

Match Report - Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2010

## Old Reigatians v London Irish (Lions) – under 15

### Surrey Champions Again!

London Irish Lions were preparing for their eighth match of the season in the Surrey League Division One against Old Reigatians. Having won all of their previous seven matches the London Irish team were already virtually confirmed as Surrey champions as only a very unrealistic set of scores could delay the inevitable. However, a win today would remove any doubt and confirm the London Irish under 15 team as Surrey Champions for the second year running.

The match was scheduled for a 12.30 kick-off at Reigate. Although the weather forecast had been very good, the early morning was dull and overcast after some rain. However the sun came out around kick-off time and it became very warm and close. Despite the earlier rain the pitch was hard.

Old Reigatians kicked off and after a short intense initial period of play London Irish went on to the attack. Soon London Irish were threatening the Old Reigatians' try line and very nearly scored on two occasions (once on each side of the pitch) only to be denied by good tackling just short of the try line. Play remained in the Old Reigatians' '22' and, following a London Irish penalty, Andy Sierocinski received a pass and darted past a number of defenders to go over the try line only for his 'try' to be disallowed for reasons that were unclear. The London Irish team continued to attack and were passing the ball from one side of the pitch to the other with great speed and skill. The pressure on the Old Reigatians' defence was now intense and it was only a matter of time before London Irish scored. Eventually **James Willis** received the ball on the left wing and sprinted over to open the scoring and give London Irish a very well deserved lead. The try was not converted.

#### **Old Reigatians 0 – 5 London Irish**

By this time London Irish should already have been further ahead. However, from the restart Old Reigatians were awarded a penalty almost immediately. They decided to run the ball and following a couple of missed tackles Old Reigatians broke through and scored on the right side against the run of play. The try was not converted.

#### **Old Reigatians 5 – 5 London Irish**

From the restart London Irish went straight back on the attack but play soon moved back to the halfway line. The last try appeared to inspire Old Reigatians who now were fighting back with real determination and tenacity. The match had now become a hard physical contest with strong tackling and rucking and London Irish were not having it all their own way. Old

Reigatians often appeared to get the better of the scrums and were matching the London Irish forwards in the rucks though not in the line outs where the London Irish forwards were repeatedly stealing the ball. Both teams were now playing well and the defences were on top. Unfortunately decisions were not going in favour of London Irish and infringements by Old Reigatians around the ruck were not being penalised. It was now a fairly even match though London Irish looked the more dangerous in attack as more excellent passing moves were put together. As play moved into the Old Reigatians '22' London Irish again threatened the Old Reigatians' try line. After a number of attacking phases the ball was passed to **Craig Banyon-Thomas** who cut inside the remaining defenders to dive over to score on the left side and give London Irish the lead they deserved. The try was not converted.

### **Old Reigatians 5 – 10 London Irish**

London Irish went straight back on the attack only for Old Reigatians to again respond strongly as play again moved back to the halfway line. Old Reigatians then began to pressure the London Irish defence as play moved well inside the London Irish half. Old Reigatians were now attacking with real determination as they attempted to respond but the London Irish defence were tackling very well and their try line was not seriously threatened. Shortly afterwards the Half-Time whistle blew.

### **Half Time: Old Reigatians 5 – 10 London Irish**

From the restart London Irish again went straight on to the attack but were met with some very strong tackling by the well organised Old Reigatians' defence. Play moved back and forth between the two '22' lines as both teams tested each others defence. Both teams were playing with real determination and tenacity. The London Irish forwards were now dominating the scrums as well as the line outs but both defences remained on top. Old Reigatians were matching London Irish in the open play. Old Reigatians were frequently attempting to slow the distribution of the ball to the London Irish backs at the scrums and the rucks but were frequently straying offside. As the forwards of both teams continued to battle it out for possession the London Irish forwards were now proving the stronger while the London Irish backs continued to move the ball around well when going forward and tackle tenaciously when defending. At the same time Old Reigatians were refusing to give an inch and were putting together some good attacks of their own while defending really well. The game continued to be very physical and some very good rugby was being played by both sides. A penalty was awarded to Old Reigatians inside the London Irish half but the kick for goal was missed and play resumed with London Irish again on the attack. Another scrum inside the Old Reigatians '22' was won by London Irish but the Old Reigatians' defenders continued to tackle well and prevent London Irish breaking through. A powerful driving run by a London Irish forward past a number of defenders was followed by an excellent offload that nearly resulted in a breakthrough but again the Old Reigatians' defence held firm. Decisions often seemed to go against London Irish and Old Reigatians' infringements in the rucks still appeared to be missed. London Irish were now attacking and applying real

pressure to the Old Reigatians' defence as they looked for the try that would give them a winning lead. With about eight minutes left, as London Irish were again on the attack, a London Irish pass was telegraphed and intercepted by an Old Reigatians' player who looked clearly offside but the decision did not go in favour of London Irish. The player broke away and ran well over half the length of the pitch to score under the posts. The try was converted and Old Reigatians were in the lead for the first time in the match with only minutes remaining.

### **Old Reigatians 12 – 10 London Irish**

From the restart Old Reigatians went on to the attack and play moved inside the London Irish '22'. Old Reigatians continued to apply pressure to the London Irish defence without really threatening the London Irish try line. The London Irish players were defending really well and continued to tackle with real tenacity as they had done throughout the match. However time was running out if London Irish were to maintain their unbeaten record and the Old Reigatians' players were scenting victory. The match was now very tense and nearly boiled over on a couple of occasions but the referee cooled things down by handling the situation very well. The London Irish players ignored the shouted taunts of a couple of the Old Reigatians' players and continued to play with real determination. A penalty was awarded to London Irish well inside their own half and Alex Abbot-Tavener made what can best be described as 'a brilliant kick that any professional player would have been proud of' as he found touch a couple of metres from the Old Reigatians' try line. The tension was now rising as the London Irish players lined up determined to take this opportunity. The ball was again won from the line out and the London Irish forwards again demonstrated their superior strength in the driving maul that followed. **Lorcan Dow** then collected the ball and dived over to score in the corner. There were only about two minutes left and London Irish had regained the lead. The try was not converted.

### **Old Reigatians 12 – 15 London Irish**

From the restart play remained around the halfway line. The tackling remained very tenacious but London Irish remained in control as Old Reigatians were unable to respond effectively. The final whistle blew a couple of minutes later and the celebrations commenced.

### **Full-Time: Old Reigatians 12 – 15 London Irish**

**This was another great win for the London Irish (under 15) Lions who were now confirmed as Surrey Champions having won the Surrey League Division One Title for the second year running. The London Irish under 15 Lions team has now been unbeaten since January 2008 during which time they have also played other county champions and a county team.**

Taking into account the five week break since the team last played together this was a tremendous team performance by London Irish. The match was hard and physical and the

London Irish players again demonstrated a real fighting spirit, great teamwork, tremendous skill and a real determination to win. Credit must be given to Old Reigatians who also played with great strength and determination up to the final whistle. They were a very strong team, very well organised and defended exceptionally well. Apart from the first fifteen minutes, which London Irish dominated, this match was very close and was the toughest match the London Irish team have played this season. No other team has restricted London Irish to scoring just 15 points. This victory by London Irish was hard earned and very well deserved and the whole squad of players deserve real credit. They are truly worthy Champions!

At the end of the match the whole squad of players, coaches and parents joined in to celebrate the tremendous success of the team. The cheering, the singing, the photos were a fitting end to a season which had been so successful. The Surrey Division One Championship had been won (again)!

**Team photo on next page**

**London Irish (under 15) Team with Coaches**  
**after beating Old Reigatians**

**Match Squad:**

**Back Row:** Andy Sierocinski, James Stanhope, Kane Alboni, Craig Banyon-Thomas, Adam Szczotka, Lorcan Dow, Jack Heeney (Capt.), Lorenzo Rossetti, Robert Lynch, Cormac Rowe, Toby Goss, Alex Abbot-Tavener

**Front Row:** Paul Burke, Wesley Heath, Jordan Harris, Chico U'Chong, James Willis, Sam Sims, Jobie Burke, Paul Sims, Ian (Chongy) U'Chong, Jim O'Hara, Dave Heeney

**Not in photo:** Sam Ollason

**The Surrey Champions 2009/10**

