

Fermanagh Redskins headed to Ballynahinch on Saturday to play the host team, The Rabbitohs, in the final of the Ulster Carnegie Rugby League, a team who had beaten the Redskins by forty points in the league fixture at the start of May.



As before, the task in hand was going to be a daunting one as The Rabbitohs fielded a very strong team, if not stronger than previously, with their players coming from AIL club's, the Ulster Academy and a few ex-senior Ulster players.

From the kick off The Redskins started as they had ended the semi-final the previous week, throwing themselves into the tackle and carrying the attack to the Rabbitoh's at every opportunity, showing little respect for the host side and the threat they posed, and as a result it was the Redskins who were first on the scoreboard.

In past games this this was the point that the Redskins would normally switch off and let the momentum slip, but this didn't happen. From the kick-off the ball was fielded under huge pressure and the Redskins got back on the attack, adding their second try after 15 minutes for a 10 – 0 lead.



The Redskins held out the hosts until the twenty-fifth minute, and came after enormous pressure from the Redskins who were held up short of the try line on numerous occasions, had two tries disallowed and also knocked on twice when over the try line. In the final fifteen minutes of the first half each team scored once more to leave the score 14 - 8 in the Redskins favour.

The second half was a much more even affair with the Redskins were into a slight breeze and slope. The Rabbitohs put some pressure on the Redskins line but some brave defence held them out, before the referee handed possession back to the Rabbitohs. After some very one sided decisions the Rabbitohs managed to use this possession to draw level, but not be deterred the Redskins got back on the attack. Some hard running by the forwards created some space for outhalf Ashley Finlay to conjour up a piece of magic to score under the posts and regain a lead, they were to hold on to until about ten minutes to go.



The Rabbitohs managed to get on level terms and with the Redskins down to the bare bones of a squad owing to injuries, the game was basically over. In the final ten minutes the game was lost to two tries aided by some infuriating referee decisions, and finished 36 - 24 putting a very glossy finish to the score line.



Redskins coach Rob Watson said afterwards, "I couldn't ask for any more from the players this season and especially in this final. The players from two rival junior rugby teams have come together with students and new players to the game of rugby and took on some of the giants of club rugby in Ireland and almost done the unthinkable. The players literally left their bodies and soul's on the pitch which is all you could ask of any player, and they can be very proud of the effort they put in." He went to record his disappointment at the decision not to seek a neutral venue for the final and added that, "with this first season done we can look forward to going one better next season, and a big thank you to all who have played, trained and come along and supported us."

Photos courtesy of www.intouchrugby.com