

Updates from Steve Tarrant - Director of Rugby
Sun 23 Sept, 2012

Well it was the turn of the U16s today and we entered two teams in the 10s competition.

The 2nd team, consisting mostly of boys having their first ever game of rugby found matches a little different to training. Unfortunately we lost all our pool games and ended up in the shield final, where we lost to Causeway Bay. The lads played well at times but really learnt how important it is to make your tackles count. We missed far too many.

The first team won three of their four pool games and ended up in the plate final, where unfortunately we lost to DEA 17 – 7. The boys played particularly well in attack and we scored a few length of the pitch tries.

Overall the U16s are going to have the basis of a good team for the 15-a-side league but success will depend on how quickly the new boys pick up the game and so I am sure Gunny and Tank will have them doing plenty of tackle practice in the next few weeks.

Next week it is the turn of the U14s and the U14 10-a-side competition is being held at Kings Park from 10.30 to 13.00hrs.

I am off to UK for a couple of weeks and whilst I will endeavor to keep up with results the weekly newsletter may be delayed. I would have asked Robbie to do it on my behalf but he is off to sunny Scotland with two of our ex-Breakthrough boys who now work for the Union, Chi-ho and Billy. They are going to visit the Scottish Rugby Union and learn about the scheme they operate, which is similar to Breakthrough, using rugby to help young offenders and kids at risk. The two boy's trip has kindly been sponsored by the Saint Andrews Society. I will get the lads to write me something about the trip for a newsletter, when they get back.

Don't eat too many mooncakes.

Updates from Steve Tarrant - Director of Rugby
Sun 16 Sept, 2012

The rugby season has finally started but let me first of all tell you about a few events this summer.

We held a very successful summer course and have recruited about 20 new boys to Breakthrough through this course. These were lads who attended the course over the summer and decided they wanted to stay on and play this season, plus a small group of boys who have recently been released from Tuen Mun Boys Home. We also sent 16 boys from rugby on an outward bound course, which 36 kids from all the Breakthrough activities attended. Eight days of outward bound activities in Sai Kung really test the children and I know they get a lot out of it in terms of self-confidence, teamwork, commitment and perseverance. All attributes they tend to lack, which results in them joining us in the first place. In addition we have played in a couple of touch tournaments with support from our main sponsors, Standard Chartered Bank.

Attached are a picture of some of the boys at the summer course and also the rugby lads at the outward bound graduation ceremony, where it was nice to see their families coming along to support them.

Anyway the club have continued to train throughout the summer and today saw the U19s back in action at the U19 ten-a-side competition. The U19s have lost a number of key players this year, as they have left school and moved on, so this year is going to be a rebuilding year. So I was very pleased when we won our three pool games against Causeway Bay, Twisters and TSW Eagles putting us in the final against Discovery Bay. We narrowly lost the final, but the way we played and in particular the way we tackled gives us much to look forward to and it looks as though we will again be competitive at the U19 level.

On the subject of boys moving on a number have joined the Police Rugby Club but those from Tin Siu Wai have further swelled the numbers of those playing for Tin Siu Wai Pandas. They have moved up to the second division this year and for a pre-season game went up to play the PLA last weekend and they played in front of a crowd of 6,000 people, which they tell me was quite an experience.

Next week we have the U16 tens at we have entered two teams, one in Division 2 and one in Division 3. We have a lot of new boys at this level and will be hoping to give as many as possible a run out and a taste of competitive rugby. The two U16 competitions will run all afternoon at the Police Club and next door at Tai Hang Tung, starting at about 12.30pm. I hope to see some of you at the matches.

Updates from Steve Tarrant - Director of Rugby
Wed 17 Oct, 2012

Well I am back from the UK and pleased to tell you that all has gone smoothly in my absence thanks to Robbie, Gunny (our head coach) and Tank (our no 2 coach).

On 31 September we took part in the U14 ten-a-side competition and got through to the Cup final, where I am told we lost in a thriller by a conversion after both sides scored 3 or 4 tries each. We have a lot of new boys in the team, so obviously this was a fantastic result.

On 7/10 the U16s and the U19s started the 15-a-side league games and we had a mixed day. The U16s, another team with a lot of new boys playing their first game, lost by two tries to nil against the combined Lions/Eagles team. However the U19s got off to a winning start by 31-14 against Aberdeen, which is a good result as they are usually a well drilled team.

On 14/10 the U14s started their 15-a-side season and we got off to a winning start by 34-17 against the Warriors, which again sounds like an exciting game.

This Sunday 21/10, sees two games at the Police Club. The U16s are playing Causeway Bay at 1pm and at 2.15pm the U19s are playing East Kowloon.

Looking further ahead we have some great rugby for you on 28/10. The Philippine U14 and U16 teams are in town for games against a HK select team on Saturday and are having a second game against a combined Lions/Police team on the Sunday. The U14s are on at 11.45am and the U16s follow at 1pm. It would be great if you could make it down to support any of the games.

Updates from Steve Tarrant - Director of Rugby
Tues 23 Oct, 2012

First up were the U16s against Causeway Bay and many of them are having their first few games of rugby, but you would never have guessed from some of the tackling we saw. This kept us in the game, despite giving away far too many penalties at the rucks and mauls and failing to get back 10yards. Causeway Bay scored first with a breakaway try after a nice move in the backs. We came back strongly and just before half time pulled level and we went into the break at 7-7. It looked like the game was going to finish in a draw, but some very tired legs let them in for two scores in the last couple of minutes and we lost by 19-7. A bit disappointing but if they continue to play like this and get a better understanding of the laws then I am sure a few wins are not that far away.

The U19s played Kowloon East and in a very one sided match we ran out the winners by 90-0. Kowloon East were very poor tacklers and there is little else to say.

Next week we have the two matches against the Philippine U14 and U16 teams who are in town to play the HK select teams on the Saturday. We are hoping that they will be softened up a bit for our game on Sunday, when a joint Police/Kowloon team will take them on. Both games are at the Police Club with the U14s kicking off at 11.45am and the U16s at 1pm. Hope to see some of you there to support.

Updates from Steve Tarrant - Director of Rugby
Tues 30 Oct, 2012

Well we had a lot of fun against the Philippine U14 and U16 side but as expected they were a bit strong for us and although they had been well beaten by the national teams on Saturday, they had not been softened up as much as we had hoped. Many of our current boys got to play and the experience was good for them.....

Updates from Steve Tarrant - Director of Rugby

5th November 2012

Well last weekend the U16s won their match against East Kowloon by 5 tries to nil. The match was cut short in the second half as the weather was apparently terrible and the pitch got very cut up, leading to the referee calling an early halt to proceedings. I say apparently as I was ensconced in a nice box at the races and left Robbie to supervise proceedings. He tells me the weather was quite bad and he had no arguments with the ref's decision.

Next weekend the U19s are back in action and we play DEA2 at Kings Park. The KO is at 11am. It should be a good match and hopefully a few of our older boys who have been out with injuries will be fit again.

This week I have yet another bit of good news as Breakthrough and the HKRFU won the Top Community rugby award at the recent Rugby Expo in London. We faced stiff competition from the highly commended Premiership Rugby's Hitz Programme and the London Scottish School of Hard Knocks initiative, and the strength of the entries was highlighted by John Hockey, chairman of Rugby Ventures which operates Rugby Expo.

"Our judges faced a genuine challenge to separate some excellent entries in many categories and this year's entries confirmed that the Rugby Expo Awards are a reflection of the growing professionalism, dedication and hard work which characterizes the sport," remarked Hockey. "We were delighted to receive entries from different parts of the world and to recognize the excellent work which is being done in both the USA and Hong Kong. Our congratulations go not only to the winners but to every club or organization which entered and we look forward to growing the Awards yet again on 2013."

The winning programme was an initiative introduced by the Union's Community Department last year, introducing rugby at the Tuen Mun Boys' Home. Union coaches, including graduates from the Operation Breakthrough programme, have been running 8 week programmes for groups of up to 25 young boys aged 14-17 years, which culminates in a day excursion to play touch games against the Breakthrough teams, followed by refreshments and the chance for the youngsters to mix together.

After the first few cycles the Social Welfare Department staff found that many of the boys were keen to continue their involvement with rugby, and so now there is a small but steady stream of youngsters who after leaving the Boys' Home are going on to join the Breakthrough programme, training on Wednesdays and participating in the Colts leagues on Sundays.

Both the Boys Home initiative and Operation Breakthrough are generously sponsored by Standard Chartered Bank, and it was great to see a group of the bank staff volunteers get involved in the last match day at the Police Sports Club, joining in the games and handing out souvenirs. Breakthrough is also supported by the Social Welfare Department through their "Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged", and is a Laureus World Sports Foundation "Sport for Good" project.

Read more about Rugby Expo at www.rugbyexpo.com

Updates from Steve Tarrant - Director of Rugby
2nd December 2012

Well last Sunday was a disappointment for the U19s as they lost for the first time this season. Unfortunately only 12 boys turned up, 11 from WTS and only 1 from Tin Siu Wai, emphasising what a lot of work Kuen, our new assistant has to do to make up for the last month when we have been without a social worker. It is disappointing when we have so many boys on the books and by this age they shouldn't need jollying along. Let us hope it was just a temporary lapse of communication.

Anyway we conceded the match borrowed three from DEA and had a really competitive game losing 24 – 14. If we had had a full turnout we could well have kept our unbeaten record. In fact the boys from WTS mostly attend the same school in Choi Hung, the Choi Hung Estate Catholic Secondary School, and Robbie tells me that they recently won the Schools Rugby 2nd Division Competition, which is a great achievement.

This week we have the touch tournament with the boys from Tuen Mun Boys Home on Sunday and proceedings kick off at the Police Club at 1.30pm with some training and the touch matches start at 2.30pm.

Updates from Steve Tarrant - Director of Rugby
16th December 2012

Well last Sunday we had a great day of touch rugby with the boys from TM Boys Home and they really enjoyed the contact drills that Gunny, Tank and Ivan put them through beforehand. Hopefully more of them will be joining us when they leave the Boys Home soon.

After the drills we enjoyed some touch rugby matches with two Breakthrough teams, two Tuen Mun Boys Home teams and a mixed team from the Standard Chartered Bank, who not only sponsor us but also the community projects, which the HKRFU run, like this initiative.

After the matches we all enjoyed some well-deserved food and some giveaways from the Bank. It also gave the four of us, Breakthrough, The Boys Home, the HKRFU and the Standard Chartered Bank, a chance to admire the splendid trophy that we won in London for being the Rugby Expo's community rugby project of the year.

Attached are a couple of photos, one of Ivan putting the Boy's Home lads through their paces beforehand and a group picture at the end.

As those of you who have been reading this newsletter in the last few weeks will know, last night Sures had his first professional fight and what a cracker it was. He was fighting a Filipino lad – Roldan Bullong in a 4 round Flyweight contest and he won the match on points, quite convincingly. It was a great debut only spoiled by the fact that he broke his nose and had to go to hospital. There was a big Breakthrough contingent there and his family to shout him on and we were all very proud of him. Ricky Hatton presented Breakthrough with a cheque for HK\$70,000 and we got a lot of excellent publicity, so that was also a big plus. Hatton was visiting the Breakthrough boxing gym tonight and I'm told was very impressed. Maybe we will have a second boxer becoming a professional before long, but one thing for sure, there is no such thing as easy money in that ring.

Next Sunday we don't have any rugby matches and then it is into the Christmas break, but we will still be training apart from 26 December when we will have a well-deserved break.