

TOWN OF ORIGIN 2011

Sunday 31st July dawned bright & sunny as the gods smiled on us for the 8th annual Town of Origin competition Bulahdelah & Tea Gardens. With player ages ranging from 6 to mid-50's, it truly was a day for all.

The day started brilliantly for Tea Gardens with the 9s team dominating early. Due to extended numbers, this game was played over 3 x 20 minute sections. Leading 3-0 after the 2nd section, things looked bleak for Bulah. However, 2 quick goals straight after the break made things more interesting. There were 6 goals scored in the exciting last stanza as TG ran out 6-4 winners. TG goals to Ben Woolard, Josh Callaghan, Christopher Woodfield, Bailey Battle, Braith Cotterill and Rex Shelton. Bulah goals to Herbie Morecombe 2, Toby Crispin & Brodan Nassif. Referees award an MVP to both teams with Josh Callaghan (TG) & Maryjoy Bramston (B) picking up the awards.

The 12's match was a tight affair with defence the master of attack throughout. TG began to dominate the midfield & that was the difference in the end. Big games from James Carter & Sammi Davidson in goals helped keep Bulah scoreless, while Megan Markham & Bexley Carter scored either side of the break for TG to run out 2-0 winners. MVP awards went to Megan Markham (TG) & Jack Hutchison (B).

This win put Tea Gardens up 2-0 overall with only 3 matches left to play & in a great position to grab the Origin shield.

With the pride of Bulahdelah on the line, the 15's took to the field knowing only a win could keep the day alive. Coach Dave Sibert had devised a plan to attack from wide on the left using Shorty Curnow's left boot to pepper the goal square. It worked early with his first shot chipping the keeper. A goal soon after to Ashley Grimshaw was followed by 2 more pinpoint crosses that landed at the feet of James Sherwood, who calmly slotted them home.

4-0 up at the break but TG didn't lie down. A renewed sense of enthusiasm in the 2nd half saw Ryan Howarth score twice & Dale Stubbs grab another, but a 3rd to James plus another to Nathan Hutchison meant a clear 6-3 win to Bulah. MVP to Josh Barnett (TG) & Steven Curnow (B).

Next was the Open Ladies match. As in the past, the majority of the Tea Gardens team consisted of soccer mums over 30yrs combined with a few fit young fillies to keep them on their toes...hooray for the fillies! Bulahdelah's team plays together regularly but were missing a few younger players so long-retired mums Karen Lamborn & Tania Locke filled in. With 6 players in their mid-to-late 40's it was probably the 1st time Bulah had the older team. This was a great game played in a wonderful spirit & all the ladies had a good chuckle at their foolishness for being there! As expected, Bulahdelah won the match 6-0, with goals to Sarah Benson 2, Ashlee Smith, Emily Bidgood, Steph Blackwood & super-soccer-mom Karen. This was a couple less than last year so the TG girls were pleased. With 9 first timers who all played incredibly well and surprised themselves by enjoying the match, the future of this game is assured. TG skipper Jude Woodfield is on the lookout for more ladies, and fillies, who are keen to jump out of their comfort zone and run onto the field next year. MVP went to Jude (TG) & Sara (B).

That made it 2 games each so the destination of the Origin shield came down to the final Men's match. With half of the TG side either current or ex-players with Bulah, this is always a fun but ferocious battle. It was great to see some of the Tea Gardens soccer-dads running

with the young crowd, while Bulah also had 3 players in their 50's. It was great to see both Club Presidents, Dave Sibert & Mark Woolard have a run. Plus the only 2 members of our 20-year Player's Club, Brent Smith & Nathan Makila, came out of retirement to take part. As with the Ladies team, this may have been the 1st time Bulahdelah was the older side.

The speed of this game was intense, so it was lucky that there were 6 subs on each team. Both keepers were called on to do some early work as the battle for possession waged. An early injury to Jye Laver took the sting out of the TG midfield & it didn't take long for Bulahdelah to convert this into midfield dominance. After 20 minutes a cracking shot from the edge of the box by Trent Lamborn gave Liam O'Brien no chance & Bulah took the lead. Only 10 minutes later, Dylan Guthrie was left unmarked 20 metres out. Despite a desperate effort from Liam, the shot went under him & into the back of the net.

Jye returned to the field in the 2nd half but it was to no avail. There were plenty of chances to both sides but there were no more goals & the score finished 2-0.

Despite an injury 15 minutes from time, Nathan Colver grabbed the MVP award for TG for his non-stop efforts in both attack & defence. For Bulah, the MVP was Trent Lamborn. Every time he was on the field, Bulah seemed more urgent & more dangerous.

A great day was had by all; players, mums, dads, spectators. In the end, the Origin Shield remains in Bulahdelah for another year. Thanks to everyone who came & played, cheered or just watched. A big thanks to Thommo on the BBQ & to Bronwyn & her team in the canteen. Also thanks to those that refereed & ran lines on the day, especially Jed Rietveld who comes up from Newcastle each year to handle the main game. He does a great job & we appreciate his help immensely. See you next year at Tea Gardens!