

Lindley happy at Crusaders in GB under 18 squad November 6th, 2008

Celtic Crusaders' Head of Youth Performance Andy Lindley says that the club's under 18 side has been a victim of its own success already this season after being forced to postpone this Friday's match at North London Stags.

The Gillette National Youth League game was called off after the Crusaders had seven of their players picked for the 18-man Great Britain Community Lions under 18 squad that will take on France in Montpellier next Wednesday.

Lindley is the coach of the successful Crusaders outfit who are currently sitting at second in the League. Eight of their players were selected for Great Britain training with a record seven picked for the team itself.

"We're delighted with having so many players selected for Great Britain," Lindley said. "It was a credit to the club to have eight lads in the training squad but to have seven in the team itself is a fantastic achievement. Commiserations to Antony Symmonds who missed out this time but he's not out of the running by a long chalk. He'll rejoin the training squad when they get back from France and will hopefully earn a place in the team for the matches against Australia in a few weeks time."

"We've been a victim of our own success here being unable to take part in tonight's game. No-one likes to postpone matches but we were forced to do so with having so many players picked for next week's French game. Thankfully the Stags have been very accommodating and we will hope to rearrange the match for sometime in December."

The seven Crusaders' players picked for the side against France include full Welsh international Gil Dudson who made his debut against England at Doncaster last month. The others are Dalton Grant, Jamie Tibbs, Rhys Fenton, Ross Wardle, Loren Quick and Mark Wool.

Forthcoming fixtures: v France Juniors - Wednesday 12th November, Montpellier; v AIS, Thursday 27th November - The Tetley's Stadium, Dewsbury Rams, kick-off 7.30pm; v AIS - Thursday 4th December - Leigh East RLFC.

PREVIOUS STORY FROM LAST WEEK

Eight Celtic Crusaders players have made the Great Britain Community Lions under 18 training squad that will be taking on France and Australia this season.

Lions manager Joe Elliott has named a 26-man train-on squad ahead of a busy winter. They will face France in Montpellier on November 12, before returning home to face the Australian Institute of Sport in a twomatch Test series on November 27 and December 4. The season then concludes with a trip down under to play the Australian Institute of Sport in June 2009.

While Crusaders provide eight of the squad, fellow Welshman Kriss Wilkes from North Wales Coasters also gained selection.

Wales under 18 coach Stuart Williams said: "This is a tremendous achievement for the lads and Wales

Rugby League. With all the hard work they have put in over the season they have now been rewarded with the recognition they deserve”

Training squad was: Kriss Wilkes (North Wales Coasters), Don Proctor (West Hull), Dalton Grant (Celtic Crusaders Colts), Jamie Tibbs (Celtic Crusaders Colts), Rhys Fenton (Celtic Crusaders Colts), Karl Olstrum (West Cumbria), Nick Johnson (West Hull), Elliott Miller (Millom), Christian Duncan (Oulton Raiders), Danny Naughton (Shaw Cross), Scott George (West Cumbria), Callum Phillips (West Cumbria), Gil Dudson (Celtic Crusaders Colts), Josh Halstead (Leyland Warriors), Ross Wardle (Celtic Crusaders Colts), Antony Morrison (Saddleworth Rangers), Antony Symmonds (Celtic Crusaders Colts), Glen Riley (West Cumbria), Antony Nicholson (Leigh Miners Rangers), Tom Connick (Pilkington Recs), Callum Windley (West Hull), Loren Quick (Celtic Crusaders Colts), Ben Bailey (Widnes St Maries), Michael Allen (Widnes St Maries), Jacob Fairbank (Elland), Mark Wool (Celtic Crusaders Colts).

Crusaders to train in Queensland, Australia November 7th, 2008

Celtic Crusaders are set to return to training at the end of this month, with their entire squad for Super League 2009 going into a tough three-week training camp in Queensland as they prepare for their first competitive match in February.

And the Welsh side will link up with Brisbane Broncos, who played a friendly match at Bridgend’s Brewery Field against the Crusaders in February 2007. The NRL club’s personnel will assist the Crusaders in specialist areas such as kicking, defence and nutrition.

The club’s main base will be in Brisbane’s Griffith University that has played host to the last two Student Rugby League World Cup tournaments. They will also have opportunity to use the Gold Coast for two sessions a week at one of the many beautiful beaches in the area.

In addition, the Crusaders will be taking part in interactive joint training sessions with three sides from the Queensland Cup competition (the second level of rugby league in that part of Australia).

Anthony Seibold, the Crusaders’ assistant coach and team manager is a former Brisbane Broncos player and he knows the benefit of training in a world class facility alongside such experienced personnel.

“We’re doing this training camp in Queensland because of its warm weather and that helps power and speed gains,” he said. “By having a three week camp we’ll get more of a benefit in those key areas to help us compete in Super League.

“With a number of new players coming in, it’s also an opportunity for them to bond with existing players and staff in a controlled environment. The whole idea is that we can have the best preparation possible in order to start Super League in the best condition.”

Seibold will be writing a blog from Australia throughout the three-week camp and regular updates will be found by going to <http://www.crusadersrfl.com/blog.htm>.

Crusaders Mark Wool to captain Great Britain U18 November 11th 2008

Celtic Crusaders' Mark Wool will lead the Great Britain Community Lions U18s against France Juniors tomorrow night.

Wool is one of seven Crusaders players in the side, which is thought to be a record number from one club, despite the fact that the Crusaders Colts and under 18s sides were only formed this year.

The Lions held their first training session this afternoon (Tuesday) after arriving in Perpignan and have quickly settled into their new surroundings.

"It's a great honour to lead out the side and is the highlight of my career so far," said Wool.

"Things have gone really well since we've been here and all the lads are confident of producing a performance against France in Montpellier."

The captain's feelings were echoed by Head Coach Carl Briscoe.

"I feel that I've picked a side that is more than capable in coming away with a win tomorrow night," said Briscoe.

"We've had a good training session this afternoon and we'll have another run out in the morning to fine tune a few things. After that I'm sure we'll be more than ready for the game."

Great Britain Community Lions U18s – Team to face France Juniors

- 1 Kriss Wilkes (North Wales Coasters)
- 2 Dalton Grant (Celtic Crusaders)
- 3 Nick Johnson (West Hull)
- 4 Jamie Tibbs (Celtic Crusaders)
- 5 Rhys Fenton (Celtic Crusaders)
- 6 Callum Phillips (West Cumbria)
- 7 Scott George (West Cumbria)
- 8 Gil Dudson (Celtic Crusaders)
- 9 Thomas Connick (Pilkington Recs)
- 10 Glenn Riley (West Cumbria)
- 11 Jacob Fairbank (Elland)
- 12 Ross Wardle (Celtic Crusaders)
- 13 Mark Wool (Celtic Crusaders) CAPT
- 14 Anthony Nicholson (Leigh Miners Rangers)
- 15 Michael Allen (Widnes St Maries)
- 16 Loren Quick (Celtic Crusaders)
- 17 Ben Bailey (Widnes St Maries)

Last gasp France stun Great Britain November 13th 2008

Great Britain Community Lions 12 v 14 France Juniors
Sabathe Stadium, Montpellier

The Great Britain Community Lions U18s suffered a heart breaking last minute defeat to France Juniors in Montpellier.

With the scores tied 12-12 and just seconds remaining a hotly disputed penalty gave the hosts a simple shot at goal and stand off Tony Gigot made no mistake from 20 metres out.

After trailing 6-0 at the break the spirited Lions hit back with scores from Michael Allen and Jacob Fairbank and looked odds on to take a share of the spoils before the last minute drama.

On a cold night in southern France both sides defences stood firm and coupled with handling errors and a high penalty count the game never really got going in the first period, despite France crossing out wide through centre Jeremy Gran.

Hard working forwards Gil Dudson, Glenn Riley and Jacob Fairbank were at the heart of most of the Lions best work and with outstanding full back Kriss Wilkes always a threat, the visitors knew that the game was very much there for the taking in the second half.

Obviously lifted by a half time talk from head coach Carl Briscoe the Lions started the second period on the front foot and soon gained their reward as the tireless Riley crashed over from close range. Jamie Tibbs added the extras and levelled the game at 6-6.

However, their joy was short lived as France hit back just eight minutes later with the best try of the night. With the set coming to a conclusion, great vision from Gigot spotted an overlap on the blind side and after combining with impressive centre Gran, winger Clement Soubeyras raced over to finish off a sweeping 60 metre raid.

To their credit the Lions again dug deep and the game started to open up as both sides looked to find the next score.

Luckily for the Lions that honour went to them, as a period of pressure deep in French territory resulted in Fairbank rampaging over from a sublime short pass from scrum half Scott George. As Tibbs added the extras the clock was ticking down and a draw looked on the cards before the game ended in dramatic fashion.

“We’re obviously disappointed to come away with nothing from the game but we can certainly take some positives from the performance, said head coach Carl Briscoe.

“There was nothing to choose between the two sides but we now have to move on and look ahead to the two games against the Australian Institute of Sport which start later this month.”

France Juniors

1 Clement Bienes
2 Guilleme Martinez
3 Eloi Pelissier
4 Jeremy Gran
5 Clement Soubeyras
6 Tony Gigot
7 William Barthan
8 Teo Gonzalez
9 John Boudebza
10 Romain Pourret
11 Jorsh Lienieve
12 Geoffrey Zava
13 Douitoy Guasch CAPT
14 Maxime Cicirleo
15 Thomas Anbert
16 Doauieu Ganthier
17 Jonathan Soun
Tries: Gran (14), Soubeyras (55)
Goals: Barthan (2), Gigot

Great Britain Community Lions U18s

1 Kriss Wilkes (North Wales Coasters)
2 Dalton Grant (Celtic Crusaders)
3 Nick Johnson (West Hull)
4 Jamie Tibbs (Celtic Crusaders)
5 Rhys Fenton (Celtic Crusaders)
6 Callum Phillips (West Cumbria)
7 Scott George (West Cumbria)
8 Gil Dudson (Celtic Crusaders)
9 Thomas Connick (Pilkington Recs)
10 Glenn Riley (West Cumbria)
11 Jacob Fairbank (Elland)
12 Ross Wardle (Celtic Crusaders)
13 Mark Wool (Celtic Crusaders) CAPT
14 Anthony Nicholson (Leigh Miners Rangers)
15 Michael Allen (Widnes St Maries)
16 Loren Quick (Celtic Crusaders)
17 Ben Bailey (Widnes St Maries)
Tries: Allen (47), Fairbank (66)
Goals: Tibbs (2)

Men of the Match

France: Jeremy Gran
GB: Kriss Wilkes
Penalty Count
France: 15

GB: 11

Half Time: 6-0

Briers looking forward to Crusaders trip

November 18th, 2008

Former Warrington Wolves and Wales skipper Lee Briers is looking forward to visiting Bridgend next year to take on Celtic Crusaders in Super League.

Briers quit international rugby league and stood down as Wolves captain in 2007 but the 30-year old is still an active member of the Warrington squad and can't wait to play at the Brewery Field in 2009.

"It's going to be a really good clash in Bridgend, I can't wait for it to happen," he said. "The Celtic Crusaders away game will be the first fixture that I look for having played in Bridgend a few times for Wales. It'll be strange going into the away dressing room this time."

Briers made his debut for Wales in 1998 against England at Widnes and went on to win 18 Welsh caps, captaining

Wales in seven of them. His eight tries, 20 goals and five drop goals makes him Wales' third highest scorer in the last 20 years and fourth on the all time list.

He knows how much Celtic Crusaders' Super League place means for the development of Welsh Rugby League in general.

"We've always need to expand rugby league," Briers admits. "We already have a team in France and the next step was to admit Celtic Crusaders. This can only make the Welsh team stronger and lead for a better class of international game.

"You're going to see a lot more kids wanting to come through and play rugby league now. In the past, they've not been given the opportunity to play at the highest level in Wales, but now they've got Super League to aim for so more will want to give it a go. I'll be following their progress closely and I really would love to see Super League become successful in Wales."

The 2009 Super League season will be Briers' 12th. Currently fourth in the all-time points scoring list for Warrington, only Harry Bath, Brian Bevan and Steve Hesford have scored more for the famous club. Briers, and everyone else in the country, will find out when the Crusaders take on Warrington in early December when the Super League 2009 fixture list is released.

Crusaders back white ribbon campaign

November 25th, 2008

Celtic Crusaders are backing a Bridgend County Borough Council-run campaign to tackle domestic violence. Members of the Crusaders' development squad have agreed to wear a white ribbon which is the international symbol for the Eradication of Violence Against Woman.

It's one of a series of initiatives and events organised by the Council's Domestic Abuse coordinator Natalie

Tanner to raise awareness of domestic abuse within the borough.

Natalie, who is based with the Community Safety Partnership, will officially launch the Council's white ribbon campaign at Civic Offices on Thursday 27 November.

"Wearing a white ribbon is a sign of your support to ending violence against women," said Natalie, who, as a former South Wales Police officer, has seen the effects of domestic abuse first hand.

"It's especially important that men and boys wear the white ribbon, which is why we are so delighted that the Celtic Crusaders have agreed to show their support.

"We must also remember that domestic abuse can also affect men and that abuse can be mental and emotional as well as physical. I really hope that by promoting the white ribbon it will get people thinking about this very significant issue."

Celtic Crusaders Community Development Officer Matthew Pritchard added "This is a very important initiative which we are pleased to support and by wearing the white ribbon we hope it will raise awareness of domestic abuse and help develop ways to prevent it.

"If this is happening to you we at Celtic Crusaders can only urge you not to put up with it and to seek assistance via Bridgend Women's Aid or the Welsh Domestic Abuse Helpline."

White ribbons will be available at a number of places around the borough for a suggested price of £1, including:

- Civic Offices, Bridgend (November 27)
- Tesco Brewery Lane (December 2).
- Tesco Maesteg (December 3)
- The Rhiw Shopping Centre (December 4)

White ribbons will also be on sale at Maesteg, Porthcawl and Bridgend police stations and at the Valleys-2Coast offices on Court Road, Bridgend and Sensi Beauty in Maesteg.

And this is just the start of Natalie's work. Over the next few months she will be working on other campaigns to highlight and reduce domestic violence.

She will be working closely with the re-formed Bridgend Domestic Abuse Forum which brings voluntary and statutory agencies together in partnership to tackle domestic abuse.

Natalie added: "It's recognised that those experiencing domestic abuse may require assistance from a number of agencies, therefore having a joint approach is very important."

Nine new signings as Crusaders start training November 26th, 2008

Celtic Crusaders go into their three-week training camp next Monday with nine new signings as they prepare for their first engage Super League game away at World Club Champions Leeds Rhinos on Friday 6th February.

The Welsh side's acquisitions include six players with 556 Australian NRL appearances between them as well as two former professional footballers.

Matty Smith and Ste Tyrer both arrive at the club from St Helens and are on loan for the whole season. Both have also played the round ball game at a Premiership club. Smith was on Everton's books as a youth and reserve player while Tyrer is a former Wigan Athletic goalkeeper.

Both players have since excelled at Saints and are prominent goalkickers.

Crusaders other Super League signing is Peter Lupton from Castleford Tigers, a player with over 100 Super League games to his name, who has previously played for the London Broncos, Leeds Rhinos and Hull FC. In addition, the club have signed five Australians and their first ever player from the Cook Islands.

Mark Bryant, who was born in Cootamundra, New South Wales, the same place as cricket legend Don Bradman, arrives in Wales on a high after making his 100th NRL appearance when helping to lead Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles to the Australian NRL championship after their 40-0 thrashing of Melbourne in this year's Grand Final.

Bryant is a former Australian schoolboy international, as is Lincoln Withers, who along with Marshall Chalk, arrives from Canberra Raiders.

Ryan O'Hara is a State of Origin player with an appearance for New South Wales in 2004. He arrives from Wests Tigers.

The final Australian is Adam Peek who has made 123 NRL appearances. Signed from Cronulla Sharks, he started his career with Adelaide Rams in the old Australian Super League before going to Canterbury Bulldogs, South Sydney Rabbitohs, Parramatta Eels and St George Illawarra Dragons.

And to complete the batch of Crusaders' new recruits, Cook Islander Ben Vaeau has signed from North Queensland Cowboys. The prop will finally play a game in Wales eight years after he was originally hoping to. Vaeau, then only 18 years old, made the training squad for the Cook Islands 2000 World Cup team to face Wales in Wrexham but failed to make the final cut.

Crusaders coach John Dixon said: "I'm pleased with the squad that we've assembled. We've maintained continuity on and off the field. We've retained our coaching staff and the core of players who have served this club so well over the last three years. We've addressed the key areas where we believe that we needed to improve as a club and have recruited accordingly. I'm happy with the squad and collectively we're looking forward to playing our role in Super League in 2009."

CRUSADERS' NEW SIGNINGS IN FULL

Mark Bryant - Signed from Manly Sea Eagles - Date of Birth: 10/4/1981 - Position: Prop

Mark Bryant was born in Cootamundra, New South Wales, the same place as cricket legend Don Bradman. He arrives in Wales on a high after making his 100th NRL appearance when helping to lead Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles to an Australian NRL Grand Final win over Melbourne on Sunday 5th October 2008. Previously with Canberra Raiders, Mark was an Australian Schoolboy international in 1998. He primarily plays at

prop-forward.

Marshall Chalk - Signed from Canberra Raiders - Date of Birth: 13/03/1981 – Position: Utility

Marshall Chalk has been a Canberra Raiders regular for the last four years having notched up 23 tries in 71 appearances. A strong utility back, Marshall's position of choice is either wing or centre but was also a strong contributor in the back row for a time at the Raiders.

Peter Lupton - Signed from Castleford Tigers - Date Of Birth: 07/03/1982 – Position: Loose Forward / Utility

Cumbrian-born, Peter Lupton comes to the club from Castleford Tigers where he has just completed a three-year spell. A utility man, Peter's position of choice is as at loose-forward. With over 100 appearances in Super League, he previously played for the London Broncos, Leeds Rhinos and Hull FC after starting his career with Whitehaven-based amateur side, Millom.

Ryan O'Hara - Signed from Wests Tigers - Data Of Birth: 18/08/1980 - Position: Prop

Ryan O'Hara has been signed from Wests Tigers in the Australian NRL. He previously played for Canberra Raiders, where he won the Rookie of the Year award in 2001. Ryan's first game for Wests was against Bradford Bulls in the World club Challenge. He has also represented New South Wales in the State of Origin in the 2004 series. He primarily plays at prop-forward.

Adam Peek - Signed from Cronulla Sharks - Date of Birth: 05/02/1977 – Position: Prop / Second Row

Signed from Cronulla Sharks, Adam Peek started his career with Adelaide Rams in the old Australian Super League before going to Canterbury Bulldogs, South Sydney Rabbitohs, Parramatta Eels and St George Illawarra Dragons making 123 NRL appearances in the process. Peek's position of choice is prop, though he can also play in the second row.

Matty Smith - Signed from St Helens – Date of Birth: 23/07/1987 – Position: Scrum-half

Scrum-half Matty Smith has been signed from St Helens but he spent the latter half of 2008 on loan at Widnes Vikings. Matty made his first-team debut against Huddersfield Giants in March 2006 and has proved himself as a prominent goalkicker. Before rugby he had a youth career with Everton FC and played for their reserve team.

Ste Tyrer - Signed from St Helens – Date of Birth: 16th Mar 1989 – Position: Centre / Wing

Ste Tyrer comes from to the Crusaders from St Helens. He made his first-team debut aged 17 against Les Catalans Dragons in July 2006 after scoring a try in every game for their under 18 side the year before. As a junior he had to choose between football and rugby league, having been a goalkeeper with Wigan Athletic. Ste spent the latter half of 2008 on loan with Widnes Vikings. He is also a great goalkicker.

Ben Vaeau - Signed from North Queensland Cowboys – Date of Birth: 07/01/1983 – Position: Prop / Second Row

Ben Vaeau is the club's first Cook Islander and was in his country's squad during the 2008 World Cup qualifiers. A second row or prop, Ben has previously been at Brisbane Broncos. His signing for Crusaders means that he will reunite with John Dixon whom he played under for Broncos' feeder club Toowoomba Clydesdales, and Anthony Seibold and Tony Duggan, whom he played alongside. He has spent the last two years with North Queensland Cowboys.

Lincoln Withers - Signed from Canberra Raiders - Date of Birth: 07/05/1981 – Position: Half-back / Hooker
Lincoln Withers has been signed from Canberra Raiders and is the Crusaders' most experienced signing with 154 NRL appearances. Born in Australia's capital, the half-back or hooker has previously turned out for St George Illawarra Dragons and Wests Tigers. An Australian schoolboy international in 1997, Lincoln also played for the Australian Prime Ministers XIII in their annual game against Papua New Guinea in 2007.

CONFIRMED DEPARTURES

Paul Ballard (released)
Gareth Dean (Carcassonne, France)
Philippe Gardent (released)
Jamie I'Anson (Oldham Roughyeds)
Aaron Summers (Central Queensland Comets, Australia)
Ian Webster (Central Queensland Comets, Australia)
Neale Wyatt (Pia XIII, France)

Carnegie Champions Schools 2009 kicks off November 28th, 2008

Last week saw the kick-off of the 2008/2009 Rugby League Carnegie Champion Schools competition in Wales, with first round of the year 7 and year 11 tournaments taking place across the length and breadth of the country.

Competitions will take place at all senior school age groups with the National Year 7 Final taking place at Wembley Stadium before the Carnegie Challenge Cup Final on Saturday 29 August 2009. The finals of the other age groups will take place in London on the day before with all finalists being invited as guests at Wembley.

The Year 8 and 9 tournaments kick-off in early December with the year 10 competition starting in January. This year has seen an increase in the number of schools enter the competition, with over 100 teams taking part as Celtic Crusaders' popularity and their admission into Super League doing wonders to boost the popularity of rugby league in Welsh schools.

The geographical spread of the teams also signals the message of rugby league is increasing all the time with schools taking part stretching from Pembrokeshire's St David's Comprehensive in the West to Newport's St Josephs RC Comprehensive in the East.

Because of this, the competition has had to be split into four regions for the very first time with each year group boasting an East, West, Bridgend and Central tournament.

Wales Rugby League development officer Dan Clements said: "The response from schools for this year's Carnegie Champion Schools competition has been great.

"Last year was a huge success for us but to attract more schools yet again suggests that the interest in rugby league is continuing to grow.

"To see schools wanting to play league from the city of St David's in the west, up to Merthyr Tydfil and all

the way over to Newport means the competition has a truly South Wales feel. It also means we get a chance to see school children competing from all areas, not just our traditional strongholds.”

With the tournaments being run by Celtic Crusaders and Welsh Rugby League staff, there has been a true Super League feel to the competition with player visits making the tournaments even more special.

Celtic Crusaders’ community development officer Matt Pritchard said: “Throughout the six week coaching programme and the tournaments that the schools have taken part in so far, the children have been very excited about Super League coming to Bridgend. We at the Crusaders are committed to providing young children with the chance to participate in rugby league.

“I have been overwhelmed by the standard of rugby on show; it demonstrates that the future of rugby league in Wales is extremely healthy”

The tournaments will continue into the New Year climaxing in a Welsh schools finals day at the Brewery Field in February to see who qualifies for the national knockout stages. This day will take place in the build up to the Crusaders first ever Super League fixture away at the Leeds Rhinos, so it promises to be an action packed week.