

# Dream Murrayfield Win for Bridge of Allan Youngsters

BY BOB McGOWAN

Whilst the media occasionally portray the youth of today as being inactive in front of computer games and feasting on high fat foods three local lads have shown that just sometimes that perception can be less than accurate.

Stirling County Under-18s became John Lewis Youth League Cup winners for the seventh time on the 25 January at Murrayfield with an emphatic 30-0 win against Musselburgh. In doing so the County teenagers joined an illustrious list of past County players who have won the trophy and have progressed far in the game, including a number of current first team regulars and current Scotland player Ally Hogg.

Leading the team was captain Craig Adams from Strathallan Road, joined by winger Ian Letton from Hopetoun Drive and Andrew Ritchie of Coxburn Brae, all from Bridge of Allan. The three lads are products of the Mini and Midi rugby

system at Stirling County and have progressed through the various age groups to the Under 18s. Craig and Ian have played with this age group for two years and were part of a successful squad last year that went close in the national competition. A loss at the quarter-final stage, when they went down to Gala Wanderers 18-17, will have been etched on their minds.

Andrew was part of the successful Stirling County Under 16 squad that secured the National Under-16 Championship last season. The squad will have learned from this experience, which, together with training twice a week and gym sessions, will have motivated them in their determined run through the rounds in this year's competition.

Before the match the result looked likely to be a tight affair with the Musselburgh pack displaying strong credentials after their display in the semi-final against Gala Wanderers with the experience of being in the final last season earning them the favourites' tag. However, the County squad was optimistic, having put in two comprehensive displays in recent weeks to eliminate Boroughmuir and Hawick Wanderers.

Ian Letton has been a regular try scorer this season, but it was his defensive duties that were to the fore in the earlier Cup matches, stifling the play of a very strong back division from Hawick in the semi-final. Andrew Ritchie has broken into the first team squad over the last few months and contributed in the cup run.

Craig Adams had led his troops admirably over the run-up to the Murrayfield match, with some dynamic tackling and belligerent incursions in attack. However, it was his leadership skills that were called upon at the national stadium.

Although the ability of the Stirling team was not in question, there was always going to be a doubt whether the occasion might take over. But from the start of this was unfounded with the Stirling team in control throughout and Craig capping a fine performance with a try on the last play of the match at Murrayfield.

The boys received the deserved adulation of the County fans as captain Adams received the trophy from Scotland coach Frank Hadden.

This was a very fine win for a talented County squad and a night to remember for three local Bridge of Allan youngsters. Look out for their names in future years as they hopefully progress through the ranks to the Stirling County first team and beyond.



The County squad show off the John Lewis Youth League Trophy: captain Craig Adams (front row, 3rd from left), Andrew Ritchie (front row, 5th from left) and Ian Letton (3rd row, 3rd from right)

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