Dramatic extra-time victory for the Hall in Rugby Cuppers Final!
Wednesday, 2 May 2018

Thanks to Ben Tucker (2007, Engineering Science) for the following match report.

The kick-off of the Cuppers final last Saturday signalled St Edmund Hall?s intent right from the get go, as we competed in the air and won our own kick to start at an intense pace. With the first 15 minutes played exclusively in the St Peter?s College half, the Hall were all over the opposition with numerous forays and probing runs inside the 22. A combination of stout Peter?s defence and unforced errors from the Hall, however, meant that we came away empty handed.

The counter-attack from Peter?s was on and, in their first visit to our 22, they scored to make it 5-0, with the conversion on the 15m line missed. We exchanged forward blows for the remainder of the half, grinding our way up the field before scoring a well-earned try under the posts to make it 7-5 to the Hall at half time.

Peter?s scored, again on the 15m line, shortly after the kick-off in the second half to make it 10-7, missing another conversion in the process. Teddy Hall then received a yellow card, during which time Peter?s touched down again, this time in the corner ? a cracking conversion followed to make it 17-7 with 62 minutes on the clock. 14 men, 10 points down, 18 minutes to play ? the engravers had already started writing ?St Peter?s? on the Cup....

We traded blows for the next 14 tense minutes, neither team giving an inch as time slipped
away, along with the hopes of stopping the rot of 5 consecutive Cuppers defeats.

70th minute ? a scrum to Peter?s on their 5 metre following a Hall knock-on very close to the line ? surely this game is done. Peter?s fumble the ball off the back of the scrum, it bounces back over the line, our scrum half screams through and is the first to touch it down. Tough conversion and, under a lot of pressure, Tom Dyer misses it before the ref calls for a re-kick due to Peter?s infringing on the charge down. Dyer doesn?t miss twice. 17-14 to Peter?s, with 10 minutes to play.

We win the ball from the kick-off, with some big carries up the middle of the pitch from Blue Lisi Fifita, among others, and receive a penalty near the 15m line on the right hand side. Hall kick to the corner!!! Flashbacks of Chris Robshaw in the World Cup come to mind; should we have gone for the posts?! We win the lineout, go left and?. knock the ball on with the clock almost dead! The game is virtually done: Peter?s just need to win the scrum in the middle of the pitch. Skipper and Prop Tom Lawrence inspires the boys for one more shove of their lives. It looks like Peter?s have won it, with the ball between the second row legs with the scrum half digging for it. The boys heave, the crowd heaves, the scrum crumbles back towards the Peter?s line and we are awarded a penalty in front of the posts. Ice-cold Dyer nudges it through for 17-17.

With 2 minutes left, Peter?s kick off again. The Hall catch it and secure the ball. As SEH try to exploit some space on the blind side, they are tackled into touch. One last chance for Peter?s. A good line-out catch and drive sees them marching forward and towards the 22. The whistle blows. Penalty. In at the side. Peters have a kick on the 5m line, 35m out to win Cuppers with the last kick of the game.... It slides wide. Extra time!!

The format for extra time is ?Golden Points?, meaning that the first team to score wins.

Peter?s win their kick-off and have the Hall on the rack from the first minute of extra time. They win another penalty right in front of the posts on the 10m line. Chris Robshaw?s clearly
coaching both sides, as they also go for the corner! The line out is won by Peter?s but the Hall defence is solid on our 5m line. The relentless Peter?s pack, however, means we give away another penalty 5 minutes later in a kickable position on the intersection of the 15m line and the 22-yard line on the left side of the pitch?

They tap and go, running for the corner (!!!) but Teddy Hall were not 10m back (leading to another yellow card) so, with the penalty advantage in their favour, they try a drop goal? which resembles a very good grubber kick! They finally decide to go for posts, having already had 4 potential winning opportunities. The whole crowd is silent: this is surely it. Teddy Hall fans look dejected, wandering aimlessly back to the stand from the sideline, the dream finish is over. But the ball slides half a foot to the right of the upright! Somehow the Hall makes it to halftime? battered, bruised, cramping, gasping, down to 14-men....

Teddy Hall then win their own kick-off for the third time in the match from a consistently good drop-kick start. Sensible play from the forwards gets the ball into the middle of the pitch on the Peter?s 22. Fly Half Tom Dyer is in the pocket, surely not! This doesn?t happen in the amateur game! He calls for it (?nooo!?) and, midway between the 22 and the 10m line, nudges a drop goal over for Cuppers Glory*.

Final Score Teddy Hall 20-17 St Peter?s. The same result and finish as the 2003 Rugby World Cup Final?.

Captain Tom Lawrence rallied himself once more to walk up the stairs for the presentation and lifted the cup with tears/sweat flowing down his face to celebrate a huge team performance. They left it all on the pitch and got what they deserved.

Commenting on the match, Aularian Stuart Barnes said ?Extra Time? What?s wrong with you?!?

*Dyer was last seen on the half-way line under a pile of 300 pitch-invading Hall supporters. I hope he?s ok!
The St Edmund Hall team (photo credit: OU Rugby Club)

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