

Hills Ladies make history

Thursday, 07 May 2009

Hillhead/Jordanhill Ladies will compete for the Sarah Beeny Cup for the first time in their history on Sunday.

The team, which has had a fantastic season so far, will take on perennial rivals Murrayfield Wanderers at Lasswade Rugby Football Ground on Sunday ko.3pm.

The road to the final has been an interesting one with the cup format changing this season to incorporate a group stage. Hills were in a group with Grangemouth and Melrose. The girls travelled to Grangemouth on a big day for the club which saw the boys 1XV also on cup duty away to Boroughmuir. The girls put on a show and to post a 61-0 victory with back-row forward Joanie Hutchieson the star performer chipping in with 6 of the teams 11 tries. Other scorers included Lizzie Willis who dotted down after showing a good turn of pace and quick feet to round her marker, Kate &Wilko’ Wilkinson, new winger Fiona and Julie Craig. Craig, confident of the teams victory allowed herself a 10min break in the second half after being yellow carded. Her defence was a ’breakdown in communication’ but it is unlikely to stand up in a court of law. Scrum half Rachael Nicolson said after the game “All credit to Grangemouth who had obviously worked on their rucking and gave us a hard time at every contact.”

Next up for the Ladies was Melrose. Unfortunately living up to their reputation as a poor travelling side they cancelled the game leaving the ladies with a bye and qualification to the semi-finals.

The open draw benefitted the Ladies seeing them avoid the ’big two’ of Murrayfield and Royal High Corstorphine leaving them to face Watsonians in Edinburgh.

Hills Ladies night of abstinence at the club dinner proved a fruitful experience after they posted a 28-0 victory in the semi-final. A plethora of travelling supporters were there to cheer the girls onto their first ever victory in a cup semi.

A solid first half performance meant there was never any doubt that this year’s final would feature the west coast team. All of the Hills 4 tries were converted by the incredibly talented footballer, Kerry ’first name on the team sheet’ Armstrong, with the varying angles proving no difficulty for the utility player. Newly exiled no.8 Susie Brown returned for the match as she was committed to the Westenders until the end of the season.

Due to the commencement of the cricket season at Myreside the match was played at Dreghorne Barracks on a gloriously sunny Edinburgh afternoon. The first few exchanges could be described as ’testy’ with both teams aware of the significance of the outcome of the match. Missing from the backline was the brilliant Julie Craig but stepping up in her absence was inside centre Steph Johnston who had a fantastic match. Her kicking at times was sublime allowing the visiting team to control the majority of territory. Hills kicked off playing down the hill and set their stall out early with a series of crunching hits put in by the pack after Watsonians looked to run the ball through their midfield. Good hard tackling and a solid defensive shape from the visiting west coasters meant the visiting team played with the majority of possession. Captain HRL put her 3-in-row-experience to good use but deciphering the Watson’s lineout calls early on in the match allowing the jumping dream team of Bronwen and Charlie to turn over ball at the lineout.

Scorers in the first half included a brilliant team effort finished off by Sarah ’Canada’ Toom who showed a clean pair of heels to her opposition number after a break by Brown was distributed well by Nicolson onto Johnston, through the centres Boag and (Player of the Year) Willis who put SarahCanada into space. Conversion by Armstrong 0-7.

The second try was scored by Brown who received the ball in space after some brilliant interlinking by the pack. She stepped inside to round the fullback and dot down near the posts. Conversion by Armstrong 0-14.

The teams’ third score was again down to the pack after some brilliant rucking and mauling Brown found herself 2 metres away from the whitewash. With Nicolson’s words of ’dive’ echoing in her ears she dully scrambled over to stretch the lead. Conversion by Armstrong 0-21.

Hills final try was scored by Heather ’danger’ Lockhart who finished off a good passage of play involving most of the team. Conversion by Armstrong 0-28.

The game remained tense despite the huge lead with Watsonians players visibly venting their frustrations with one another. Surely buoyed on by her successful public speaking the night previously, one of the Hills front row was heard, in the latter stages on the match to be and in no uncertain terms, making it clear her feelings for a certain member of the Watsonians coaching staff.

Watsonians mind boggling switching of their 9/10/12 combination keep the hills back row on their toes but did little to impact on the match which was effectively over as a contest at half time.

The majority of the hills girls did tire in the later stages in the hot conditions but Hills captain Heather &HRL’ Lockhart led by example putting a series of thumping tackles in around the 70mins mark.

After the match a proud Coach Kitch and guest Coach Keithy treated the girls to some greatly received after match refreshments for the bus trip home

And so onto the final……