

Cheltenham Under 16 AA Rustlers Champions with win over Newport 13-6 !!



Frank Mindum reports: Having demolished Ormond in the semi-finals 29-1, the U16AA boys would've been forgiven if they were a bit cocky this past week. But that was not the case – batting practice on Monday, a solid 2 hour training session on Wed, and some extra batting practice on Friday was just business as usual. Coach Cummings kept things

pretty low key, the emphasis being on the little things that got them to the Grand Final.

So the Grand Final day came, with a warm morning in tropical Newport. Thankfully we had a slight breeze and cloud cover, and a batting box in the shade for the main part of the game. Luke P went to the plate with lots of noise from our bench and a very keen group parents and friends. Finally the bat cracked the ball but only to second, who had an easy toss to first, Luke back to the dugout. Fred H got bat to ball but also out at first. Matt C got to first, but only as a result of wayward pitches. Henry up and also walked. Jak C had our first safe hit, with a ground ball to shortstop, bringing home Matt C. Ash F got involved with a hit to third, getting both Jak and Henry home, but was left on base after Connor O struck out.

Matt C start off our pitching, taking a couple of throws to blow out the cobwebs, walking the first batter, before striking out the second. The third batter took to Matt, hitting a triple to deep Centre Field. The next was a double, then a single and scores were tied 3-3. Thankfully a heads up play from Matt C stopped a ground ball into his glove, and the throw to first for the second out. He then casually struck out their third. 3 – 3.

A torrent of runs in the second inning came courtesy of a walk to Nick M and Ryan T, a single to Luke P. Luke S and walked before Matt C launched a double to Centre field, Bevan singled, Jak C doubled along with Ash F ! Seven made it around before Connor went out with a very sharp line drive caught by Newport pitcher, then Nick M's huge hit into left field caught. 10-3.

The Rustlers took to the field again, Matt C giving the first batter automatic first base (and no doubt a decent bruise on her calf...) Newport went on to score another 3 runs, 10-6.

Top of the third went real quick, Ryan out on a fly to short stop, Luke P safe on base, but then both Lukes (Porter and Sexton) out on a great double play by Newport. Thankfully the bottom of the third was just as quick, a groundball picked up by Henry B at third to Matt M at first for the out. Matt C then caught a high infield fly for the second. Newport finally got their third onto base, but he was then run out thinking he could steal second by take on Ash Flynn's arm to Jak! Not today ! Still 10-6, and Rustlers stepping back into the batting box.

Top of the fourth brought a bit more breathing room, starting with Matt C being walked, before Henry was caught out deep in right field. Jak then hit a fly which was luckily muffed, followed by Ash cracking one into right field to advance the

runners. A fantastic extended lead play saw Jak home and Ash advanced before Connor was walked. Matt M was then the lucky recipient of another muffed fly by the pitcher. Ryan then grounded out at first, but scored Ash F and advanced Connor and Matt. Luke P unfortunately also grounded out to the pitcher, out at first, and the lead now 13-6, but plenty of game time left...

Matt C went back to the mound, close to his allowed pitch count, to strike out the first batter before being applauded off to centre field, and replaced by Luke P on the mound. Three pitches later the second batter was back in the dugout, and 20 seconds later the third grounded out to Ryan at second with the easy toss to Matt at first for the third out.

The fifth innings and with 15 minutes to play, we wanted to stay out there batting just as long as possible. Sometimes things don't go quite to plan.... Luke S struck out, Matt C was caught at left field. Henry made it to base but was left there after Jak grounded to third for the out at first.

By this time the clock was close to full time, so the Newport Rams still had the chance to clinch this. Seven runs down, but with no seven run "mercy rule" in the finals, if Newport could keep batting, they could steal the win. The first batter singled. The second.... Caught by Matt C at Centre field. 1 out. Another single, another loaded base. Then a great pick off by Jak at second. But then another single and another loaded base. Still 2 out.... A stolen base..... Damn this was tense..... !!! Finally Luke P muscled the ball into the safety of Ash's glove – swing and a miss - third strike and third out ! Time and Game !!!

A couple of titbits from the statistician.. Firstly – both teams had 12 hits. Newport had 5 strikeouts to our 2. Newport was walked twice to our seven times. Doubles to Matt C (1 RBI), Jak C (2 RBIs) and Ash F, (4 RBIs). Matt pitching 63% for 10 outs, Luke P 69% for 5 outs.

Couple of quick thank you's for the record. The Dads – always there on home games to get the ground set up – Phil, Peter, Andy, often before the team manager had to ask...Ros McKenna – ever smiling scorer! Craig Sexton - Assistant Coach doing all the little things behind the scenes at training, game days, to support Paul – Paul !!!! Coach of the Year !!! These boys have had the benefit of an incredibly passionate, fanatical and dedicated coach who has put his heart and soul into the team. He has pushed them hard, and today, they have reaped the benefits ! Thanks Paul ! All the others who got the boys to games, training, early mornings, later afternoons, forked out for bats, cleats, gloves, etc. etc. etc.

Today's result validates the effort that everyone has put in - This is what it's all about !

And so the season ends for our boys ! Struggling early on, but persisting in their self-belief, and getting the ultimate prize !!! Each of these young men have grown - physically and mentally - over the course of this season. Each had faith in the other, and backed each other up. The parents, and the club, need to be incredibly proud of this group of young men. They have done us proud and we are in awe of the calibre of their character !

Game, Season, CHAMPIONSHIP !!!!!

Paul Cummings adds: the Under 16 C team would like to thank under 14 Jake Pocock for getting mum out of bed to come and support the team as bat boy.

Also many thanks to our Co ordinator Peter Leslie who also got our of bed early to make the long trip to Newport to support the guys.

It was great to see the many family members and friends who made the journey to scream and support the guys, for an away game for us we had the biggest supporter base by far.







