

STEWART'S MELVILLE COLLEGE CELEBRATING SUCCESS AT SCOTTISH SCHOOLS' CUP FINALS

Stewart's Melville College were one of the schools triumphant at the Scottish Schools Cup finals as their U18s defeated Edinburgh rivals Watsonians to win the U18 Cup on the international pitch at BT Murrayfield.

Stuart Edwards is the 1st XV Head Coach and hailed his side's win when he spoke exclusively to *SCRUM*.

He said: "It's the biggest accolade you can strive for in Scottish Schools' rugby.

"It's the best thing that these boys are going to experience in their whole school career. Some of them will go onto bigger and better things like international or professional careers. Without a doubt, there are boys in that group who could do that, but for those who don't, this could be their pinnacle of their rugby and school career.

"It's a pretty cool experience for them all to have been there and to have the whole school behind us.

"The young lads, P5s and P6s, they were watching on and for them, it was almost a motivator. Hopefully, it will inspire the young lads to go on and do that as well."

Edwards also explained how the players had to combine their studies with their rugby commitments on the day of the game at BT Murrayfield.

"We thought long and hard about what to do with the players; we just had a normal school day and a pre-match meal at school."

And as for their preparation, Edwards attributed Coach Logic - the video analysis platform - as one of the main reasons for their success throughout the tournament.

"The biggest thing I can attribute it to would be Coach Logic.

"It's the first year we've been using it and having that to interact with the boys around training, video analysis in preparation is huge.

"So we looked at videos of Watsons, Marr and Dollar and tried to pick out trends in five or six games and then threw that into a 10-minute preview on Coach Logic for the boys to see and then our training would all be tailored around that."

Edwards explained the side's mantra this year was not to be outworked, and that started with the coaching team.

"We tried to work as hard as we could to allow the boys to feel as prepared as they possibly can be. That allowed our message in training to be all about preparation and process rather than the occasion itself.

"We knew what we were going to be faced with so we spoke a lot about discipline and we spoke about giving away under 10 penalties - at the World Cup they are giving away between seven and 13 - so we thought at schoolboy level if we give away under 10 we are doing alright."





In the end, they conceded only three, and Edwards believes that allowed his side to stamp their authority on the final, and he was delighted with the team's performance under pressure.

"What you're asking them to do in front of 5000 people is just brutal. We were well aware it could have been completely pear-shaped if they lost their cool, so I'm just pleased they managed to stay on task."

That gameplan shows great trust in the players, and Edwards was pleased that the squad responded well.

"I wrote a little individualised laminated card for each of them the week before to kind of talk to them about what their role was and to give them a bit of confidence in what they were going to do. I wanted to really emphasise they should just go out and enjoy it.

"I heard from parents that it was really beneficial as they all knew what they had to do.

"I said to the boys at the end of the game, sometimes you work hard for stuff and you don't always get what you deserve but sometimes you do, that's life. It just so happened that day was one of those where it worked for us."

And after lifting the trophy, Edwards said the whole school was "buzzing" the following day.

He explained: "We had the boys walk through the lunch hall and all the P5s who were lunching were all up giving a standing ovation, and catering had photos from the final on the screen. There was just a really good buzz around the school."

After claiming success in the U18 Cup competition, Edwards has his sights set on being the best rugby school in Scotland.

"We're three years deep into our restructuring and we want to be regarded as the best rugby school in Scotland.

"It means nothing unless we sustain that and that's where the cup motivates the boys to try and do it again."

For more information:
www.esms.org.uk

