

## Ince Rose Bridge U11's vs Shevington Sharks U11's – Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018

This was a case of “**almost clutching defeat from the jaws of certain victory**” with the way the Sharks 11's almost a tossed away a game they were in complete control of & never looked in any danger, whether it was the extreme heat, & it was a very hot Sunday morning, or just complacency with the way they were easily dealing with the opposition, incidentally this was Ince Rose Bridge away, but the final whistle couldn't come quickly enough in the end, it was almost a relief.

This rekindling of warfare with old rivals IRB was decided would be spread out over 4 x 10 minute periods due to the aforementioned hot weather with hardly any breeze, to give the kids chance of getting plenty fluids on board. Both sides had limited numbers, so it was 10 a side with the Sharks having one sub to spare, both sets of kids had to be prepared to toil in the heat for the full match.

IRB kicked off & as throughout the game, George Lowe ran the ball hard back at the Bridge, a ball strip on the 3<sup>rd</sup> tackle gave the Sharks another 6 tackles & they moved up the field almost effortlessly. No specialist half backs were in evidence today & the ball wasn't very fluid coming out from dummy half & moving across the line, it was a bit disjointed in parts & as a whole even though they seemed to be coasting, the Sharks didn't play all that well, they flattered to deceive most of the time as a team.

The first set from the penalty just fizzled out with a knock on at the 4<sup>th</sup> tackle. The match was sleep walking basically as the Bridge drew the Sharks across to the right then loaded an attack on the left, an adventurous & speculative cut-out overhead pass only played into the hands of little Sam Kelly as he anticipated correctly & streamed on the interception, plucking the ball out of the air & game over as far as any chance of catching him as he strolled over for the opening score, Tom Carter providing the extras & in no time the Sharks were 0-6 up, they knew about Sam now but it did them no good eventually. There was the sound of massive deflation from the Ince lot at this & a bit of bad language in evidence from their coaches, in ear shot of all the kids too.

Back came the Bridge & the little ginger-haired half back started weaving a bit of magic, he was deft with his passes & a bit of ball trickery to go with it with an excellent dummy also, he threatened constantly but the Sharks for the most part always seemed to have him weighed up. A knock on gave the ball back to the Sharks & the middle men ran the ball hard & made good ground & on the 4<sup>th</sup> tackle nothing looked on as Sam received the ball standing still about 20-30 metres out, but noticing the slow filling in of the Bridge defence on the right, he needed no 2<sup>nd</sup> invitation & seemed to ghost around the right edge & back under the posts without a finger being laid on him & before IRB knew what was happening, easy for Tom to add the extra 2, so further away at 0-12 now, coasting, so it seemed.

The Sharks continued with strong running up the middle by Leo Wadsworth, George, Harvey Sadler & Luke Gledhill and looked sound in defence whatever the Bridge big guys threw at them, crunching tackles from Rhys Clayton, William Metcalfe, Brody Lucas & a masterclass from George kept the Ince boys at bay, but the Sharks were guilty of being sucked into the middle too much & when Ince decided to spread the ball wide they were dangerous, being fooled by a dummy from the half back put Ince into a good field position & from the kick on the last tackle the ball bounced kindly for the winger to score in the left corner but he fumbled the high bounce at the last minute & the chance was gone, the Sharks then wasted possession on the first tackle with the dummy half pass going overhead from Rhys & Brody spilled it, Ince back on the attack & thank you very much as they made

the most of the gift & a strangely static Sharks defence to eventually cross in the corner, not doing themselves any favours there at all, try converted & Ince back in it at 6-12.

After a quick water break the Sharks resumed again with Ollie Fairhurst prompting & orchestrating from the centre of most attacks, Sam tried to go around the outside on the right edge again, but they had him watched like a hawk now, a tame kick on the last by George just gifted Ince the ball too easily. With Ince growing in confidence they started to throw the ball about & swept downfield with the Sharks defence all over the place, it took some determined last gasp try line defence to keep them out again & the ball was turned over in the corner. A couple of promising looking forward surges by the Sharks were spoiled by sloppy play the balls with turn overs for knocks on, just wasted possession through lack of concentration.

Good defence by the Sharks defence kept the threat at bay again with Tom Carter to the fore here & a timely intercept by George set the Sharks rolling again, an enterprising long punt into empty space downfield by Ollie on the 2<sup>nd</sup> tackle almost came off, would have worked better if the others would have been aware to put even more pressure on, Ollie completes the first tackle on the Ince line. The Sharks then kept Ince in their own half in the next set & some great running, passing & weaving took them to the left edge & clever, quick thinking by Luke from dummy half, noticed short cover by Ince in their corner & a quick nudge of the ball to Ollie who rolled over in the corner, a positive end to a great set, Toms conversion just managed to scrape over via the crossbar & how significant that proved to be in the end, 6-18 up now.

At this point the Sharks should have been twisting the knife as Ince started to fall apart, some kids were arguing & having a strop & walking off, the coaches were falling out with the kids & between themselves, they were in disarray, but the Sharks just didn't take advantage & impose their superiority. From a break in play due to an injury to an Ince player & with them one player down, the Sharks relaxed, didn't wake up quickly enough & let Ince throw the ball to the right edge & score in the corner, classic mistake, shutting off temporarily & not switching back on quickly enough, in total control one minute, blink & they lose control, so annoying!

The conversion was missed & again that proved significant in the end, 10-18 now.

The teams turned around & Ollie kicked off & Ince ran it back at them, Luke with an acrobatic diving interception thwarting the first attack. The Sharks then wasted an opportunity after they were given a penalty in the Ince 20 metre area by a pointless kick to the corner on the first tackle, the ball bouncing dead, possession wasted again. From the restart some non-existent defending saw the first run cut the Sharks in half & they had to chase down the length of the field to halt the surge, a penalty for a ball steal then compounded this, how many free invites could they give away to Ince to retaliate? Another penalty for offside gave Ince loads of space down the left & they didn't turn this down, the little No7 half back was having even more of an influence now as he floated a long looping pass to the winger to drop over the line, it was significant now that the Sharks were spending more time watching & admiring his play & were standing back & not moving in & cutting him off as earlier, big mistake! Try converted so narrow now at 16-18.

It was time for the Ince defence to have a nap now as Sam wandered into the midfield & tried his luck at a gap he'd seen in the retreating Ince defence, he shot through it like a knife through butter & was contest over as soon as he'd passed the first defender, right between the posts to complete his hat-trick & leave Tom an easy job to add the extras so back out again at 16-24.

Penalties by the Sharks defence kept coming & giving Ince more field space that they hadn't earned, another one for holding down in the tackle brought Ince into their 10 metre area, some great

flowing passing moves again by Ince saw them cross easily again with the Sharks defenders glued to the try line seemingly, not desperate enough today overall. Conversion over so the cat & mouse game continued & 22-24 now, time to start sweating.

Back on the attack again & Sam got Ince all nervous with another dart through the middle, Ollie made good ground again on the back of Sams offload, George took it up into the 10 metre zone & from dummy half Ollie jinked around the slowly retreating Ince cover in the right corner to score a great opportunist try, Tom adds the extras from a difficult position & back to an 8 point gap at 22-30 now.

The Sharks contain Ince to the next 5 tackles and a very confident catch near his own line by Louise Fairhurst from the high bomb going over his head diffused a potential difficult situation, a bit of argy bargy in the tackle from Ince on Rhys then gave them a relieving penalty, Leo made great ground on the first tackle with a strong powerful run through the middle, power & pace in harness, taking the Sharks inside the Ince 20, the ball was worked to the right & it looked like the static Ince defence was going to let Sam in again but they awoke at the last second & kept him out, a 4<sup>th</sup> was beckoning, Brody then went within a hairs breadth of the line then was involved in a bit of fisticuffs, the move fizzled out with a tame kick on the last that was easily dealt with by the Ince line defence, something they need to work on is their tactical kicking, it was pretty poor today.

It looked for all the world that the Sharks were in again as a large hole opened up for Rhys & he went for the line but the cover just made it & the ball was lost in the tackle so a chance to put clear daylight between the sides had gone, they could have relaxed after that, unfortunately they did relax & let the No7 weave a bit more of a spell as Ince played some great rugby league with big forwards passing like backs to go from the right to the left touchline as the left winger screamed down the edge to touch down, it was a great team try but the Sharks showed too much respect again & stood off instead of attacking the ball carriers. Try converted then the final whistle came as a massive relief to the Sharks, maybe another set to Ince & they would have pulled in front, the Sharks definitely did their fair share of giving Ince more chances & space than they actually earned, soft penalties & static defence the reasons here. The one missed conversion by Ince the separating factor, the scrape of a conversion by Tom just as crucial, two matches with a 100% success rate is phenomenal.

The looks on the Sharks kids faces at the end you'd have thought they'd lost, they had to be convinced that they'd scraped home by 2 points, a hint at a smile then emerged eventually. Leigh Miners next up & they have to improve, the choking pressurised defence they demonstrated vs Orrell has to return if they're going to compete. Onward & upward hopefully, the season is even at this point, 3 defeats, 3 wins & a draw, a win next Sunday & we'll be in the positive, come on lads!

## **Up the Sharks!**

### **Awards:**

Parents MOM: Sam Kelly

Coaches MOM: George Lowe