Cru would take on the mighty Toda Over the Top for the Meat Cup itself.

They would, but they didn't.

Despite the freezing rain and cold, the wizards standing at the BBQ pits had got two roaring fires going. The smell of coal and meat; the sudden appearance of beer; the warmth...it was too much to bear. With only a modicum of hesitation, it was unanimously decided that no-one cared about rugby any more, and everyone wanted to get a feed on.

Jerry, Jon and Seth had outdone themselves, bringing everything needing for a kick-ass BBQ, even in the adverse weather. The raffle went off well, with some brilliant prizes on show; the Meat Guy's burgers and sausages were a panacea to the masses, and everyone had a bloody good time.

After deciding that the Meat Cup champion would be decided by a boat race, the Cru organised six of their finest lagnernauts to take on Toda...who left without saying anything.

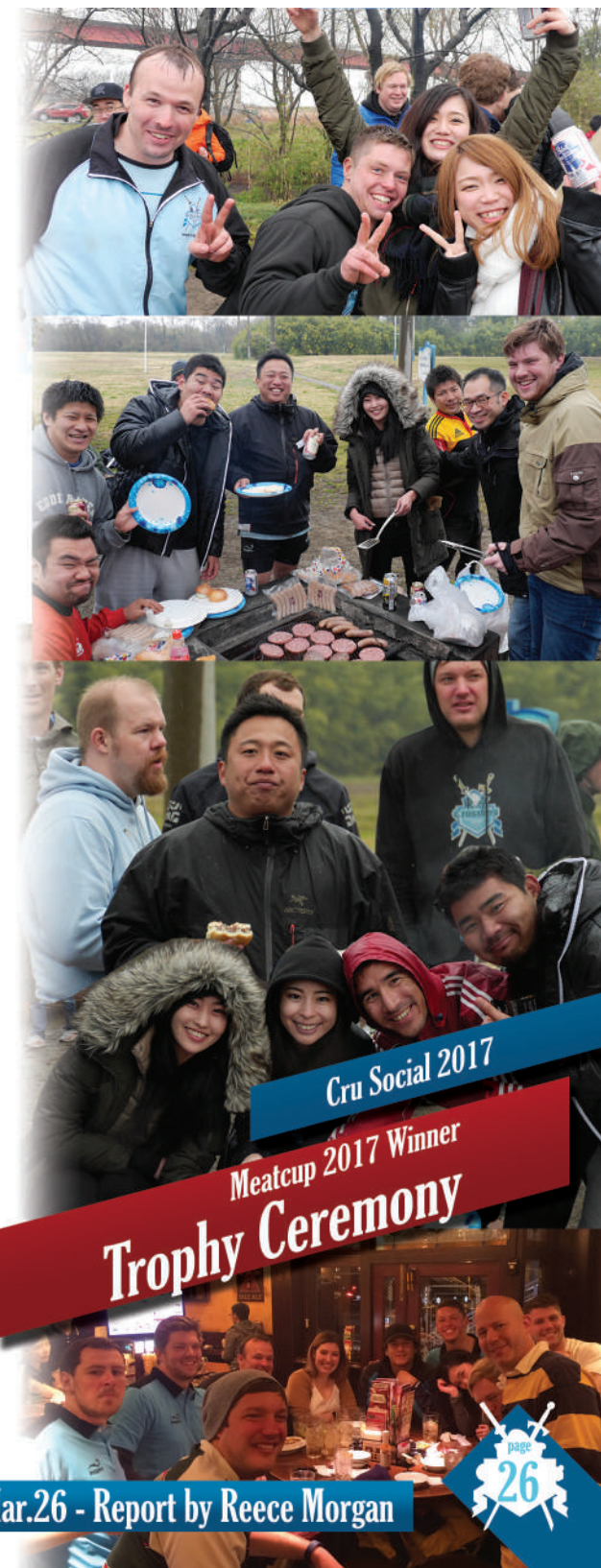
The Crusaders were the 2017 Meat Cup champions, in the sweetest way – by default!

After the party wound down, several brave souls made their way onto Ueno Hub, where Good Joe was forced to drink four Dynamite Kids in a row, Bad Joe woke up in a cold and empty Chofu station, and cocks were blocked. Temporarily.

We'd like to thank the referees, All France, the Tokyo Gaijin, Toda Over the Top, Ottawa and NS Ruggers for making the trip out on such an awful day, playing great rugby and immediately agreeing to choosing food over rugby. We hope to catch you boys next year too.

Big thanks, of course, to all our sponsors and those who offered raffle prizes, for making it such a smooth event. Congratulations to the Meat Cup committee for pulling it off despite...well, everything. I think Sparrow put it best – I'm never doing this again.

See you in 2018, gents!







### Pt. 1 – The Beginning

Recommended song while reading  
'The Art of Losing' by American Hi-Fi

So there he was: Reece. In a pub, by himself, drinking with two trophies and pretending he had just beaten Hitler during WWII. To us he was Reece, but to him...he was just drunk. The night was supposed to start early, but ended up ending early the next day. Our battle cries were heard amongst Roppongi and Shibuya as we had walked into the Hub, one of our proud sponsors...

Many conversations took place much that we cannot remember, but apparently I made Reece my unborn child's godfather – which, for him, will probably be his greatest achievement. It was nearly 6pm before the first buffalo took place (Foster). And then, the shenanigans launched into full force, destroying pride and livers. At about 7pm we rushed down the street and jumped into a taxi: I was fortunate enough to ride with Cocksy and Reece (I'd rather have had a conversation about politics with Gen and Hiro).

We had arrived at our destination – Hobgoblin – and they were expecting us and our trophies. The bar had a slight sense of hope gleam through the door. After making our acquaintance with the rest of the Cru, our food and drinking for two hours began. Trophy-drinking and hurtful comments flew through the air like a bird in a blender.

The food was great and the company was better. Sparrow had just won a free trip to Taiwan for missing so many kicks during the season, (what a bargain, right?). After our time was up, we moved to our trusted sponsor Geronimo's, but sadly there was a birthday party and we were not invited. We decided to rendezvous at Two Dogs Taproom instead. Then, finally, it happened: we had begun the transcendence into Coyote Ugly.

While picking up some groupies from Hobs, we started enjoying the music – some of us a little too much. Foster experienced his first body shot off...something, and then his chest; we all got stuck in and the party ended by losing Tavis to the night and guzzling all the water.

### Part 2: Punishment

Recommended song while reading  
'Hangover' by Taio Cruz feat. Flo Rida

The day began for me, and probably most of us, by waking up to 20+ messages from our beloved Gibbo, saying "Wake up, Wake up, I need you." In Foster's humble apartment, Jerry had just rolled over into his corndog when we decided it was time to start our day, smelling as badly as our dreams had been broken a few hours prior. We left, stepping over Foster who had decided to make his bed in the hallway of his flat: not moving much at all, just blocking the door. The walk to the station seemed like forever until Jerry and I saw a Family Mart, and decided it was time for magic liquids to help us throughout the day.



When we had arrived at the station, we were greeted by a full team of 11 people, not like TeamSnap had suggested (I'm starting to see a trend here). We had three of our trusted players MIA – well two at least – Foster was in his flat rotting away in his shame-filled endeavors; Sparrow had decided to become a bird and not give a sh\*t about coming to our aid, and Ed, well...Ed is Ed.

There we were at moments before the whistle blew where we wished that a rain storm would come in and cancel the event. Frank had just chu'd Reece prior to warm-ups, and Frank chu'd himself for whatever reason. The pitch was blurry and everyone one of us smelled like a brewery, but we kicked the ball off and nothing else mattered...except everything.

Hiro led the charge as our captain for the first time. It was also his first time at hooker, and not the kind you'd find in Thailand either. We fought subpar and only the hope that the game would end kept us alive. Frank was out to kill that day, proving this by quickly receiving a yellow card. He responded respectfully to the ref with a 'F\*ck off!'. The clever bastard got to rest for 10 minutes.

We were caught off-guard – when Frank returned to the pitch – by not one, but two Matsudo tries. Then we jumped for joy as Seth (we missed him) gave us a breath of hope, and Reece stormed into the middle, his alcoholic flatulence propelling him past Matsudo into the sunset for a try. Matsudo kept pounding away at us until half-time.

The second half started as though Hellen Keller were in my position. The ball was right in my direction and as I touched and dropped it, I unintentionally kissed someone's shoulder. Our game was sloppy to say the least, but it was our payback for enjoying maybe a little too much the night prior. It kept getting worse as Ten lost his temper and called the ref an idiot, resulting in another yellow card. I saw the light as Seth had broken through and was stopped, but he passed me the ball on the 5 meter line which quickly resulted in a cartwheel on my part. And once again I was brought back to reality, and missed the try.

The last exciting moment, though, was when Frank quenched his bloodlust and skullf\*cked one of the opposition with his knee in full sprint, laying him out onto a stretcher. Alas, the whistle blew and we were off for yakitori, drinks, and regret.

Matsudo's MVP – No. 8, Kento Kano      Our MVP – Reece, for not cutting his eyebrow as badly as Tavis.

The bar was a nice change of pace, and the Cat-Splosion Hoody made a comeback with the other squad wishing they had our #SWAG. It was a calm era, with a few buffalos and eventually a boat race that never took off. We left the night early, and our beds were our faithful lovers that night. Well, except Gibbo, but you'll have to ask him about that.

Major props to our few that showed:

- |                   |  |  |                       |                       |
|-------------------|--|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Joel           | 2. Hiro (probably the best hooker EVAR!!)      | 3. Kenzu                                   | 4. Corey (That's me!) | 5. Gibbo (The legend) |
| 6. Aurelien (Ray) | 7. Reece (Foster's wannabe)                    | 8. Yuuta                                   | 9. Shunichi           | 10. Owen              |
| 11. Ten           | 12. Seth (He comes when you need him the most) | 13. Frank (He really likes it in the back) |                       |                       |
| 14. Hideo         | 15. Jerry "Puke in the Kitbag" Sysourath       |  |                       |                       |
- Subs: No-one. Thanks, Cru!

**MVP: 5pts Reece, 4pts Yuuta, 3pts Seth, 2pts Owen, 1pt Ten**







Dasewa was to be the first of our Tokyo cup matches, and for many players their first taste of the Tokyo Cup's peculiarities (not sure if that's the correct word: Frank offered some more colourful choices but they would be barely appropriate for a squaddie's stag-do, let alone a world-renowned and respected website such as this).

Peculiarities such as the requirement to be at the ground 80 minutes before kick-off. Although, being at the ground at all proved to be almost too difficult for Corey to manage, driving his car and being navigated by a slightly worse for wear Matt Foster.

Peculiarities such as proving you have a first aid kit which, thanks to our strong and stable (and absent) club captain, was – of course – missing. Tooley took this in his stride though, and jaunted off to buy a new one, whistling a merry tune as he skipped down the road. He didn't really: he was not a happy Kiwi.

Peculiarities such as only being allowed 4 backs to pick from; actually, this was more of a self-imposed rule...

The Crusaders opened up the scoring after 10 minutes – Foster with one of his trade mark water-buffalo-esque runs down the blind side – targeting the opposition full back who was both in fear of the leviathan baring down on him, and in awe at the speed at which he was arriving. Foster flattened him. Foster scored.

Dasewa quickly worked out that the Cru back line was somewhat less than mobile, and were able to run around the edges to dot down three unanswered tries. The Cru fought back with tries from Reece and Owen to level the scores, but from then until the last-minute try from Seth, it was all Dasewa on the scoreboard. It finished up as a 26-56 defeat, although the team put up a decent show of themselves given the circumstances: Tavis showed great strength in consistently breaking the line; Evan showed great tenacity in not shutting-up for the whole match, and Sparrow showed great skill in managing to appeal to the referee for a tackle infringement whilst he was being tackled.

More importantly, the loss didn't stop the festivities, led by a sidelined Zimbabwean in the Ojisan bar.

Also, a big thanks to Melissa, Madoka, Libby and others whose names I don't know for coming to help out as sideline staff.

MVP: 5pts Reece, 4pts G-sup, 3pts Tavis, 2pts Yuuta, 1pt Owen

Apr.15 - Report by Owen Morris





Crusaders takes Tokyo No.1 team Superman R.F.C. for 2nd time of the year and

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



It was a fine, bright Sunday where the Cru would normally schedule a match. However, owing to 'once in a few years' duties for the Tokyo Cup, the Cru sent some lads off to assist with match day for the other teams. Big thanks to the ten Crusaders in shining armour who spared their time to help, and maintain our good reputation with the TRFU organisers: Brett, Corey, Ed, Frank, Hiro, Joel, Menno, Owen, Sean, and Hiro's best mate Mamoru.

The crew met at Mitaka station in the early morning – half of them making a detour in search of Tooley's fabled 'cut lunch' – and headed to the stadium for 10am. Hiro served as captain for the day, bridging between the Japanese organisers and our own idiot troupe; Joel as touch judge for both games; Brett, Corey and Hiro were the medical staff, carrying one injured player off by stretcher. The majority of their time was spent watching the other teams.

One of two games of the day was in the elite division, Mandara vs. Komaba WMM, the latter of whom gave the Cru a solid whipping earlier in the year. Komaba successfully blew out Mandara 71-0, showing off their well-trained phase plays and strength. The other game, in the first division, was Kochijoji Wild Turkey vs. Koryo. The new-look Korean side, sporting several new faces and led by anew captain, rampaged and smoked Turkey with a 101-3 score, securing their playoff spot.

The Cru showed their team effort and hard work at the end of the day by breaking the ground down, dismantling the goal posts and collecting the astro. They then moved onto the traditional conbini beer trip and then back to the station. A few of them went to the pub at Kichijoji, and enjoyed extra drinks and encounters with the natives.

\*\*\*Calories burned\*\*\*

Goal post lifting  
Grass carpet lifting  
Trailer pushing  
50m sprint to catch the bus

\*\*\* Calories consumed\*\*\*

Cut lunch(?)  
Bento  
Some conbini snacks  
Post-match beers

MVP: 5pts Reece, 4pts G-sup, 3pts Tomo, 2pts Brett / Foster, 1pt Cocksey







Emails from Hiro are generally a cause for concern, but the news was wonderful: Yellowbacks couldn't field a team. We'd won by default! Although we had decided to offer Yellowbacks a friendly game, and so didn't tell the masses for fear of what would happen, those in the know opted to enjoy some libations, now that the game had lost its importance. Aiming to take the most of this, Reece headed off to Shichirin to get smashed; Cocks looked forward to another day of not being there; and Sparrow gave himself to the tender embrace of Downer and Gorman's wallets.

The sheer panic when Hiro emailed after midnight to say that the game was back on was palpable. His kit abandoned in some Roppongi joint, Sparrow made the flight over and the team assembled down at the ground to a familiar sight: all the flankers, none of the backs. With Rob banished again to the back line, some clever re-jigging saw a fired-up squad take to the field (Yuki moaning about how he couldn't prop aside) and the game began in earnest.

Instantly, the clouds opened and a golden ray of sun fell upon Brett, as angels began to sing. After a single ruck, the gods' chosen one made a break all the way to the opposition try line, before taking the restart and doing it again. A lack of restraint in defence gave a penalty, and allowed the Yellowbacks to slip back in, but Brett made his way in for another try - his third in the first fifteen minutes. With the Cru then pinned down on their defensive line, big shifts by Tom Cocks and Menno kept the opposition at bay, and the boys in blue lined up to beat the Yellowbacks down the wing. This they managed: noticing a massive blind-side gap, Owen and Foster's quick hands gave Reece a long break down the wing, popping it back to the golden boy with twenty metres to go. Although Brett bumbled the return pass, the two had made enough ground for Reece to repeat Logan's 'whoops!' moment, ignore Ev's request for the ball and ground it under the posts. A similar move then followed, but with Seth on the receiving end, handing off the full-back in the face to score his first of the season.

The Yellowbacks, suitably fired up and out for blood, scored two in quick succession before the restart, claiming a third after five minutes of hard work afterwards. Disappointed with Brett's lack of tries in the last few minutes, the gods directed their glory to Jon Ball, who scored an unbelievable...break away?...try down the wing, an 80m trundle with opposition bouncing off him as he went. Ten minutes later, Foster capitalised on the Yellowbacks injuries for another Crusaders try.

At this point, it was quickly becoming apparent that the Crusaders weren't in the best of shape. With few subs and injuries mounting, the back line had become an almost all-flanker party, with Brett and Rob in the centres and Reece on the wing. This lack of depth meant that the Cru resorted to their usual tight game, which wasn't working - indeed, the Yellowbacks slipped in for another try. A mammoth charge by Foster took another try, immediately answered by the Yellowbacks, before G-sup rounded things off with a try of his own. At 55-36, the Cru were victorious, earning the right to defend their first division spot. Captain Tom Cocks took the opposition MVP spot for a Shire horse-esque work-rate, with the opposition 8 taking our selection.

MVP: 5pts Brett, 4pts Cocksey / Reece / Foster, 3pts Menno, 2pts Owen, 1pt G-sup

May.28 - Report by Ghost Writer



Arriving at the Misato ground on a rainy day, the Cru were met – once again – by the sight of desolate numbers, players missing from the starting line-up, no Ed Downer, and not so much of a ginger hair from Tom Cocks. At least Frank brought good humour with his four-sizes-too-small tshirt. Still, this was the final: the final game; the final chance to prove ourselves fit to stay in the first division and, for Menno, Foster, Reece and Jon, the final game for the Cru. Giving Foster the armband (his first and last captain game for the Cru) and with a new, stylish 3-man lineout to boot, things looked hopeful, and despite the familiar back-line issues the Cru took to the pitch with passion.

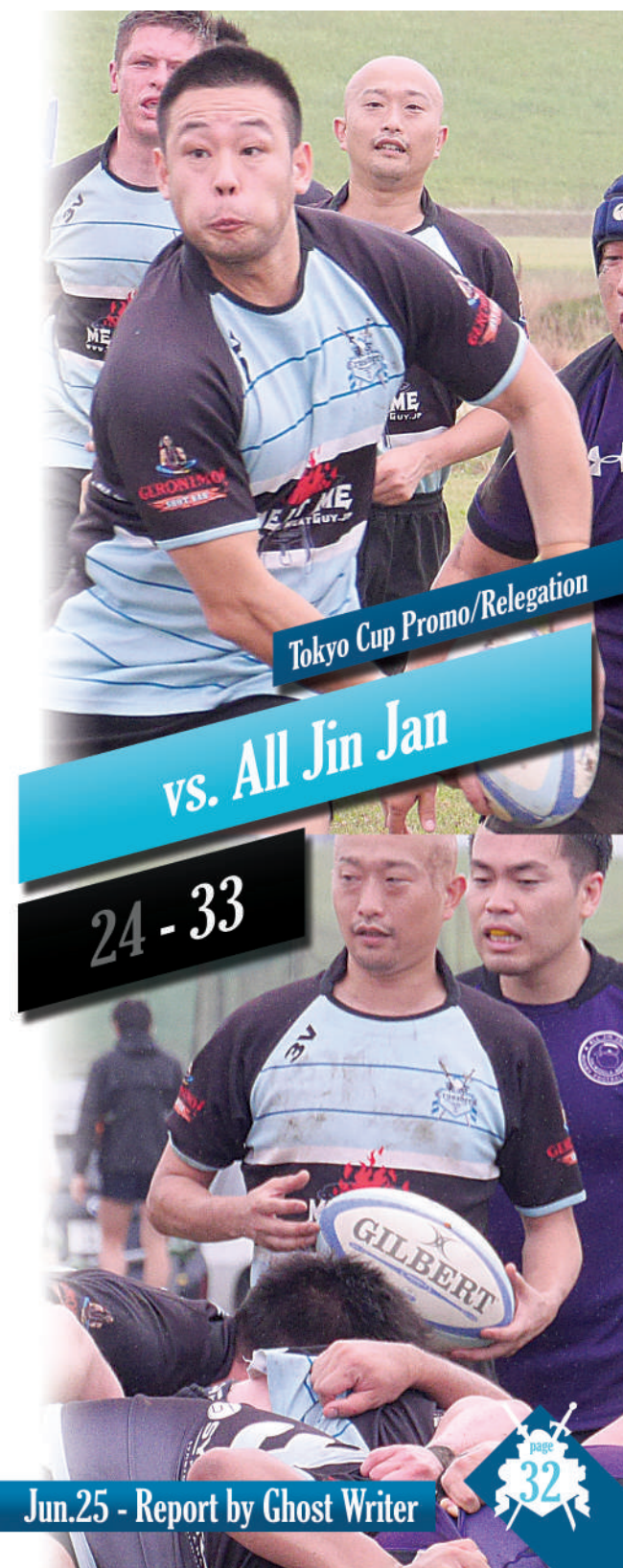
The first few minutes went by largely without note – AllJinJan took the offensive, but the Cru rallied and kept them at bay, until an unfortunate missed tackle allowed them through. Yuuta was soon put in the blood bin with Brendan entering the field, making a big impact in the first scrum by pointing out the ladybug beneath. Some slick play by the opposition earned them another try, and Menno was brought in from the cold to replace the injured Frank. Big runs by Foster and Tavis pushed further up the pitch, and with Gen brought in to replace Yuuta for a second time, the forwards made ground play-by-play. A head clash took Reece off with a bit of claret, and Corey took to the flank until the half, showing some great support play that allowed Tomo to jink past the opposition for the Cru's first try. Unfortunately, Menno then decided to get himself binned, taking the Cru down to 14 shortly before an opposition try.

The restart brought much of the same – Foster and Reece battling for season MVP, the former with big charges up the pitch and the latter pressing the back-line hard; Tavis nowhere near any rucks, and Rob Galbraith getting really cold at centre. Tomo, pulling off another 'I'm actually a 120kg linebacker, not a Krillin cosplayer' swept through the opposition line for a second try, soon compounded by the eternally impossible to understand Gsup. Taking the lead for the first time in the game, and with bad boy Menno back in action, things were looking up for the Cru: unfortunately, we lost the ref, and with penalty after penalty coming our way and going nowhere near AJJ's plays, it soon became a monumental task. Full-back Brett played phenomenally in his new position, and brought run after run from depth to keep play in the middle half of the field. The opposition quickly made ground and scored, however, and despite Gen rolling on the floor for eight minutes to slow them down, they were soon back in the Cru half. As Owen practiced his golf swing in the corner – twat – the Cru made a great defensive effort, Foster sacking lineouts to keep the boys on the 5m line. After some dirty moves from the opposition 12, which of course went unnoticed, AJJ scored again, and Frank called some bad news: only one minute left.

Looking for blood in that last minute, Sparrow sent the ball soaring high, landing just in front of the AJJ hooker – who was immediately bulldozed in the kidneys by Reece, refusing to bow out in this most important of finals. It turned out, however, that there were six minutes left to play. The aforementioned injury softened the AJJ scrum, and the Cru were able to make much-needed ground. After one tiny slip, though, and AJJ were through for the last try of the game, and a disappointed squad heard the final whistle blow.

It's never enjoyable to lose a game, particularly one as important as this, but the Cru did well in spreading their strength and had plenty of solid plays to show for it. Above all, no-one was too upset: after all, the final game was over, and although it was bittersweet for the Four Horsemen to lose their last game, the call of ringo-hai from Matsudo ojisan bar was the sweetest end to the day.

**MVP: 5pts Tomo, 4pts Brett, 3pts Foster, 2pts Reece, 1pt Tavis**



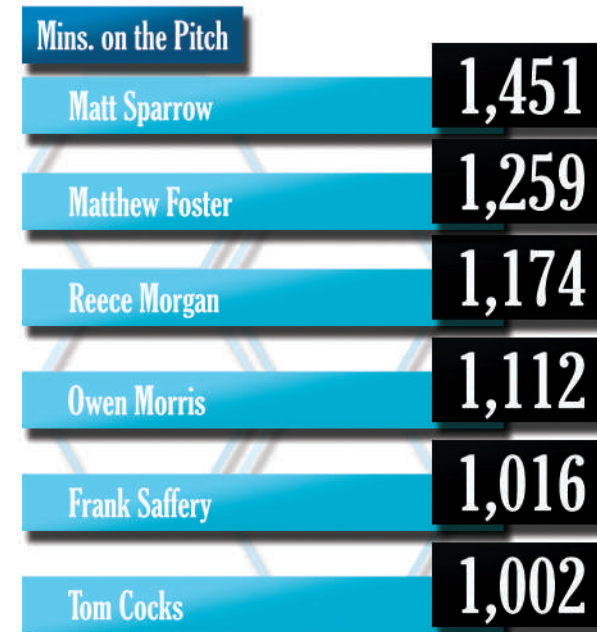
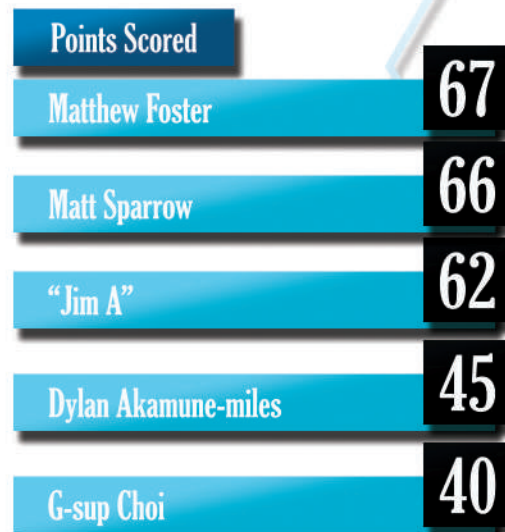
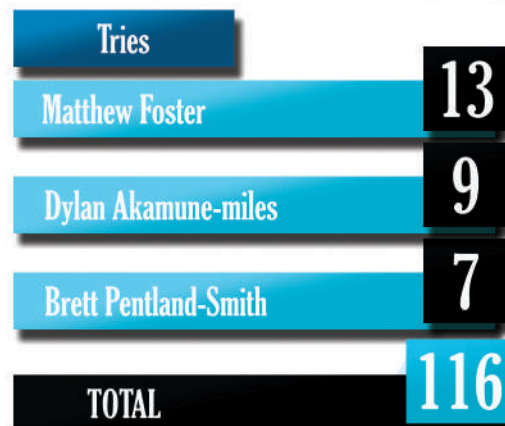
**Jun.25 - Report by Ghost Writer**





2016-17 Season

By Numbers







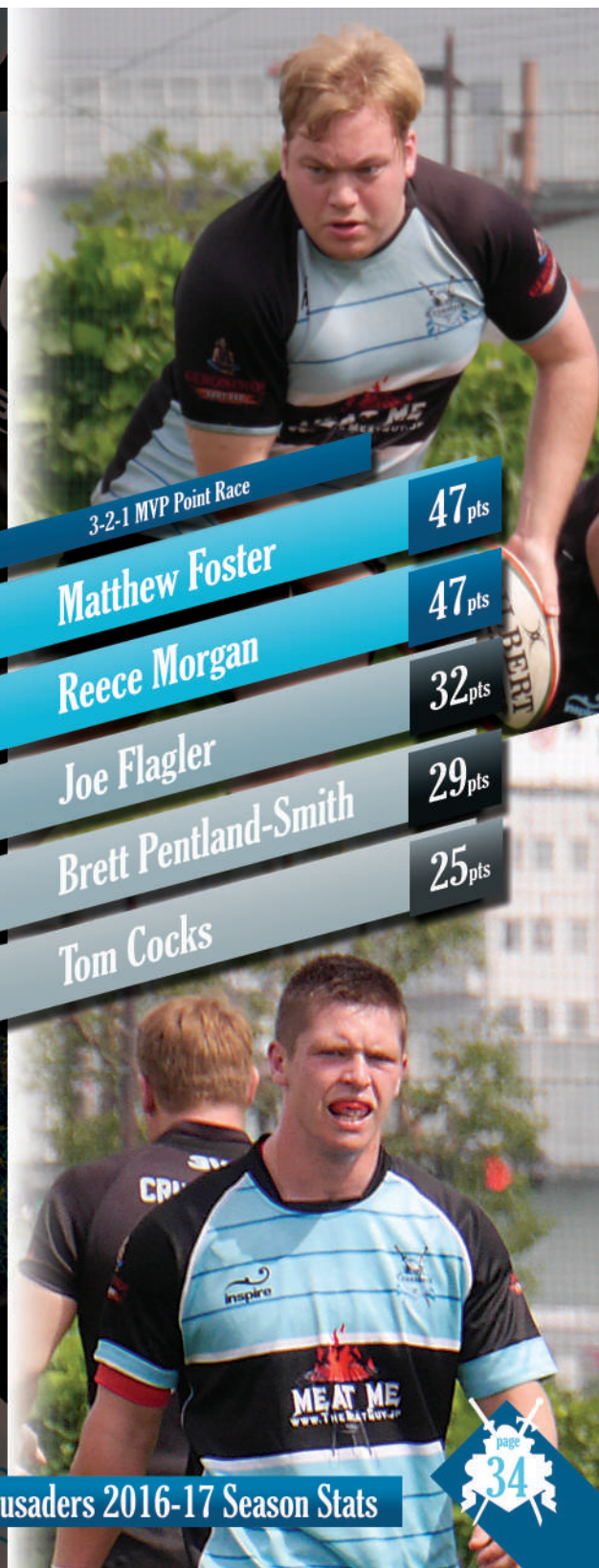
Ironman of the Year  
**Matt Sparrow**



Clubman of the Year  
**Sean Gibson**



Most Improved Player  
**Corey Carter**



3-2-1 MVP Point Race	47 pts
<b>Matthew Foster</b>	47 pts
<b>Reece Morgan</b>	32 pts
Joe Flagler	29 pts
Brett Pentland-Smith	25 pts
Tom Cocks	





*Play Rugby*