

London Irish U15 A – Lions / London Irish U15 B – Cheetahs - 2009/2010 season

London Irish U15 (Cheetahs) Match Report

## Esher RFC 22 – 07 London Irish

Fixture Type: Surrey League Division 2  
Match Date: 17 Jan 2010

Venue: Esher RFC  
Attendance: 60

### Passionate Irish fall short

Jerry Goss reports from Esher RFC

It was a sunny morning in Esher as the London Irish Cheetahs (under 15s) prepared for their third and toughest league match of the season in the Surrey League Division Two.

Following defeats in the first two matches of the season the Cheetahs were keen to put in a good display against Esher.

Esher were riding high at the top of Division Two having convincingly won their first three league matches.

Following the now thawed snow and heavy rain, the pitch was very soft, but playable.

As the teams lined up the captain of a big powerful Esher side was heard to say loudly "Same as always guys; this will be all over by half-time!"

From the kick off Esher went on to the attack but soon found that the Cheetahs were not going to roll over. Several crunching tackles from the Cheetah's centre wiped the smile of the Esher faces, as they realized that they were in for a tough match.

Though much of the early play was in the Cheetahs half, Esher were making little progress as a determined London Irish side continued to tackle hard. One such attack resulted in a high tackle on an Esher back, and the referee immediately awarded a penalty to Esher in front of the London Irish posts. The kick was taken and missed; however the ref saw an infringement and ordered the kick to be re-taken. This time the kick went over.

#### Esher 3 – 0 London Irish

From the kick-off London Irish attacked Esher and were soon camped in the opponents' half. A reckless high tackle from an Esher player resulted in an Irish penalty on the Esher 22. The Cheetahs elected to run the penalty, but it came to nothing and Esher regained the ball. The counter attack was stopped however and the resulting Esher scrum was turned over. An imaginative "Garryowen" from a Cheetah back was caught well and kicked to touch by the Esher full back.

Esher now began to exert pressure on the Cheetahs, who were pushed deep into their own half. Attack after attack was beaten back by the Cheetahs; and twice the ball crossed the line only to be held up by the gallant defenders. After a series of five-metre scrums, Esher finally got across the line for a try. The resulting conversion attempt was missed.

## **Esher 8 – 0 London Irish**

From the resulting kick-off London Irish went on the attack and were soon testing the Esher defence with a number of penetrating runs by both the London Irish forwards and backs who were now putting together good passing movements. The Cheetahs were now playing as a cohesive unit, which the Esher defence had difficulty coping with. A line out in the Esher half was well won by the Cheetahs second row, and after some excellent play and terrific teamwork by London Irish, **Ruairi O'Hara** collected the ball and made a brilliant run through the centre of the Esher defense scoring a great try under the posts. The conversion was made good by **Charlie Teece**.

## **Esher 8 – 7 London Irish**

From the restart London Irish resumed control of the match and could have closed the gap further but started to concede a number of penalties. From one such penalty Esher tapped and ran, and for once the Cheetah defence could not stop them, and a resulting soft try was scored and converted.

## **Esher 15 – 7 London Irish**

London Irish kicked off and once again went on the attack, electing to push through the middle of the Esher ranks. Steady progress was being made into the Esher half when the ref blew for the end of the half.

## **Half Time: Esher 15 – 7 London Irish**

So much for the game being over at half-time. In their previous three matches Esher had only conceded five points and rarely been taken beyond half-time. They knew that would have to dig deep in order to retain their 100% record.

There was still everything to play for and London Irish came out the stronger of the two teams after a stirring half-time speech from the coaches. The match was now a tough physical battle with the London Irish players rising to the occasion. In particular London Irish forwards were now winning the scrums on a regular basis, and were peerless in the lineouts. Both forwards and backs were tackling well as the team went on the attack.

Most of the play was now in the Esher half. A Cheetahs centre kicked high and ran 'Lomu like' at the Esher defense; it was no surprise that the Esher full back fumbled the catch. London Irish won the resultant scrum and drove at the Esher defence. Now it was Esher's turn to defend, which to be fair they did well. A lesser team would have conceded. After a series of attacks the ball was turned over in a ruck and as confirmation of the pressure they were under Esher just kicked for touch. The Cheetahs won the resulting lineout and once again drove at the Esher line. However the pressure was relieved as the ref awarded a penalty against London Irish. Esher kicked for touch again and made it into Irish territory for what seemed to be the first time in the half. The play now ebbed and flowed either side of the half way line. The penalty count increased as Esher was awarded three in quick succession placing them on the Irish 22. The latest penalty was kicked to touch, but it was the Cheetahs who again won the lineout. A loose pass gave the ball back to Esher, but it was turned over by the Cheetahs in the ruck. London Irish were on the attack again. However the play was called back for an earlier infringement and a penalty to Esher was awarded deep in the Irish half.

Esher choose to run the penalty and after some gallant Irish defending eventually crossed the line for their third try. The conversion was good and the score became;

## **Esher 22 – 7 London Irish**

The cry went up amongst the Esher players "let's go for the bonus point!". However that soon became a forlorn hope as wave after wave of green bore down on their defence. Immediately

after the re-start Esher were camped on their five-metre line defending for their lives. A fine interchange of play saw a Cheetahs forward sprint for a gap; it took two Esher players to stop him, leaving an overlap. Unfortunately he couldn't make the pass and the opportunity slipped away. London Irish continued to pressurize the Esher defence but frequently the Irish attacks were broken up as the referee awarded penalty after penalty against them. Each time the penalty would be kicked to touch, and each time London Irish would win the lineout and renew the attack. By this time, Esher players were asking how long to go, as their defence became ever more desperate.

London Irish were now trying everything to breach the Esher line. However all credit must go to the Esher defence which somehow withstood the sea of green. One of the Irish centres kicked a trademark up and under, which this time was caught by the Esher full back; but the resulting kick didn't make touch and back came the Cheetahs. This was the story of the second half.

It had been 11 minutes since the third Esher try, and for that entire period Esher were pinned inside their 22, whilst London Irish launched attack after attack. Eventually, much to the relief of Esher, the ref blew for the end of the match.

**Full-Time: Esher 22 - 7 London Irish**

This was Esher's fourth league win of the season. It was an even match, played in a good spirit; but Esher took their chances better than London Irish, defended very well, and on the whole deserved their victory.

London Irish Cheetahs can be proud of their performance and can take much from this match. The power in the scrum; the domination of the lineouts; the tackling; and the passion shown in the second half.

Scoring sequence (home team first):

3-0 (5 min), 8-0 (20 min), 8-7 (24 min), 15-7(31 min), (Half time), 22-7(45min).

**London Irish Squad:**

Goggin, Tobin, Bonning, Rossow, Green, Gold, Ingram, Barth, Lucas, Cahill (Captain), Goss, O'Hara, Teece, Roffey, Kerrigan, Derzak, Wilkinson, MacDonald, Guite, Rye, Riphagen, Grimes, Keane, O'Mara, Dean.

Scorer	Tries	Conversions	Penalties	Drop Goals	Total
O'Hara	1				5
Teece		1			2

Referee: Simon Keeble (London Society)