

# Ross 2<sup>nd</sup> XI v Hereford B

## Stats

Date	For	Against	Venue	Fixture	SHM MOTM
03/12/11	1	0	home	league	Brian Clare

## Scorers

Name	Andy Cross
Goals	1



## *Ross Hang On Manfully*

Within sport there is a long history of battles and rivalry; from the Foreman – Ali fights of the sixties & seventies, to Nicholas and Watson on the long fairways and undulating greens of the Open, through to clashes between England and Australia for that singular honour of owning a small urn holding the burnt remains of two bails. But surely there is nothing that stirs the blood and sinews of those playing, or watching for that matter, than a clash between a Ross Men's Hockey team, and their local rivals, Hereford.

On a beautiful, late autumnal day, with the sun just giving us the last of her weakening rays, Hereford came to Ross, and into this game full of confidence, riding high in the league with a young side and playing a style of hockey that has proven very pleasing on the eye for their travelling fan base. Ross on the other hand have had a curates egg of a season, winning tight games from seemingly impossible situations, only then to lose other matches when they have total control, as they proved last week at Lansdown – However, they too came into this game with the confidence of knowing that, while a few key players were absent, they were close to lining up their strongest team of the season thus far.

What transpired was a game in the very best traditions of this tie – no quarter asked, and none given by either team, but played in a convivial and sporting atmosphere which did credit to both sides. It would be fair to say, that the first half was narrowly edged by the visiting team, with some strong midfield play and attacking prowess – however, the visitors in white, were thwarted at every turn by a back four consisting of Sean Couch, Brian Claire, Greg Weston and Tony Faulkner, and with the increasing agile and confident young keeper, George Goldsmith, behind them. All of whom put in wonderful performances throughout the match, and who were backed up from the bench by the evergreen Gareth 'Lenin' Hughes.

This is not to say that there was not some glittering attacking play from Ross during these first 35 minutes, who, the more and more they found the confidence to move the ball around, started to play some very attractive hockey. Instrumental in this attacking momentum were Chris Chalk and Pete Jenkins, who played with great aplomb in the middle of the park. These two, were then ably assisted by the young legs of Rhodri & Geraint Morris, Alistair Williamson and Andy Cross, all of whom refused to stop running for the entirety of the match. The bench was also abundant with talent for Ross, with the returning Richard Harbottle, fresh from his sojourn in warmer climes, and the every willing Kieran Brann able to inject both speed and guile to the home team's play.

At half time the score was still 0-0, and a rousing talk from both Captain Cross, and Coach Jenkins, gave just the right level of encouragement and tactical nouse to send the brave men of Ross back on the pitch with just the right level of confidence and control. The pattern of the half followed very much that of the first, with sustained pressure put on the home goal by some very clever Hereford

play, but equally a defence able to withstand everything thrown at them, and then show skill to move the ball out of danger to allow those in the midfield to break on the counter attack.

It was with just one of these lighting breaks that the deadlock was broken; a wonderfully flowing move, started at the back by Man of Match Claire, saw the ball go through 6 different player's sticks, before a pass of sublime accuracy and weight from Williamson, found a marauding Geraint Morris unmarked in the 'D'. Just as the elder of the Morris boys was looking to supply the coup de grace on the move, a rather enthusiastic tackle from the Hereford goalkeeper saw Morris felled unfairly, and a penalty flick awarded.

It fell to the inspirational captain to take the flick, and with the added pressure of both his father and daughter watching on, he hit, with perfection, his flick to take the home side in to a well-deserved lead.

The remaining 20 minutes were frantic, with end to end hockey on the highest quality, and every one of the 22 playing giving their all. With Ross forced into playing deeper and deeper, as Hereford piled on the pressure, both Claire and Jenkins came into their own, organising the defensive lines and giving a calm assuredness that saw the men of Ross triumph over their closest rivals.

This was a wonderful game of hockey, and thanks to the two umpires Peter Hughes and John Setchfield, both of whom officiated sympathetically to ensure a free flowing game. It was hard to pick just one man amongst the group to win the Man of Match after such a game, but the one player who was felt to have done a little more than all the rest, was the veteran Brian Claire.

Finally, and in the best traditions of these reports, I will now shoehorn a pointless quote in to my prose, in the vain attempt to link it to the match, and also to prove I have read a book. I therefore give you Jean Giraudoux, a French diplomat, dramatist and splendid novelist of the early twentieth century, who said,

*'Only the mediocre are always at their best'*

## Squad

Andrew Cross (Capt)	Sean Couch	Greg Weston	Tony Faulkner
Pete Jenkins	George Goldsmith	Brian Clare	Chris Chalk
Richard Harbottle	Kieran Brann	Gareth Hughes	Alistair Williamson
Rhodri Morris	Geraint Morris		