

# Rugby

## 1st XV

**B. Leslie**

The 2022-23 season will long live in the memory as a historic and successful season for Banbridge Academy 1st XV. The team won the Schools' Bowl, the highest honour we had ever gained and had a hugely successful season as well. The on-pitch pre-season was well attended on the back of a successful first summer program of strength and conditioning held in Banbridge Rugby club's excellent facilities.

Our season began strongly at the Grosvenor Grammar tournament, where we beat the hosts 14-0 and then Rainey Endowed 7-0 but lost out 3-12 to Dromore in the final. The performances here, as much as the results, hinted towards the good season that was to come.

This was followed by a number of friendly games where we tried different combinations of players to see what gelled best. We beat Larne 57-7, Omagh 19-12, lost 5-45 to Enniskillen, beat Lurgan 39-7 and Limavady 20-0 before our first Schools' Cup group game v Dromore High (see later in report). We then beat Regent House 17-12 before our 2nd Cup game v Larne Grammar. This was followed by 3 wins over Friends' School 10-0, Grosvenor Grammar 17-0 and RS Dungannon 31-7 before our final Cup game v Bangor Grammar.

Further friendlies in January, just prior to the Bowl campaign, were a 12-33 loss to Down High and a 24-17 win over RS Dungannon.

### Schools' Cup group games

#### Game 1 v Dromore High:

Unfortunately the team lost 7-19, but it was a fantastic spectacle played in front of a huge crowd of supporters. Dromore went into the tie as heavy favourites as they were the number one seeds in the group, while the Academy were seeded third out of four. The Academy's performance defied this seeming imbalance however and the young team, just 3 Upper 6th boys on the pitch,



more than held their own in a thrilling encounter.

Dromore were first to score with some good phase play resulting in a well-worked score; the extras were added by the kicker. As halftime approached Banbridge piled on the pressure but after a near miss close to the line, Dromore broke away and when Banbridge twice failed to find the safety of touch with clearance kicks, Dromore capitalised and scored again to take a 14-0 lead into halftime.

The 2nd half saw some of the Academy's best rugby with big carries from Ulster Hooker Connor Magee and Ulster back row Ryan Hanna, alongside some



impressive work from 2nd row Noah Bell. This good play led to an outstanding break from centre Luke Charman who burst through the defensive line and then stepped the full-back to score under the posts; Full Back and Captain Ryan Matthews slotted the conversion to bring the score to 7-14. The Academy continued to play well as the game ebbed and flowed both ways, with both teams having chances to increase the score. On 55 minutes it was Dromore who put together an excellent series of phase play and then, as the defence scrambled to cover, they made the midfield break and fed their left wing to score in the corner; the wide-out conversion was missed. As the game drew to a close the Academy continued to try to get within bonus point range but the Dromore defence was resolute and the whistle blew with no change of score.

The game was an epic encounter in many ways; the physicality of both sides was to be commended but the skills levels and work rate from both was also exemplary and the two sets of supporters should also be commended for their loud but sporting support.

#### Game 2 v Larne Grammar:

Despite a strong start from Larne, the Academy soon kicked into gear and ran out 55-5 winners. The tries came from: Ryan Matthews, Connor Magee, Darragh Knox x 2, Fergus Alway x 2, Ryan Hanna, Jacques MacAuley & Noah Bell



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and captain Ryam Matthews added five conversions.

## **Game 3 v Bangor Grammar:**

The team completed the group stages of this year's Danske Bank Schools' Cup with an impressive 22-0 win. The match began well for the Academy, when after just two minutes a cross-field kick from outhalf Andrew Jackson resulted in a spill from the Bangor winger and centre Daniel Hutchinson pounced on the loose ball to dive over the line for the opening score. Most of the rest of the half was played in the middle of the pitch, with both teams having their moments but neither able to penetrate resolute defence from each side. With just seconds left before half-time, the Academy executed an excellent right-hand move off scrum and winger Noah Myles dived over in the corner for a well worked try. This was converted from wideout by fullback Ryan Matthews, leaving the half-time score 12 - 0 to Banbridge Academy.

The second half began as an evenly contested match with both teams working hard to create opportunities, but neither team were able to capitalise on some good field position. After 20 minutes however, Banbridge Academy executed another nice right-hand scrum move this time moving the width of the pitch and scoring in the corner when flanker Tom King picked up at the base of a ruck and dived over. Just 10 minutes later, with the Academy pressing for the 4th try bonus point, Second Row Noah Bell was the sharpest at a penalty and after a quick tap dived over to secure bonus point and also kill the game as a contest. The Academy were aware that points difference could matter in qualifying out of the group and continued to press for the remaining 10 minutes, but Bangor held firm and there was no further score.

It was a very pleasing display from the Banbridge Academy 1st XV, as away wins are always a rare commodity in the Schools' Cup and a large crowd of travelling supporters thoroughly enjoyed their day out in Bangor.

## **Schools' Bowl games**

### **Round 1 v Larne Grammar**

Our first round tie was a rematch of the Cup group game and it brought about a similar result. Larne were once again very brave and tackled hard all day, but the Academy team had too much power and accuracy and ran out 54-0 winners. The scores came from Jonathan McCrum, Callum Little, Ryan Matthews, Daniel Hutchinson x 2, Elijah Dempsey, Ryan Hanna, Connor Magee and Andrew Jackson with 7 conversions.



### **Round 2 v Bangor Grammar**

This was another replay of a group game, but this match was very different. It was a game where the team never really got going and Bangor were immense throughout. It took a very late score from substitute winger Elijah Dempsey to finally get the Academy ahead and they held on to win, 15-14. Connor Magee had earlier scored our other try and Andrew Jackson was on target with the conversion and a penalty.

### **Semi-final v Omagh Academy**

Banbridge Academy 1st XV have booked their place in the Final of the Danske Bank Schools' Bowl with a hard-fought 37-21 win over Omagh Academy in a pulsating semi-final. Andrew Jackson opened the scoring for the Academy with a penalty after just 3 minutes, but despite further pressure from Banbridge it was Omagh who scored first with a well worked forward based try and successful conversion. This sparked the Academy into life as they responded 5 minutes later when 2nd Row Tom King powered over and Jackson successfully converted. This was followed up 5 minutes later

when Prop Jonathan McCrum drove over the line to score but Jackson was wide with this conversion attempt. Just before halftime however Omagh pressurised the Academy line and, in spite of some great defence from the Academy, they scrambled over the line for the try and again slotted the kick to take the halftime score to 15-14 in favour of Banbridge.

The 2nd half got off to a great start when Scrum-half Harry Wan finished off a brilliant attack from the Academy, but just when it seemed the Banbridge boys would pull away, Omagh mounted a counter attack to score on 50 minutes and when the kick was converted they took a 20-21 lead into the final quarter. But Banbridge had saved their best for last. After a number of strong drives, Hooker Connor Magee powered his way over the line to score and Jackson once again added the extras, then a few minutes later Jackson slotted a long-range penalty to take the game out to 9 points. With time running out Banbridge kicked a penalty into the corner and Prop Jonathan McCrum scored his second of the day from the resulting powerful driving maul to seal the 37-21 victory.

### **Final v Friends' School**

Banbridge Academy 1st XV achieved their own little bit of history on, Wed 8th March by winning the Schools Bowl for the first time. The Academy overcame Friends' School, Lisburn 31-15 to claim the Ulster title on a cold but dry day at a blustery Barban Hill, home of Dromore Rugby Club. A huge crowd, in excess



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of 1000 people, watched a pulsating game and saw Academy Captain Ryan Matthews hoist the trophy with his team. The Bowl is the top trophy fought for by the 20 schools who did not make it out of the Schools' Cup Group stages.

The final began with the Academy benefitting from a strong wind. They utilised this advantage early on with a good kick to the corner and the Academy lineout functioned well and Prop Jonny McCrum touched down from the resulting driving maul for a 5-0 lead after only 2 minutes. Out half Andrew Jackson was just wide with the conversion. Friends' came into the game after that, but neither team could exert a stranglehold and it wasn't until the 25th minute when Banbridge ran an excellent set piece move of the scrum, that winger Noah Myles powered over in the corner for the score. Jackson slotted this kick to take the score out to 12-0. Friends' followed up with some late 1st half pressure but the Academy defence was resolute and refused to be broken. Friends' eventually settled for a penalty on the stroke of halftime to leave the score 12-3 in the Academy's favour, but with the wind in their faces in the second half it was far from a winning lead.

The Academy came out firing however, and the next 15 minutes were decisive in the tie. After 45 minutes a good phase of attacking play led to 2nd Row Tom King touching down for the important



score for the Academy. Jackson was narrowly wide again. Friends' rallied and moved down field and took advantage of some loose Academy play to score an unconverted try but the Academy boys responded almost immediately, when they powered up-field and produced two brilliant tries in just 3 minutes. First up Prop Thomas Williamson cut a lovely angle to drive over for a score which Jackson converted and then the best score of the game where the Academy moved ball left and right and eventually a sublime one-handed pass from Jackson and a lovely line from Full Back and Captain Ryan Matthews put him in under the posts for the decisive try. Jackson again added the extras to take the score out to 31-8. To Friends' credit they finished the game strongly and got another converted score with just 10 minutes to play but the Academy saw the rest of the game out comfortably and claimed the hard won title of Danske Bank Ulster Schools' Bowl winners.

The Bowl was presented pitchside at the end, on behalf of the Ulster Branch, by Mr Sam Grattan and the large Academy crowd enjoyed the moment. Well done to all involved, a very special day indeed for Banbridge Academy.

Thanks must go to Dromore Rugby Club and Dromore High for the use of their excellent facilities and to their staff for

running the event.

## The Forwards

The forward pack was the backbone of the team. Loosehead prop was L6 Johnny McCrum who continues to improve with every game he plays. Jonny is a strong scrummager and good ball carrier, who had an eye for the tryline. At Tighthead prop was Thomas Williamson. Thomas was highly effective over the ball in defence and also improved his ball carrying throughout the season and was awarded the Most Improved Player award at the end of the year. At Hooker was Ulster Schools' player L6 Connor Magee. Connor has an excellent lineout throwing and is an extremely strong carrier and big tackling front row player who played for the Ulster clubs and schools team and trained with the Ulster elite training group. He was awarded Player of the Year at the End of Season dinner. Yr 12 Adam Jones also made a number of appearances at prop. Adam is improving all the time and is developing into a really good ball carrier and technical scrummager. In the second row was Yr 12 player Noah Bell who went from strength to strength as the season progressed. He represented Ulster U17 and pushed his way onto the elite training panel. The other second row was L6 Jack Shaw, who was a fast developing forward who enjoys carrying the ball and always gives 100% on the



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pitch. In the back row at number eight was Yr 12 Ryan Hanna, who is explosive off the base of the scrum and a very effective ball carrier. At open side Flanker was U6 Tom King who was an excellent lineout forward and strong with ball in hand. Our Blindsided flanker was Callum Little, who worked hard around the pitch and was an explosive ball carrier. Flanker Adam Logan forced his way into the team at the end of the season with outstanding performances for both the 2nd XV and 1st XV and broke into the starting team for the Cup run. Adam is a workhorse flanker who runs and tackles for the full 70 minutes. U6 Henry Knox also played numerous games at flanker and was always industrious and hardworking in both defence and attack.

## The Backs

Scrum-half is L6 Fergus Alway. Fergus has a strong pass off both hands and is an excellent decision maker at half back. L6 Harry Wan also played a number of times. Harry is a talented player who is happy playing either 9 or 10 and always does a great job whenever needed. He was awarded the Clubman of the Year award. At Outhalf yr 12 Andrew Jackson slotted seamlessly into the team. He is very effective at running his back line and has an eye for a gap himself, allied with a very strong kicking game. At first Centre was L6 Daniel Hutchinson; Daniel is equally at home at outhalf and is a superb ball player who runs great lines of 10. Outside centre was L6 Luke Charman who is a hard running and big hitting player but also has a subtle side to his ever improving game. On one wing was U6 Noah Myles who possessed incredible pace and strength and was an attacking threat from all areas of the field. On the

other wing was L6 Darragh Knox, whose excellent footwork was always a threat to opposition defence. At fullback was Captain U6 Ryan Matthews. Ryan has an excellent kicking game and was also rock solid under the highball, as well as being very keen to turn defence into attack. He led the team excellently throughout the season and was a first-rate captain. U6 Ronan Quinn would have been a regular starter for the team but unfortunately a bad injury early in the season put him out for the year, but his footwork and defensive capabilities were greatly missed. L6 Jacques Macauley played a number of games at centre or wing and his pace and eye for a gap were always a worry for opposition defences. Yr 12 Elijah Dempsey could also play in wing or centre and he too has pace to burn and came up with some crucial scores as the season progressed.

In addition to those detailed earlier, the following players also represented the 1st XV during the season: James Seifert, Thomas Humphries, Ollie Kelly, Will Kennedy, Corey Hamilton, Benjamin Quigley, Joey Mackrell & Nazie James Mulligan.

**The 1st XV playing record was:  
Played 21, Won 17, Lost 4  
Points for 490, Points against 226**

## Top points scorers:

	Tries	Penalties	Conversions	Drop Goal	Total Points
Ryan Matthews	8	1	24	-	91
Connor Magee	13	-	-	-	65
Andrew Jackson	-	4	18	-	48
Jonathan McCrum	8	-	-	-	40
Noah Myles	8	-	-	-	40
Ryan Hanna	7	-	-	-	35

## Thanks

I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few people for their invaluable help throughout the season.

Firstly, to all our valuable sponsors for their incredible generous contributions to Banbridge Academy rugby:

- Little & Company – Warm-up jackets for the entire senior squad of 45 players
- Wheatfield Decorative Stone – 8 Substitute jackets for the 1st XV
- Mr & Mrs Matthews – Dinner for Senior Squad
- Senior Parental group (Mr Terry Magee, Mr Guy Charman, Mr Ivan Hutchinson) – Match Balls
- Houston's Banbridge (John Houston) – Match Ball
- Banbridge RFC - for free use of Gym facilities all season



Thanks Mr Brian O'Shaughnessy, Mr Robbie Ervine and Mr Charlie Farrell for all their coaching and help with the 1st XV throughout the season, their expertise and enthusiasm are greatly appreciated. Thank you also to Ben Bradshaw and Marcus Graham, our Strength & Conditioning coaches, for their hard work with the pre and in-season programmes for the players. Finally, thanks to the caretakers, and John Kernaghan in particular, for their hard work on Saturday mornings looking after the changing areas and grounds. Without the help of these people we could not have had such a successful and enjoyable season.



# Rugby

## 2nd XV

Mr O'Shaughnessy



The 2022-23 2nd XV season will be remembered for the Cup run that almost secured a quarter final spot against all odds. The season started with an away defeat to Royal School, Armagh (28-7) with centre Elijah Dempsey scoring the first of his 12 tries that would see him finish the season as top try scorer. A narrow home win followed against Omagh Academy (17-14) with the impressive Adam Logan scoring the decisive 2 tries. Enniskillen Royal GS proved too strong (40-12) with full back Josh Thompson scoring 2 excellent tries.

A win against Limavady GS (40-7) and a defeat against Regent House (51-12) followed before the first round of the 2nd XV Cup, which threw up a home tie against Belfast HS. A nail biting 26-21 victory ensured that we were in the draw for the 2nd round with centre Nazie-James Mulligan scoring the match-winning try in the dying seconds. Royal

School, Dungannon were the visitors in round 2 with the home team coming away with another superb 22-12 victory. Out half Harry Wan scored 2 tries with hooker Ben Quigley and full back Joey Mackrell grabbing a try each. With the top schools entering the competition in the 3rd round, it was Ballyclare HS that had home advantage. With easily our best performance of the season, unfortunately we came up just short in an epic battle that saw the lead change hands several times (33-26). Try scorers were James Seifert, Elijah Dempsey (2) and Thomas Humphries. The quarter final of the Plate threw up a home tie against a strong Coleraine GS side. In another titanic tussle we came up just short once again, (33-22) to all but end the season.

The season finished up with a couple of friendly fixtures against Down HS to ensure the whole squad got some

game time. Several of the 2nd XV went on to represent the 1st XV during their victorious Cup campaign, which was just reward for their excellent performances for the 2nd XV. Special mention must go to captain Henry Knox who was the only Year 14 player in the squad who led the team admirably week in, week out.

At the End of Season Awards Dinner, the winners included: Captain - Henry Knox, Player of the Year - Adam Logan, Most Improved Player - Adam Jones, Top Try Scorer - Elijah Dempsey (12)

The squad would like to pay particular thanks to senior coaches Mr Leslie, Charlie Farrell, and Robbie Ervine for all their hard work throughout the season. With virtually the entire senior squad returning next season, except for a small number of Year 14 leavers, and the addition of the victorious Medallion squad, Banbridge Academy senior rugby looks promising.



# Rugby

# Medallion XV

Mr O'Shaughnessy



The 2022-23 Medallion squad started the season hoping to emulate the class of 2021-22 by winning some silverware. With only nineteen Year 11 players in the squad it was clear that a number of Year 10 players would have to make the step up to help out each week. A number of those players were identified early and eight of them joined the squad for the season, while continuing to represent the U14 XV. The season started slowly with a narrow 17-12 defeat at home to a strong Royal School, Armagh side. This was then followed up by five successive wins on the bounce against Larne GS (35-31), Omagh Academy (14-5), Enniskillen RGS (34-28), Lurgan College (64-0) and Limavady GS (21-14). Local rivals Dromore HS came out on top, 10-3 in our next game, which was followed by two further defeats against Regent House (26-12) and Friends' School Lisburn (29-10).

The Academy team then started their Medallion Shield with a disappointing 13-0 defeat away to Foyle College. The squad had to pick themselves up and knew they had a good chance of success in the Trophy, if they played to their potential. A determined Carrick GS side were first up in Round 1. Tries from Alex Andersson, Miles Mawson, Max

Ireland, Arturs Jonuss and Captain Noah Haughey paved the way for a superb 31-5 win. Next up was a tricky away tie against Dalriada in the Quarter-Final. Having played most of the rugby, the away side had to settle for a 7-7 draw with the points coming from a try from Year 10 out half Sam Leslie and a Noah Haughey conversion. The replay at home was a little less nervy with the home side coming out on top 29-7, with tries from Arturs Jonuss, Warren Hooke, Sam Leslie, Noah Haughey and Miles Mawson. The Semi-Final was against Grosvenor GS at home. Having played each other earlier on in the season, it was the Academy side who came out on top 10-3, so both teams were expecting another tight game. Grosvenor took an early 5-0 lead but were then blown away by a superb all-round performance, 41-5. Tries were scored by Miles Mawson (2), Nathan Young, Matthew Morrison, Arturs Jonuss, Sam Leslie and Alex Andersson.

The final against Enniskillen RGS, played at the superb facilities at RS Armagh, did not disappoint the vast number of supporters from both schools. It was the Academy team who started the stronger. Straight from the kick-off hooker Nathan Young beat a number of would-be tacklers, to take the play deep inside the

ERGS half. Further carries from a number of forwards left an easy job for scrum half Jonny Neill to touch down from a few metres out, leaving the score 5-0 to the Academy. With Enniskillen RGS on the back foot once more, a second score looked inevitable. Superb defending from ERGS left the Academy forwards frustrated and the score remained 5-0. Having weathered the early storm, it was the turn of the Enniskillen side to show their attacking prowess, with their fullback scoring out wide and their impressive inside centre nailing the tricky conversion. The halftime score was 7-5 in favour of ERGS. Both sides knew that the next score would be crucial. Having lost replacement scrumhalf Max Ireland to injury early in the second half, the Academy side had to make further changes which disrupted the flow of the game. The ERGS number 8 then showed his pace out wide to outstrip the cover defence and score in the corner. With the conversion missed, the Academy side trailed 12-5. A superb turnover by replacement winger Adrian Logins, left the Academy team with a line out 5 metres out. Strong carries from Noah Haughey, Caleb Cromie and Fynn Niblock ensured that second row Matthew Morrison had the space for the all-important score. With no





recognised kicker on the pitch, flanker Miles Mawson stepped up to send the conversion straight between the posts from a difficult angle, tying the score 12-12. With little under 10 minutes left to play, both sides looked for that all important score that would seal the victory outright. ERGS had a difficult kick to win it at the death, but the effort drifted wide leaving both sides to share the Trophy.

Having played 17 games and only losing 6, the Medallion squad narrowly missed out on the Team of the Year Award at the rugby end of season dinner. Other winners included: Captain - Noah Haughey, Player of the Year - Fynn Niblock, Most Improved Player - Jonny Neill, Top Try Scorer - Arturs Jonuss (11), Top Points Scorer - Max Ireland (71).

The squad would like to pay particular thanks to coaches Arthur Allen, Charlie Farrell and Jemma Farrell for all their

hard work throughout the season and to Mr Leslie for all his support. A special mention must also go to all the parents who turned up week in, week out to cheer on the team. Four of the squad gained representative honours with various Ulster provincial squads, so we wish Matthew Morrison, Fynn Niblock, Noah Haughey and Arturs Jonuss all the best and congratulate them on their success. Many of this squad will return next year to fight for a place on the 1st XV, with the eight Year 10 players getting their chance in the Medallion squad once again.

We would also like to thank our very kind sponsors JMK Solicitors, through Ms Maurece Hutchinson, who sponsored a full set of playing jerseys for the entire squad. This was a very generous gesture that was greatly appreciated by both the school and the players.

Squad: Alex Andersson, Nathan Young,



**Medallion Sponsors JMK Solicitors**

Finlay Long, Matthew Morrison, Fynn Niblock, Miles Mawson, Caleb Cromie, Noah Haughey (C), Jonny Neill, Sam Leslie, Jamie Ramsey, Arturs Jonuss, Ethan Houston, Daniel Hampton, Matthew Grimes, Luke Wills, Leo O'Neill, Raz Zachs, Patrick McElroy, Max Ireland, Warren Hooke, Aaron Horwood-Barrett, Adrian Logins, Andrew Robertson, Conor Patton, Syd Moore, Conor Comiskey.





# Rugby

## U14

### Patrick McElroy - U14 Rugby Captain

Throughout the year the U14 rugby team used over 30 players, showing the growing strength and depth in the year group. As Captain of the U14 rugby team it has been a very exciting and progressive year, although we had a rocky start with a loss to The Royal School, Armagh.

We saw improvements in our performance throughout the year, demonstrated by a decisive win against Armagh, a team that had beaten us consecutively for three years but finally we overcame them with a score of 14-0 in the performance of the year. Over the course of the season we played over 20 matches against many different schools and we won our fair share of games playing some really good rugby at times.

Nearing the end of the season we played a tournament at Royal Belfast Academical Institute. We had mixed results as the team was carrying a few injuries. We had a tightly fought loss to Coleraine of 7-8 with a consistent performance throughout the entire tournament from Conor Patton; a win against Armagh of 17-7 and a loss to Sullivan Upper in the quarter final. This tournament showed our determination, perseverance and endurance.

We had another tournament at Armagh Royal with three very close unlucky results, but we surprised Dungannon (having lost twice to them previously in the year) showing our determination and hunger for the win throughout. We also fielded a full B team at this tournament and they enjoyed their three games and played some excellent rugby.

At The End of Season Awards, Ethan Houston won player of the year and Luke Wills won most improved player, both highly deserved awards. Congratulations also to all the boys who were members of the Ulster Regional Development Programme; Leo O'Neill, Patrick McElroy, Syd Moore and Conor Comiskey.

The team would also like to thank our main coach Mr Reaney, who will be missed at Medallion level by the whole team as he has massively improved our team performance. Thank you to our games coaches Mr Leslie, Mr O'Shaughnessy, Jamie, Adam and Joel, a past pupil, who helped out on some Saturdays. All of these rugby coaches came together to improve our overall game.



**U14 A XV**



**U14 B XV**



# Rugby

## U13

Charlie Geoghegan - U13 XV Captain



The U13 squad had a slightly mixed season with some excellent wins and some disappointing losses, but our biggest achievement has been our first full season together and learning and adapting our own skills.

We started our season off with a strong win against Royal School Armagh; they put up a good fight for most part but the outcome was 39-17 to the Academy. We then went on to beat our rivals Dromore 29-5, then Clounagh Junior High School which was a confidence booster as we beat them 40-0 with an outstanding performance from everyone.

Then after our win streak we got invited to the Ballyclare Blitz. In our first game we dropped our heads after one try against Ballyclare in the first match, then we had a break in between to reset ourselves and our next match against

Limavady resulted in a draw with Conor scoring a hatrick. Next we went on to beat Armagh again, with an outstanding performance with Conor McNamee and Dawson Knox both getting hat-tricks. In our next games we had some tough fixtures against very strong sides from Grosvenor, Dungannon and also a very tight game against a skilful Down High squad; then we went on to play Friends' School Lisburn, suffering a 31-17 defeat. The improvement in character throughout the year meant that none of the players ever gave up and we were rewarded with a hard-fought win against Killicomaine, from which we scored an early kick and chase try. In that game Conor scored an amazing four tries. Next, we carried on with a fixture against Omagh wanting a big win, but were outplayed by a strong team, losing 38-5. Even though confidence was down we went on to beat Enniskillen Royal

Grammar School in our next game and played some fantastic rugby. The next match we had was a match against Lurgan Junior High School, which we lost 40-5.

At the end of season awards ceremony Dawson Knox was awarded the Player of the Year trophy and Matthew Macauley was awarded the Most Improved Player award.

I believe and I'm sure the coaches do as well, that for the most part even though we were adapting to playing 15-a-side rugby, we made some major improvements. I'm sure all the rugby players would like to say thank you to all the coaches that helped us throughout the season, in particular Mr Beacom (our head coach) for his huge commitment of time and energy and also Mr Livingstone for all his help and support.



# Rugby

## U12 A&B



The U12 players had a thoroughly enjoyable first season as Banbridge Academy rugby players. Training numbers were good all season and all the boys put in lots of hard work in the early part of the year to get us all up to 'match' pace and ready to play. With lots of players new to rugby this took a bit longer than usual, but paid off in the end.

The first games of the year were away to Friends' School in Lisburn. Both the A and the B teams played hard and gave their best, but the more experienced Friends' teams won both games. This was followed by an Ulster Rugby 'Gamification' blitz with RS Armagh and Dromore High. In this format points were gained by successful completion of passes and tackles etc. This is an exciting new initiative and added to the fun of the day, as there was lots to cheer. The A team performed well in both matches, while the B team won their group. Two fixtures against RS Dungannon followed this blitz and by now we were starting to find our stride. The A team competed well but just ran out of steam at the end, while the B team lost 12-11 in a pulsating game. Another blitz followed in early December with teams from RS Armagh, Omagh Academy, Enniskillen RGS and Killicomaine JH. Both the A & B teams enjoyed a successful day out scoring lots of tries and winning a few games. A second visit to Friends' School showed

just how far the U12 teams had come this season. The A team lost 6-3, but it was a really tight affair and the B team drew 11-11 to show how much improvement had been made in these squads since November.

In early February the U12 A team played their first ever Saturday fixture with a game against Killicomaine JH at home before the Medallion Shield match. In the end Killicomaine proved too strong but the Academy boys fought to the end and showed great promise. Next the teams played another blitz against teams from Sullivan Upper School and Wallace High School. Both teams performed really well and the A team won one and drew one while the Bs won one and lost one. This was followed by two fixtures against RS Armagh, where the As lost but the Bs had a fine win. The final match of the season saw the As lose 5-4 and the Bs win 9-5

against Dromore High in the Masters' Shield. Unfortunately, the normal end-of-season tournament at Down High had to be cancelled due to bad weather.

The Under 12s thoroughly enjoyed their first season at the End of Season Award ceremony and there were four A team players of the year: Jack Agnew, Zach Watson, Daniel Cairns and Isaac McCrum. The B team players of the year were Gareth Elliott and Jacob Anderson.

All the players would like to thank their coaches Mr Erskine and Mr Baxter for all of their help on Monday afternoons and at matches and Mr O'Shaughnessy and Mr Leslie for helping out at matches and games. The players now look forward to next year when they will play their first full schedule of fixtures; playing every Saturday and a number of mid-week games throughout the season.





# Rugby

## Award Winners



### Players of the Year

Banbridge Academy held their annual Rugby awards ceremony in late March to mark the end of their season and honour the teams and standout players for all seven rugby teams in the school. The awards dinner took place in the Belmont Hotel on Wed 22nd March with 115 players and rugby staff gathering to celebrate the schools' successes.

The special guest for the evening was the Ulster & Ireland player Eric O'Sullivan. Eric is a dynamic ball-carrying Prop who has 100 Ulster Caps and was voted onto the Pro 14 Dream Team for the 2020-21 season. Eric congratulated all of the players on their efforts and encouraged those not fortunate enough to have received an award to keep working hard on their game and keep improving.

Headmaster Mr Robin McLoughlin also spoke to congratulate the players and coaches alike. He commended the players on their hard work throughout the season and congratulated them on another fine year in terms of results and performances. He also commented on the commitment of the coaching staff, namely the school staff of Brian Leslie, Brian O'Shaughnessy, Tim Baxter, Jonny

Erskine, Chris Beacom, Jonathan Reaney & Jamie Macartney. He also thanked the outside coaches who come into school to help coach; Robbie Ervine, Charlie Farrell, Jemma Farrell, Arthur Allen, Brian Livingstone, Joel Good and the Athletic Development coaches of Ben Bradshaw and Marcus Graham. He paid tribute to all their hard work in coaching, refereeing and organisation of teams.

Individually the Academy also had a number of players who represented or trained with Ulster age group squads; Connor Magee Ulster U18 Clubs & Schools, Ryan Hanna Ulster U17 & U18 Clubs & Schools Training Squad, Noah Bell & Andrew Jackson Ulster U17, Matthew Morrison Ulster U17 training squad, Noah Haughey, Arturs Jonuss, Fynn Niblock, Leo O'Neill, Patrick McElroy, Conor Comiskey & Syd Moore Ulster Regional U16 training squad.

The performance of all the teams was commended and with five teams playing each Saturday and two Under 12 teams playing each Friday, the numbers playing the game are certainly on the rise. The two highlights of the season were the fantastic performance of our 1st XV to win

the Schools Bowl for the first time in the school's history and also the Medallion XV winning the Medallion Trophy competition. Two bits of silverware in the trophy cabinet is never a bad year!

A full breakdown of the individual award winners is below:

#### U12 'A' XV

##### Player of Year:

Jack Agnew  
Zach Watson  
Daniel Cairns  
Isaac McCrum

#### U12 'B' XV

##### Player of Year:

Gareth Elliott  
Jacob Anderson

#### U13 'A' XV

**Captain:** Charlie Geoghegan

**Player of Year:** Dawson Knox

**Most Improved:** Matthew Macauley

#### U14 'A' XV

**Captain:** Patrick McElroy

**Player of Year:** Ethan Houston

**Most Improved:** Luke Wills



**Medallion XV**

**Captain:** Noah Haughey  
**Player of Year:** Fynn Niblock  
**Most Improved:** Jonathan Neill

**2nd XV**

**Captain:** Henry Knox  
**Player of Year:** Adam Logan  
**Most Improved:** Adam Jones

**1st XV**

**Captain:** Ryan Matthews  
**Top Try Scorer:** Connor Magee  
**Overall P.O.Y.:** Connor Magee  
**U6 P.O.Y.:** Noah Myles  
**L6 P.O.Y.:** Connor Magee  
**Yr 12 P.O.Y.:** Noah Bell  
**Most Improved:** Thomas Williamson  
**Clubman:** Harry Wan

**Team of the year**

**1st XV** – Bowl winners & best playing record



**1st XV Med XV Ulster Trophy Winners**



**Most Improved players and Other Winners**



**1st XV Med XV Ulster Trophy Winners**