

Sports Department - Easter end of Term Report

I write this following the U16s heart-wrenching elimination for the Rosslyn Park National School Sevens at the hands of Eton. After winning the 'group of death' as coined by media covering the event, the boys lost in the last play of the game. Shattered, exhausted, upset, angry, proud, we packed up and came home, in the knowledge we should have been a part of the last 16, deserve to be a part of the last 16, belong in the last 16. These are now the expectations of our top sportsman; we respect our opponents, but do not fear them, and are disappointed rather than accepting that we are not in the final stages of a National competition.

Prior to yesterday's emotional roller coaster, the U16s secured their maiden title by winning the Hampshire Collegiate School 7s Cup, defeating Portsmouth Grammar in the final. This followed their success at Stowe 7s defeating some of the biggest names, non-more so than Wellington College, but unfortunately coming unstuck against old rivals Millfield in the Cup semi-final.

Throughout the school this 7s season has seen success, as the seniors also brought home the HCS Cup for U18s, while the U12s won their County competition without conceding any points, quite remarkable! The U13s made it to two consecutive Cup semi-finals, while the U14s too have played some top opposition, toppling Whitgift along the way. The 1st VII made visits to Surrey 7s and Rosslyn Park in addition to their Cup win at HCS.

This of course all follows the media furore that was the Natwest Vase Final for the U15s, who after a remarkable cup run put in a wonderful display against an Oakham team, with an exceptional talent who unfortunately couldn't be stopped. Despite the result, the experience for the boys and staff was something truly special, made all the more so by the travelling support, helped partly by our wider support who secured the supporters bus for us. We may not have won on the pitch, but our vocal and loyal travelling support certainly chalked one up for us over Oakham. I would like to take this opportunity again to thank all of our parents, brothers, sisters, relatives and friends who do support us in everything we do and in a manner of ways, every little helps and it all adds up to make a huge difference to us and the boys. Without your help and support we simply would not be able to run the number of teams and activities that we do.

While thanking people I should mention Mr Lloyd and Mr Griffey who have both covered some miles for me in particular; Mr Griffey to all of the Cross Country and my 7s fixtures as well as the seniors, while Mr Lloyd put in a sterling shift transporting our Senior Tennis Team to Bolton for the National Finals. The boys represented the school for the first time at tennis finals after 9 matches, starting back in September, and defeating the likes of Dauntsey's and Millfield along the way. Despite a shaky start, the boys pulled through, winning 2 matches and losing 1 to finish second in their group, and they pipped Rugby School to third place overall of the 135 schools entered. Not bad for a school without any tennis courts, and so a thanks must go to Salisbury Tennis Club and its coaches for their ongoing support. The tennis boys have got their most recent campaign off to a winning, start beating Brockenhurst in the first round of the National Championship, and face Bournemouth Collegiate School in the next round.

Despite my starting with the 7s, this term is traditionally the football term and our teams have seen great success so far this season, posting some huge scores against local opposition. The Years 7, 9 and 10 teams all have local semi-finals after Easter, while the 1st XI continue their rich vein form. Despite a disappointing friendly loss to Millfield toward the end of this month with an under-strength side, their league and cup hopes remain strong as they continue to push on, following a cup quarter final win over Corsham. The annual Warminster 6-a-side tournament, despite some excellent results over the likes of Sherborne and Canford, ended in disappointment as we lost to Gillingham in the final. The 1st XI once again have been a leading light in the schools' football and have been rightly recognised for their play by the likes of Millfield and Bradfield College, who have invited them for friendlies, no greater compliment from two of the top school sides in the country. Doug Small continues his work with the seniors and Year 11, courtesy of support from 4com, while aptly aided by Mr Podger and again Mr Lloyd.

I can't write about the football without celebrating Monty George and his achievement, making his England Schools' boy's debut earlier this month in a 2-0 victory over Wales, always nice to have an international between the sticks. Congratulations Monty.

From pitches back to courts: the Badminton boys played in their County Finals in February against some tough opposition. Having been coached by Simon Woodhouse, the boys went in full of confidence and while the KS4 team came unstuck early on, the KS3 team were placed second overall.

Staying on court for now, the Basketball season has seen Mr Duckett very busy indeed with the teams doing well and only in recent weeks suffering knockout defeats. Prior to this we had seen nail biting wins over Millfield and European School Culham for the U17s and Winchester College at U18. While the U14s finished their season as County Final runners-up, the U16s continue to shine as they defeated their most recent opponents, notching up over 90 points and hence move into the next round of Nationals.

Finally to some more individual performances of note; following the Cross Country season both Dan Poynting and Robert Croager went on to represent Wiltshire at the National Cross Country Finals. Fabrice Webb came second in the Wiltshire Fencing Finals and is off to the British Schools' Modern Biathlon Championships at the end of March. Very well done boys.

As the games' season comes to an end, with the likely prospect of multiple football play offs and hopefully some finals and silverware we begin to cast our eyes to our summer activities. This year will see the re-introduction of School Cricket for a number of year groups, and nets have already begun. The Athletics season looks to be an exciting one, with some real talent throughout the school. Area Sports and the Schools' Cup are just around the corner and the Tennis season for the Middle and Lower School begins again.

Track sessions will be on throughout next term for our athletes. These should be seen as an opportunity for all of our Sporting Team BWS boys, regardless of sport, to put in some ground work, not just for Athletics, but for their forthcoming season in

September. The gym is also open for Y11 upwards and circuits on a Wednesday after school are due to make a return next term. We are up there mixing it with the best schools in country across a wide range of sports, but to gain further success and to sustain it, we must foster a culture of hard work. Hard work that begins before the season, so we are peaking in it, rather than at the end.

I would wish this culture of hard work to be instilled not only on the sports field, but also off it, and to complement and drive academic success also. The above should not come at the expense of academic endeavour, but instead should work alongside it. Our boys are smart, intelligent, ambitious and hardworking, when their minds are put to it. Neither academia nor sport should be a scape goat for the other, but more of a catalyst for each other, driving the other on.

We know academic results are important for the future success of the boys, but sport and extra-curricular activities are a huge part of what make our boys so special. It is what makes them the well-rounded young men that leave us ready for the world. Following the ecstasy highs and agonising lows of the BWS sporting term and in a month where International Day of Happiness took place, I thought Tom Fordyce's (Chief sports writer for the BBC) conclusion was apt – "Who wants to go through life insulated from emotion? Sport - the winning, the losing, the hoping, the hating, the tension and the despair and the very occasional ecstatic moment – opens us up to feeling alive."

Have a great Easter break.

Mr R Demain-Griffiths
Head of PE Department