

Pre-Season Rugby Trip to Portugal (Finn Piper, Year 13)

It was an early start for the rugby lads with a 7:30 flight from Heathrow but they all arrived in the mood for the training to come. Our training eventually commenced the same afternoon situated in the nearby gym, which was an excellent facility that the Portuguese international rugby team also used. The gym looked out onto two rugby pitches, one being a 3G pitch which is where all our training was to be over the following days. An early start the next morning brought us to the rugby field at 9 o'clock in the morning with all the boys keen to get to work. Our two coaches, Mr. Hillier and Mr. MoConnochie, worked us hard in the first session, targeting our handling, movement off the ball and all-round fitness which was all at a reasonable standard for a first session. A break at midday and trip to the beach gave the lads the down time to recover and relax ahead of the second two-hour training session that afternoon. The boys brought the same intensity to this training as they had the prior, even if there were some fatigued limbs. The team learnt some valuable lessons about composure under pressure in that exercise along with the importance of communication in the structure of rugby that we were playing. We could all tell it had been a positive and effective day of training as we tucked in for the night. The next morning, we had another early start, however, due to the upcoming match that evening, training was at a lower intensity. After training had finished we relaxed for the afternoon, as well as holding a short meeting to discuss areas of focus for the game versus a local club team later that day.

The match commenced under floodlights and from the outset Cranbrook were on the front foot as we kept the significantly bigger opposition pinned in their half. After five minutes of sparring we scored our first try due to some great support play and speed from the backs which was finally planted over the line by Finn Piper. This proved to just be the start of great running rugby from the Cranbrook side which was excellently doubled up with some strong forward play even though size was not on their side. Size disproportion has become a regular theme for the rugby boys over the past years but the boys adapted, and overcame, this in the match with some formidable running from the likes of Chris Vinton and Archie Marshall, some impressive tackling from Seb Terry, strategical kicking from Owen Chilvers and some pin point accuracy from the tee by Luke Alderwick-who didn't miss a single conversion from the eleven tries scored-leaving the final score at 77-10. The attitude and intensity shown by the boys in that match was faultless and if this is fuelled into every match we play this season many victories should follow. Post-match we enjoyed a dinner with our opposition, when friendly rivalry was put to one side and we could get to know the team we had just played. The boys were in high spirits that evening after the taste of victory and I think it's safe to say we are all hungry for more. I don't think we can thank Mr MoConnochie and Mr Hillier enough for their support and patience towards us in training and on the touchline along with the fantastic organisation Mrs. Coleman has put into this trip as it wouldn't have happened without her. We now turn our heads towards the season back in sunny England and the success it'll hopefully bring with it.

