

The Third Annual Old Boys Match

In a closely contested match in which the lead changed twice, SPC Silverstream's Old Boys retained the **B P McMahon Cup** by defeating SPC Wellington's Old Boys by 36 points to 21, after leading the match at half-time by 19 points to 14.



Photo Mike O'Leary

Playing at Kilbirnie Park in Wellington in stunning conditions, both teams featured a number of famous international players, with SPC Wellington captained by **Isaac Feau'nati** with the support of **Kas Lealamanua** (both Western Samoan internationals), while SPC Silverstream boasted the skills of Italian international **Aaron Persico** and All Black **Scott Waldrom**.

Only two members of the 2015 SPC Silverstream squad returned to the field this year, with the experienced **David Silk** appointed Captain of the team, and **Blake Finnigan** making a cameo appearance from the bench. On the side-line, members of the victorious squad of last year provided lusty vocal encouragement, with **Simon Shepherd** and **Frank Cole** spotted among the visiting supporters.

SPC Wellington were the first team to score a converted try, as the result of repeated direct thrusts around the ruck which exposed SPC Silverstream's defence. But the 'Streamers were swift to respond with an unstoppable burst down the left-wing, reducing the deficit to two points.

It was to be the first of two lead changes in the match, with the depth of the Home Team's bench providing strategic relief at key moments of the battle. SPC Wellington extended their lead with a second converted try, until **Scott "Scooter" Waldrom** scored the first of his hat-trick of tries, reducing the lead to two points, 14-12. A converted try just before half-time gave the visitors a five point buffer at the oranges break.

While there were no oranges to be seen in the half-time huddle, the directions to the team provided by **Aaron Persico** were full of colour and piquancy. A hastily arranged hydration station arranged by Old Boys' Association President **George Collins** ensured the team took

to the field with renewed vigour, appropriately saturated, under the unseasonably scorching Wellington sun.

As in the first spell, SPC Wellington were the first to score a converted try, playing into the light northerly; 21 points to 19. Suddenly, following the re-start, Waldrom broke clear and converted his own try using his boot as the kicking tee, 26 to 21. Then again down the left-wing, the mercurial Centre ran away to the chalk for the third time, by which stage the damage had been done to SPC Wellington's aspirations to re-claim the Cup.

Following the exchange of post-match pleasantries, Player-Of-The-Day Awards were presented to **David Silk** (SPC Silverstream) and **Nic Fitisemanu** (SPC Wellington). Lashings of sausage rolls and club sandwiches were kindly supplied by Old Boy **Tony O'Brien** from The Pines, while **Poneke RFC** kindly provided the use of their facilities for the completion of the necessary post-match player re-hydration.

With thanks to the Old Boys' Association for their organisation of the event.

Sectare Fidem!

Gordon Noble Campbell