



Double Success in Melbourne

The NSW Country Cockatoos and Colts have scored solid wins in their matches against the Victorian Rugby Union at the Harlequins Rugby Club grounds.

The Cockatoos scored four tries to three to overcome a determined Melbourne Axemen 31 – 20, while the Colts wore down a never say die VRU Colts 22 – 13.

Cockatoos v Melbourne Axemen

As has been the case in previous encounters the Melbourne Axemen turned up to play, and from the kick off the Country Cockatoos knew they had a game on their hands.

The Axemen secured a turnover from the kick off and immediately went on the attack in the Cockatoos' twenty two, and after five minutes of applying pressure they were rewarded when they slotted a penalty goal to take a 3 – 0 lead.

The next ten minutes were very even with both teams keen to throw the ball around, but each attacking raid was met with solid defence which saw several turnovers and play continually moving up and down the field.

The Cockatoos got the first break in the match at the seventeen minute mark when an Axemen clearing kick failed to find touch. Following a solid return run by Fullback Justin Placek and quick recycle from the ensuing ruck the ball quickly went through the hands to Winger Chris Jack who raced in for a converted try to make the score 7 - 3.

The Cockatoos continued to mount pressure and five minutes later No 8 Mike Te Moana broke from the base of a scrum and raced forty metres down the blind before off loading to Fullback Justin Placek who crossed for the second converted try to take the score to 14 – 3.

This score stirred the Axemen into action and they struck back within the next two minutes when a well executed move from a scrum resulted in a mid field line break which was halted just short of the Cockatoos' line. The ensuing ruck saw the Axemen work the ball wide to the wing and they touched down for an unconverted try to close the gap to 14 – 8.

The tempo of the match lifted with both forward packs trying to dominate, while the backs continually probed for holes in the defence line, but neither side could get the upper hand.

The Cockatoos were dominating in the lineout, with Locks Tom Cullen and Matt Waterford winning a mountain of ball, but the possession wasn't being turned into points.

With the clock running down to half time Winger Chris Jack crossed for his second try when he took a pass from Mike Te Moana who had broken from the scrum base, kicked ahead and regathered. The conversion by David Kennedy saw the Cockatoos go to the half time break up 21 – 8.

The second half saw the Cockatoos immediately go on the attack and after five minutes Winger David Kennedy kicked a penalty goal to take the lead out to 24 – 8.

The Cockatoos were taking control of the match, but a series of unforced errors and misdirected kicks kept stalling the momentum which was being built.

Points were hard to come by as both sides continued to be rock solid in defence, but it was the Axemen who broke the deadlock, when in the sixtieth minute they caught the Cockatoos napping close to the line and scored a converted try to close the gap to 24 – 15.

The Cockatoos immediately went on the front foot and after pinning the Axemen in their twenty two for a period of time, No 8 Mike Te Moana made one of his trademark runs from the base of the scrum to crash over next to the posts. The easy conversion saw the Cockatoos take the lead out to 31 – 15, and it looked as if the floodgates were about to open.

All the play was now basically in the Axemen's half, but the Cockatoos continued to let them off the hook with basic errors which started to make the match a stop and start affair.

On one of the few occasions the Axemen did manage to get into the Cockatoos' half, they forced a turnover and ran through some weak defence to cross for an unconverted try to bring the score to 31 – 20.

The remainder of the match saw the Cockatoos on the attack, but they were unable to add to the score-line and eventually ran out winners 31 – 20.

The Players Player Award went to Lock Tom Cullen, who was well supported by Winger Chris Jack, Prop Liam Vaughan and Mike Te Moana.

NSW Country Cockatoos – 31

Chris Jack 2, Justin Placek & Mike Te Moana Tries
David Kennedy 4 Conversions & Penalty Goal

Defeated

Melbourne Axemen – 21

3 Tries, Conversion & Penalty Goal

Country Colts v VRU Colts

The Country Colts wrapped up their two match tour to Melbourne with a grinding 22 – 13 win over the VRU Colts.

In a match which never rose to any great heights the Colts always looked to be in control, but couldn't deliver the knockout blow to put away a VRU Colts who wouldn't give in.

The opening ten minutes was played at a fast pace with both sides keen to play the match in opposition's half, and play fluctuated up and down the field.

Ten minutes into the match Fullback John Millen gathered a clearing kick spun it wide to Winger Josh Damen who raced forty metres down the touch line before crossing kicking for John Millen to regather and score a converted try to take the lead 7 – 0.

The VRU got on the scoreboard a minute later to make the score 7 – 3 when they kick a penalty goal after Country were penalised at the breakdown.

Country started to put together a series of attacking players and it was only strong defence by the VRU which kept them from scoring.

With the first quarter of the match ticking over No 8 Aidan Kwast broke from the back of a maul and raced forty metres before being pulled down short of the line. The ball was feed to Five-Eight Chayce Bambach who sidestepped his way around two defenders to score a converted try under the posts to take the lead out to 14 – 3.

The remainder of the half saw Country dominate, but they didn't convert the pressure into points mainly due to a lack of ball control and poor decision making, and they went to the break with an eleven point lead.

The second half saw both sides keen to throw the ball around, but neither side could string together any concerted attacking raids, and the match developed into an arm wrestle.

The deadlock was broken at the fiftieth minute mark when Country forced a turnover on half way, and a long cut out pass from Jacob Miller to Chris Miller saw him break the line and race to the corner and score an unconverted try to take a 19 – 3 lead.

VRU hit back with an unconverted try five minutes later to close the gap to 19 – 8 when after a series of pick and drives they crashed over in the corner.

Five-Eight Chayce Bambach put the match out of the VRU's reach ten minutes later when he snapped a twenty five metre field goal to stretch the lead to 22 – 8.

The remainder of the match saw both sides trying to create opportunities, but neither side could make any headway against the other's defence.

VRU had the final say when a loose Country ball was toed through into the in-goal and they scored a consolation unconverted try to make the final score-line 22 – 13.

The Players Player Award went to Flanker Ben Ham, with the other Back-rowers of Dominic Morris and Aidan Kwast, Prop Dylan Evans and Five-Eight Chayce Bambach standing out.

NSW Country Colts – 22

Chayce Bambach, John Millen & Chris Miller Tries
Chayce Bambach 2 Conversions & Field Goal

Defeated

VRU Colts - 13

2 Tries & Penalty Goal