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Country Championships wrap up – Day 1: Seniors & Colts

COLTS – Game 1

NEWCASTLE HUNTER vs ILLAWARRA

NHRU looked great out of the gates scoring in the early minutes to take a 5 – 0 lead over Illawarra. This sparked the Illawarra side into gear, Illawarra then had what seemed to be all the ball and field position for the next 20-25min. NHRU Colts held their line after continued pressure and possession by the Illawarra side.

Illawarra continued to be frustrated by the staunch NHRU defence which eventually turned the ball over and turned it into three late tries to end the first half 20 – 0.

The second half was controlled by NHRU and continued to pressure the Illawarra side that after a few injuries and changes did well defensively to hold a rampant NHRU team to only two tries in the second half.

The first match of the day also marked the first hat-trick with NHRU Colt Ethan Fowles bagging a great hat-trick.

Final result NHRU 34 – 0 Illawarra.

COLTS – Game 2

CENTRAL COAST vs CENTRAL WEST

The second game of Colts saw last year's Rowlands Colts Cup champions Central Coast take on Central West.

Central West dominated from the opening whistle. The speed of their ball at the breakdown providing an opportunity to stretch the Central Coast defence which proved very hard to handle in the first half. Central Coast were starved of possession and field position in the first half which led to Central West posting a very healthy half time lead of 25 – 0.

Whilst the Central Coast Colts fought hard and scoring a good team try, the handling and passing of the Central West forwards and backs proved the difference. Lock Sam Greatbatch getting over the chalk for two tries a highlight of the overall team play from Central West.

A very impressive performance by Central West Colts and NHRU Colts in their first hit out which will lead both teams in what is shaping up to be a highly entertaining Rowlands Colts Cup Final tomorrow.

Illawarra and Central Coast will fight it out for seeding and pride tomorrow in the playoff.

SENIORS: Richardson Shield – Game 1

CENTRAL COAST vs FAR NORTH COAST

A very dominant first half of rugby by Central Coast ended up in a see-saw battle with their Far-North Coast.

Central Coast jumped out to a 33 – 7 half time lead with some impressive set-piece plays executed by their backs. This was complimented by some bullocking runs in the middle of the field by the Central Coast forwards led them to a healthy lead at half time.

The words of wisdom at half time from the Far North Coast coaches must have sunk in with the team, as after half time striking back with two quick tries to close the lead to 33 – 21. Central Coast kick a penalty goal after being starved of possession for the 20 min of the second half to take the lead to 36 – 21. This remained the final score with the two teams in an arm wrestle for the remainder of the second half.

Final result, CENTRAL COAST 36 – 21 FAR NORTH COAST

SENIORS: Caldwell Cup – Game 1

ILLAWARRA vs MID NORTH COAST

This game posed an unknown with the newly promoted Mid North Coast that won the Richardson Shield in 2017 on home turf in Port Macquarie, against the powerhouse of Illawarra who were Caldwell Cup winners in 2016.

The intentions from both teams were evident from the start of the match with both teams content with holding possession and building pressure. This led to a very entertaining first half with both teams scoring excellent team tries.

Half Time: Illawarra 33 – 22 Mid-North Coast

The excellent play continued in the second half with both teams putting together some great passages of play. Illawarra's top tier experience then started to show out with some well worked team tries and some sheer power got Illawarra a comfortable full time lead.

Mid-North Coast in their first Caldwell Cup game ever were certainly not embarrassed pushing Illawarra all the way to full time.

Full time result: Illawarra 55 – 22 Mid-North Coast

SENIORS: Richardson Shield – Game 2

WESTERN PLAINS vs NORTH WEST BUSHRANGERS

A huge reception for the home zone in front of a lot of their friends and family.

A frantic start to the games from both teams gave the healthy crowd that swelled to watch the Home Zone some thrills. Both teams really showed the gritty yet skilful nature of Country Rugby with some big hits and some wonderful tries.

The home zone got the first points with a try built on pressure and phases with last year Cockatoo and home town hero Ben Egan from Warren getting the hosts off to a great start. The Bushrangers were not to be outdone scoring a great try of their own to take the score to 7-5 to the hosts. Watching his Cockatoos teammate score the first try for Western Plains Joash Mann crossed the line showcasing his strong ball running. A few missed opportunities from the hosts left some points out on the field.

Half Time score: Western Plains 19 – 5 Bushrangers

The Bushrangers refreshed after the break came out the half time shadows with two quick tries bringing the scores all level 19-19 with 28 minutes to go. Western Plains then with all the possession and field position pressured the Bushrangers line for 7-8 minutes but the North West men held their line. From a Western Plains error and the ensuing scrum a charged down clearing kick was grounded just before the dead ball line to break the deadlock. Western Plains 24 – 19 Bushrangers.

The following 10 minutes were a see saw battle with the Bushrangers striking back with a try after their goal line charge down to put the score to Bushrangers 26 – 24 Western Plains. The biggest roar was to follow when the Western Plains hit back with a converted try under the posts to take the hosts out to a 31-26 lead. The last 10 minutes were tense, the crowd started to ride on every decision. The Bushrangers from their own try line with 4 minutes to go went the length of the field desperately throwing the ball around trying to get an injury time try to win the game. Deep into injury time a knock on over the line left the hosts victorious and relieved that they will be in the Richardson Shield Final tomorrow.

Such an entertaining game with a great spectator following and involvement. A true Country Rugby classic!

SENIORS: Caldwell Cup – Game 2

NEWCASTLE/ HUNTER vs CENTRAL WEST

Defending champions Newcastle Hunter were out to prove a point in the early minutes of this game with some staunch defence and some strong carries but Central West were certainly up to the challenge.

The first 20 minutes like the opening rounds of heavyweight boxing clash with both teams landing some good blows but couldn't cut through the opposition defence.

Before a wonderful line break from Central West just had the last defender to beat, Dane Sherratt from NHRU plucked the ball out of the air and ran 80 metres to break the drought and take the defending Caldwell Cup champions to 7 – 0.

Following the try the grind continued for both teams trading blows but struggling to find the weakness in the opposition, both teams putting a lot of phases together. Then some quick line out ball from the Central West forwards caught the NHRU defence off guard off able to adjust and Flyhalf Mahe Fangupo sprinted through the defensive line to level the scores 7 - all with 8 minutes before the half. With seconds remaining before the half time siren the Delore brothers from NHRU combined to split the Central West defence up the middle leading to a converted try with the defending champions of Country Rugby taking the lead.

Half Time score: NHRU 14 – 7 Central West

Newcastle Hunter coaches really fired up their troops at half time resulting in a quick try after half time but Central West hit straight back and the scores were NHRU 24 – 17 CWRU. A penalty goal to sharp shooter Sherratt pushed the lead to 10 with 29 minutes remaining in the game. Central West showed great character getting back into the game with another try to tighten the scores to 27 – 19 with 23 minutes to go.

The game looked like it was about to break open with tired players on both teams. Central West were first to take advantage of the tired bodies with a great attacking kick resulted in a converted try, only one point separated the teams with 20 minutes left.

Central West were next to score and take the lead for the first time in the game 33 – 27 with 10 minutes remaining the pressure was starting to mount on the defending champions. The Newcastle Hunter team looked like they found another gear finding the try line with a very difficult conversion that Sherratt would nail. NHRU taking back the one point lead with 6 minutes remaining 34 – 33.

Central West would grind their way inside the 40m line of NHRU and a penalty directly in front 35m was kicked by Central West to take back the lead with 2 minutes remaining. A gallant effort deep into injury time by NHRU would eventually be turned over and Central West make their way into the Caldwell Cup final.

What a day of Rugby!

Thanks to the Western Plains Rugby community and the Warren Shire Council for all the amazing hard work.

WOMEN'S 7's RESULTS.



WOMENS 7'S

RESULTS ARE IN

FROM VICTORIA OVAL @ WARREN POOL A

CENTRAL WEST 37- WESTERN PLAINS 0
CENTRAL NORTH 17 - CENTRAL COAST 15
CENTRAL WEST 12- CENTRAL COAST 5
CENTRAL NORTH 32 - WESTERN PLAINS 0
CENTRAL WEST 20- CENTRAL NORTH 7
CENTRAL COAST 20- WESTERN PLAINS 0

POOLB

MID NORTH COAST 25- NEW ENGLAND 5
HUNTER 37- NEW ENGLAND 5
HUNTER 20 - MID NORTH COAST 0



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