

## NZ Tour Report

The tour departed early, 5am from Chatswood to get the 7:50am flight to Christchurch. A few quick photos at the airport and a little delay, we were off on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Under 15s Tour of New Zealand.

After arriving and checking in on Friday, we made our way to the Crusaders vs Highlanders Super Rugby Fixture, looking for some inspiration from the best in the business, and they did not disappoint!! The Crusaders were amazing from warm up, to the final siren and then after the game where they welcomed everyone onto the pitch.

Saturday morning we woke ready to go to work against St Thomas of Canterbury College, kicking off at 10am. We began the match with prayer, a tribute to those who lost their lives in the Christchurch Terror attack just one month ago. Prayer was followed by a Haka which our boys faced with great respect, delivered fiercely by a passionate and physically intimidating St Thomas outfit. It was not long before the home team asserted themselves through powerful running and great structure. Later we found out (after the match) that this team had been undefeated the past two seasons, have been labelled one of the biggest sides in the country for their age group and are expected to go on and win the national championships this year. Needless to say, today wasn't the day they were going to be beaten, but our boys showed plenty of courage, with Will Stanley, Harry Melloy and Max Wood deserving mentions. No injuries from any of the SPX boys and we enjoyed fantastic hospitality after the match with our fellow EREA brothers.

The afternoon was spent on a tour of the city, led by one of Canterbury's favourite son's and our very own Mr McBrearty. The boys were treated to a very proud and sometimes emotional expedition of the Christchurch, visiting historical landmarks including the Christ Church Cathedral, the Art Centre, Earthquake Memorial on the Avon River and the makeshift tribute to the recent Terror attack. The boys did a spot of shopping before boarding the bus to the Palm Sunday Vigil mass at Sancta Maria Parish in Addington.

Sunday was a day of leisure and relaxation where the tour party travelled to Hanmer Springs to soak in the hot springs and ride waterslides. Following a very scenic bus ride there and back we ended the day with a meal and movie at the local shopping complex.

Monday morning was an early start where we travelled three and a half hours south to play against fellow EREA school St Kevin's Oamaru. St Kevin's started well scoring quickly, but then Pius held the ball well for the next 15 minutes only to turn it over and concede another two tries. In a much improved effort from game one, they finished the half well, finally getting on the board through Harry Melloy and the half time score was 19-5.

The Pius men started the second half where they left off scoring quickly and narrowing St Kevin's lead to a converted try. Throughout the half the two sides traded scores and with 3 minutes the game was in the balance at 29-22 to St Kevin's. In their urgency to snatch the game, Pius leaked two more tries and St Kevin's ran away with a 41-22 win, a score line that did not reflect the effort and improvement from St Pius X. Again we were treated to an amazing afternoon tea and exchanged mementos, before boarding the bus for the journey home to Top 10 Holiday Park Christchurch.

On Tuesday morning the boys were treated to a sleep in and after checking out at 10am we did a sightseeing tour from the coach, visiting the coast and seeing some of the areas most effected by the 2011 earthquake. Subway sandwiches for lunch and then we took off for Rotorua after a short delay at the airport.

We arrived safely and were welcomed onto traditional Maori land at the Apumoana Marae in Rotorua. The students were very respectful as we sat and listened to stories about culture, ancestors and prayer, before Mr Brannan replied on behalf of the group. The boys expelled some energy out on the field before grabbing shovels to dig up dinner, a traditional Hangi of game and farm meat and home grown veggies.

On Wednesday morning, the boys were treated to another sleep in and then a home cooked hot breakfast of porridge, bacon, eggs and sausages. We spent the morning at the Whakarewarewa living Maori thermal village where they learned about how food was cooked using the hot springs and steam from the Earth and entertained by local dance, singing and a haka.

Lunch was a picnic by Blue Lake before an afternoon of adventure at the skyline gondola and luge adventure park, followed by dinner back at the Marae of BBQ wild venison and homemade sausages. The boys were entertained during the evening with a game of 10 pin bowling, where Oscar MacDonald showed great skill.

On Thursday we were up early and farewelled our lovely hosts of Apumoana Marae and headed north to Auckland to play our third and final match of the tour against Liston College.

We were greeted with sunny warm conditions and a good crowd at the local rugby park. Liston started well and scored after a few minutes however Pius bounced back with a try of our own through Will Staber. We then held the ball well only to be scored against through some strong running from Liston. Two more quick tries just before half time hurt us and we were down 20 to 7 at half time.

Another quick try from Liston after the break had us on the back foot however some great work from the forwards and a solid driving maul had us scoring again through Oscar MacDonald. Score 27-12. The scoring went back and forth, first Liston, then Pius from Kobe De Moulin, then Liston again, with the score finishing 37-17. By far the best performance on tour with everyone in the team deserving, but especially Will Staber, Will Stanely, Harry Melloy.

The afternoon we enjoyed the amazing view of Auckland from the Sky Tower and then a buffet dinner to finish the tour before departing early Friday morning and home to Sydney for the Easter Weekend.

The boys who attended to the tour were great ambassadors for their College, their Families and their Country. While they did not get a win on tour, they approved with every game and will take the positive experience into the ISA season.

*Mr Joe Lynch – Rugby Convenor*