

'We few, we happy few, we band of brothers (and sisters)'...' Shall think themselves accursed they were not here (there)' *Henry V, Act IV, Scene III*

My apologies to all those who have no interest in sport, Shakespeare or the mawkish ramblings of an ageing Headteacher but sometimes children achieve things in such a way that it deserves to be celebrated.

Let me begin with the Netball finals which you will know, if you have been paying attention to earlier bouts of mawkish ramblings, took place last Monday. Having won their league, the team had to play 7 matches in one evening against the winners of the other leagues. Each match was limited to two 7-minute halves rather than the usual four 7-minute quarters so it was important to score goals early and to force turnovers in order to get in front before managing the match. The compulsory rotation of positions added extra pressure and required each team member to be versatile and determined but we knew that we just had to focus on winning each match as it came without trying to worry about the overall prize.

Some teams proved more difficult to overcome than others and some of the opposition had certainly been eating their Weetabix or possibly even three Shredded Wheat! Nevertheless, we were undeterred by the physicality of some players and our team, as angelic as they looked in the picture published in last week's newsletter, proved themselves to be 'up for the fight'. One match followed another and we clocked up the wins. By the time it came to the final match, we had 6 wins from 6 and so needed only to win again to be indisputable champions. I am not sure if it was the promise of a team dinner at Prezzo or whether they had been saving themselves for the last game but, they won convincingly and, as they had done in every match, demonstrated teamwork and a slick, fast passing game beyond their years and certainly beyond the reach of the other school teams.

Overall, in the league and at these finals, the team managed to win 14 games in succession. They have worked incredibly hard in training and in their own time and they have been very supportive of each other. They all knew the reputation that we have for producing strong Netball teams but rather than fear the expectations, they rose to the challenge. It was particularly pleasing that, when they were presented with their winner's medals at the finals, they were also applauded for their sportsmanship. This team have earned their place amongst the other winners on our sports hall, 'Wall of Fame'.



Then came God's own game...the Rugby. Due to the lack of commitment to a league by other schools, we found ourselves put straight into the Sport's Partnership Finals which took place on Thursday at Aylesbury Grammar School. To say that conditions were awful, would be an understatement and there were times I worried whether lighter members of our team might actually be swept away by the wind!

Due to the Netball, the team had very little time to get together and practise but, we had trained last year and I knew that those picked would be able to hold their own in company. The first pool game was really a case of finding our feet and getting used to the conditions. There were a few handling errors but eventually we ran in several tries to set up a convincing win. This was the pattern of the next pool games but we seemed to improve the more we played.

The squad, Harry (Captain), Anna, Brayden, Max, Gwilym, Tiana, Ben, Jago and Matthieu played well enough to win all of their pool games to set us up for the final rounds. Due to inclement weather conditions, the organiser announced that the event was to be cut short and that they would use accumulated wins and points scored to decide on the play offs. The nerves jangled a little as I had no idea how the other pool games had gone but they soon disappeared when it was announced that Ickford and Turnfurlong School would play to see who would be the overall tournament winners. By this time, we had gathered quite a crowd of supporters whose presence was amplified by a large group of Grammar School boys (including our own past pupils Zach, Gethin and Zara) who took delight in the rugby being played and made their voices heard.

The game began and a missed tackle or two let Turnfurlong in for an early try. We looked a bit shaken but regrouped and answered with a try of our own. So it went on, with Anna Kerry leading the way, until it was 3 tries a piece but then...the proverbial wheels began to fall off! Turnfurlong had some big strong players who could also run fast as well as a couple of very small players who could run very fast indeed! More missed tackles and a couple of handling errors meant that Turnfurlong scored 3 more tries without reply and we found ourselves losing by 6 tries to 3 at half time. It was time for a bit of an 'honest' team talk and a little Henry V! Run into spaces not faces, look for the quick off load and get back our structure in defence.

The second half began and once again Turnfurlong's big runners attacked our line but this time, led by Harry (Henry) Johnston our Captain we stood our ground and the defensive line held. Getting off the line quickly made the difference and soon we were forcing them to make mistakes and, with possession gained, we attacked. A pass, a big drive through the middle by our very own Henry V, support from the flying Anna, Jago and Tiana, a well-timed pass and a score, 6 – 4. And so it went on. Brayden, Ben, Gwilym et al now tackled anything that moved, Matthieu moved into the scrum half position and Max joined the attack. Once again, we kept possession, drove at the heart of their defence, used our support and released a runner through the gap not, once but twice. The crowd were roaring and the lads from AGS were looking on in disbelief. Turnfurlong came again but now they were panicking and we stood firm and organised. They thought they were over at one point but the referee was not going to be swayed by some vocal team members. We got possession and launched the last attack of the game. Safe hands, a break, a runner on the shoulder and suddenly

Tiana was striding down the field to score and, as the sound of the whistle drifted away on the wind, the game ended with Ickford at 7 and Turnfurlong 6. If I am honest, I felt for Turnfurlong team but, no one remembers 2nd so I got over it quickly! (joking). Our boys and girls made sure to shake hands and to give three cheers, scant compensation perhaps but good sportsmanship and true to Ickford's values. To defend so well in the second half that the opposition failed to score required huge effort from the whole team and passionate leadership from the Captain. It was a great performance, enjoyed by everyone on the touchline and, in my opinion, worthy of a special write up.



On behalf of all of the staff, I would like to thank you for the support this term. It has been a positive term and a great deal has been achieved. The summer term will be very busy and, now that we seem to be through the worst of Covid, we can look forward to our Summer Concert (sponsor required) a proper Sport's Day and so much more between.

Have a peaceful Easter a happy Eid and a rest.

Mr Ronane

Back by popular demand Michelin
Star chef Lahiru Jayasekara and
Ickford School presents an
afternoon of
STREET FOOD



INCLUDING A CRAFT COCKTAIL BAR

24 APRIL 2022

12PM TO 4PM

Ickford School Sheldon Rd Ickford