Why play rugby at Millfield school? Every week between September and March Millfield pupils (over 250 boys and a growing number of girls) will engage in rugby training and match play. School sport is a vital part of school life and the day of any pupil. For those who choose rugby, the game is driven from a solid foundation of values. These guide the behaviours of every teacher, coach, parent and boy or girl involved in the sport. It has been wonderful to hear the referees in the professional game referring to ‘rugby values’ and penalising play which contradicts such values.

Rugby provides a unifying spirit that leads to life-long friendships, camaraderie, teamwork and loyalty which transcends cultural, geographic, political and religious differences.

IRB Game Values

The school lives of our pupils are full of expectations driven by the desire for better grades, comparisons on social media and seemingly every moment in the day, filled with viewing a device. The great strength of sport in school is the opportunity to step away from these daily challenges. Teamwork provides an opportunity for interaction and reliance on one another and from this our rugby players derive their enjoyment. The thrill of victory, the sense of supporting team mates and the joy of leaving every ounce of effort out on the field. These experiences test the character of all involved and through these tests comes a greater understanding of self and others. A cold and wet afternoon out watching the Under 16B team may not look like the most enjoyable part of the day, but through the struggle to find progress, teamwork and enjoyment the ‘why’ we play sport and rugby in school is evident. We need to look beyond the score line and the tries scored to see the foundation of the game’s values, the victory Vince Lombardi refers to here, is more than just a simple score!

I firmly believe that any man’s finest hour, the greatest fulfilment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle – victorious.”

Vince Lombardi

In November 2018 Sir Gareth Edwards visited Millfield to support the launch of a scholarship fund in his name. During his visit he spoke fondly of his time at Millfield. He was passionate about the opportunities he had enjoyed when a pupil at Millfield in the 1960s. The school’s founder Boss Meyer, encouraged him to be humble about his sporting prowess as well as to compete and enjoy representing the school. Gareth spoke about schoolboy fixtures he had played in, about his team mates and the many happy memories. He explained about feeling a pride in the school shirt, a love for playing alongside mates and a passion for enjoying the great opportunities of life at school. These memories are the very reasons we play sport at Millfield.
Rugby sevens offers our boys a change of emphasis in the spring term. For many years Millfield has led the way in this form of the game and there are numerous reasons why we love sevens so much. By far the most important factor is our belief that sevens improves the future potential of our players. By removing eight players from the pitch the game now becomes much more focused on individual skills and performance. Accurate passing, assured handling, high work rate without the ball, effective tackling, competitive breakdown work, intelligent decision-making, ability to win the ball; all sevens players will be tested in these areas more often than in a fifteen-a-side match. When players feel themselves getting better the personal rewards can be enormous.

Sevens also produces a nourishing collective environment. Tournaments are an all day affair. Players play one match and then have to wait for long periods before they are next involved. As a result the team spends a great deal of time supporting each other through warm ups, matches, cool downs, eating, drinking and mental preparation. When you add in the extreme aerobic discomfort that players experience, you have all the criteria for a fantastic teambuilding event. As a consequence the friendships made on the sevens field tend to be long-lasting.

There has long been a healthy debate regarding the relationship between sevens and fifteens. In the Northern Hemisphere they tend to be viewed as different sports and few sevens players end up playing the fifteen-a-side game at a high level. In the Southern Hemisphere sevens is seen as a vehicle for improving youngsters and players such as Jonah Lomu, Christian Cullen and Rieko Ioane, who all began their international careers on the sevens field, to the benefit of themselves and their country. At Millfield we have always believed that rugby is a game where all players should be involved in all facets of the game. This is a view which chimes strongly with the Southern Hemisphere. We try not to pigeon-hole players into one particular position. Therefore, whilst players like Chris Robshaw, Jonathan Joseph and Huw Jones have all flourished in our sevens’ programme. We have also seen players like Henry Thomas and John Mallett, senior international tight head props, producing outstanding displays on the sevens’ field. (Well at least one of them did......!)

It is a challenge to play fast flowing rugby in the British winter, but Millfield sevens has done just that for many years. It is enjoyable, watchable and nourishing. I could not recommend it more highly for player and spectator alike.
ACADEMY RUGBY by Mike Baxter, Assistant Director of Rugby

Millfield Rugby have been very busy this half of term with supporting pupils selected for playing representative rugby.

Fourteen players from the U15s were invited to trials with the Bath Rugby Academy Development Player Programme (DPP). They attended a session at the Recreational ground and were given the opportunity to train on the 1st XV pitch, which the boys loved. Whilst the boys were enjoying running around inside a fantastic stadium, the parents were attending a player pathway presentation put on by the Academy Manager, Andy Rock which our parents found very useful and informative. Two other boys in the U15 squad are currently involved with Harlequins DPP and London Irish DPP.

Nine players from the U16s are heavily involved with the Somerset County setup and Bath Academy and will look to impress the coaches in the next few weeks to claim a place in the squad that will go to play in the Academy Festival, held at Wellington College in April.

Senior students are also doing very well within the Academy setups. Ewan Richards has captained the Bath Academy U18 team in his lower sixth year and has relished in the role by putting together some monumental performances on the pitch. He has been joined by Arche Friend, Nat Arnold, Ed Walrock and Harry Swinburne, who have all had positive gains within the squad.

Will Joseph and Oisin Kearney have been heavily involved in the London Irish U18 programme and Joshua Gillespie and Ed McDowell have had a successful campaign for Northampton Saints Academy. In addition, the performances by Will Joseph and Joshua Gillespie were rewarded by being selected for an England U18 training camp during the half term holiday.

U18 Welsh caps were won by Oliver Burrows, Ospreys Academy, and Daniel John, who both attended the Wales U18 training camp and played a match against France U18s, during the February Half Term Holiday.

In addition our Club Captain, Tyler Olding, has been selected for Wales U19 to play against Japan, Rotuk Rahedi has been selected for the Kenyan U20 National side and having played for the South West U18 Counties’ team this season, Fergus Walker has just been selected for the England Counties Squad. We wish all the boys involved with representative rugby the best of luck over the next 6 weeks.

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XV SEASON REVIEW by Ed McDowell, 1st XV Captain & Tyler Olding, Club Captain

The 2018/19 XV season has been monumental in the progress of Millfield Rugby, from creating ‘Brotherhood Values’ to appointing a new Assistant Director of Rugby, to teams rediscovering their top form. An emphasis was also placed on the senior team’s connection with other teams throughout the school to spread the values of Millfield Rugby and act as role models for younger players with aspirations for their rugby and conduct both on and off the field.

For the majority this season started in the summer on pre-season camps. This year, the sixth form rugby squad travelled to Bordeaux for pre-season, where they were met by ex England International and Italian Attack coach Mike Catt. The camp was also a chance to meet new boys joining the Millfield Rugby Club and to make them feel welcome and part of senior rugby at Millfield. They had 5 great days of training, analysis, fitness and bonding to create the ‘Senior Brotherhood’. This was key for early season success. They then had warm up fixtures against a French team and attended the Esher President’s Cup.

Meanwhile the U15s were working hard at Truro School, making foundations with Millfield’s new in-play calls which have been adopted throughout the Millfield Rugby teams, as well as doing some dreaded but most essential fitness testing. Their hard work paid off, in what became a very successful season (see round up on page 6).

Once all rugby players were back at school, It was time for our rugby schedules to begin. As always we started with our Millfield Rugby Club induction through the age groups. This is where we drove standards and senior players placed emphasis on the Millfield Brotherhood. The induction led all the teams fittingly into the start of the season.

The first two games across the board were against Canford School and RGS High Wycombe. For the 1st XV these two games resulted in strong performances due to the passion in the group to work for each other at home on the Sir Gareth Edwards Pitch. The next fixture throughout the school was against Clifton in a charity match, the emotion surrounding this match paid out for a great game of rugby throughout the sides. The U14s managed to win against a strong Clifton side followed by supporting the 1st team under floodlights in a courageous two point win. This was a highlight for the U14 Captain Ieuan Davies. The senior squad were also met by Ed Jackson for an inspirational pregame talk about his memories of Millfield Rugby.

In the same week Millfield Rugby had a block fixture with Wellington College, one of our top rivals. This led to multiple highlights across the club, no more so than for the mighty 3rd team, who secured a strong win away from home. Meanwhile on the Sir Gareth Edwards Pitch, the 1st XV had a historic win against an extremely strong Wellington outfit with multiple England and Academy players, which was a successful outcome from all the hard work performed in match preparation by the team.

After a short break, the next point on the season road trip was where the 1st XV travelled to Tor Rugby Club where they watched the U14s play in a tight game. This was followed by a team curry night, another chance to strengthen the brotherhood in the group before they travelled to Ipswich to take part in the prestigious St Joseph’s Festival. The first day started slowly with narrow wins and one loss against a well drilled Denstone side however other results meant the team managed to top the group. The group for the team on the 2nd day contained strong rugby schools with games against Brighton, Dulwich and St Jo’s. Strong wins against these first two teams boosted the team’s confidence going into a game against the home side which saw a hard fought victory. The team were then in the final playing against a very strong RGS Newcastle side, this game proved to be one game too many as injuries and fatigue crept in, and even with a large amount of effort from the boys the result didn’t go their way.

However, the weekend did result in the group becoming even more tightly connected to the Brotherhood Values.
XV SEASON REVIEW CONT.

Post half term the U15s came back as they left with strong wins against Blundell’s, Cheltenham and also maintaining an unbeaten Schools Cup run, they had become the side to beat on the U15 school circuit. These games were shortly followed by the next of the ‘Big 3’ to play - Whitgift. The U16s season before this point had looked promising with only three losses. They were a team with high confidence and energy, which translated onto the rugby pitch with a hard fought win against Whitgift. This was a particular highlight for their team and captain - Kieran Woname.

With the 2018 season coming to a close the last of the ‘Big 3’ was to come - Sedbergh. This is one of Millfield's most enjoyable rivalries. For many of the 1st XV this meant travelling up to Sedbergh for the first time. The game itself was extremely physical and played out in tough conditions. The team unfortunately came up short, but they left an impression on the Sedbergh boys and the match will be remembered by both teams in years to come. Back at Millfield, the 2nd XV led by Ben Roworth secured a memorable win against Sedbergh on the Sir Gareth Edwards Pitch. This was a means to an end for many players who are part of Millfield Rugby Club for another senior year.

Following the Christmas break there were development games and also further Cup games for the U15s. The developmental games gave an opportunity for players to be exposed to first team rugby and the behaviours and attributes needed for a successful team performance. For the U15s their Cup run continued with a strong win against Colston’s School, this was a particular highlight for U15 Captain Oli Wood after they had drawn with Ivybridge leading up to this game.

Unfortunately, their Cup run came to an end against a strong, well drilled Whitgift side, along with their home support. However, the game showed signs of a strong future for this group of players. Their coach Mr Meehan stated. “...they should be proud of what finished with a solid performance against Whitgift School.”

To round up the Millfield Rugby season there is no better way to describe this than to ask the players to share their thoughts. It has been described as; “...a season where we learnt to work together and play to our strengths” - Oli Wood, this was also the view of U14 Captain Ieuan Davies. The Mighty 3rd team Skipper- Tom Treaddell described the season as, “Sometimes scrappy, sometimes brilliant but no matter what, always fun and mostly successful.” The 2nd team Captain Ben Roworth said it was, “A season with courageous performances...”.

Finally, a message shared by many and especially felt by both Ed and myself (Tyler);

“It has been our best season in a Millfield jersey due to the culture and selfless drive which was created by us, the players.”

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@MillfieldRugby
@millfieldrugbyclub
U15 SCHOOLS CUP INTERVIEWS

Describe your Cup run:

Approaching the first game of the tournament against Crispin we were a confident side, although we were a bit rough around the edges we were unbeaten and this would not be the hardest game of the season, as the score ended 50-0.

For the next game against Sherborne, we began our preparations by working on some things from the previous week’s match and pulled off a 55-5 win.

Taunton was the team that awaited us in the third round, we had already played them earlier in the season and pulled off a win, however we knew that Taunton would not want to be beaten again. During the game we were faced with some tough decisions that went against us, however we came through in what was a physical game away and won 31-8.

The fourth game of our cup run would come against an Ivybridge side who we had previously beaten by 50 points. This was the first game back after the holidays so we had to work hard during training in the week leading up to the match. When we arrived at Ivybridge we were faced by a large crowd and from this moment we understood that the game would be mentally tough as well as physical. When our opponents came out to the field we noticed there was a lot of faces that weren’t recognised from our previous meeting. We got off to a slow start with some handling errors and let some stupid tries in, however towards the end of the game we worked hard and pulled together as a team, although it was not enough to get the win and we got a draw. Luckily this was enough to win on a technicality, but we knew our performance had not been our best!

The next game would be Colston’s. We had trained extremely hard as a team and bonded well in the weeks since Ivybridge and we felt strong and confident going in to the game. That confidence was reflected in our performance and we won 33-5.

The quarter final was next, against Whitgift and this would be the hardest game of the season for everyone, we prepared well and trained hard. We travelled down the day before and all had an early night. The next morning we went for a walk as a team and did some light training to stay fit and loose for the game, after this we changed into suits and went to the game. When we arrived the tunes went on and we felt ready. The game started well from both teams with each team scoring one after the other, at this point we knew it would be a close game. At half time the general feeling was we were playing well and playing hard however we still had a whole half to go. The score was pretty even right up until the last five minutes when fatigue and mistakes began to creep in, along with a few injuries picked up along the way. The Whitgift side scored two tries in quick succession to see the game finish at 32-22. We knew we had worked as hard as we could and this was reflected in the feedback from the coaches. We had left everything on the field which is all we could have done. The journey home started off with a sombre atmosphere, however we soon realised there was nothing we could change and we still had what was looking like a strong 7s season ahead, so we started to lift spirits with a couple of good songs and everyone, although tired, was proud of what we had achieved.— Sam Curwen

Where were you when the draw for the quarter finals were made & how did you feel when Whitgift were announced, knowing that you had previously lost to them in the season?

After we made it through the round of 16s, we knew there would be a draw to decide who we were playing. I remember being ill the day of the draw. I just remember two other people who were ill [who were also in the team] texting me saying, “quick come my room”. I joined them, and actually the draw brought a bit of a buzz to the room, even though we were ill. When we saw that we were playing Whitgift away it was a bit of a shock. Though after 20 minutes, we agreed that the earlier in the competition the better. It was going to be a battle, and we were going to bring an army! — Sam Harris

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MILLFIELD RUGBY PARENT
PHOTO COMPETITION

We invite parents to send in their best photographs of Millfield teams/players from over the last two terms and we will announce and publish the top three in our Summer Newsletter.

Please send photos to Max, gauntlett.m@millfieldschool.com by 30th April 2019.

The winner will receive a bottle of Champagne!

OMs’ Photo Quiz Results: CONGRATUALTIONS to Peter Hill who correctly named all OMs alongside their Millfield boarding houses and current premiership clubs/countries.

(A) Darren Atkins ex Shapwick - Bath and Adam Hastings ex Shapwick - Glasgow and Scotland

(B) Rhys Ruddock ex Butleigh - St Mary’s College RFC and Leinster

(C) Chris Cook ex Joan’s Kitchen - Bath

(D) Mako Vunipola ex Kingweston - Saracens and England and Henry Thomas ex St Anne’s - Bath and England

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