



News Release

For immediate release

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Minnesota Rugby Boys Beat Canada

MN Select Under 18 and Under 20 teams beat Manitoba Select Teams

Twin Cities, Minnesota – July 2008 – Manitoba brought a squad of 33 players to Minnesota last week as part of their US tour. Minnesota turned out their Select U-18 and U-20 teams and won both the games handily.

In the first game, Minnesota's U18's scored a 32-5 win. The game started with the Canadian side controlling possession and Minnesota struggling mightily to get something going. The local XV had trouble retaining the little ball they had, making several unforced errors. While the offense struggled to find itself, the boys settled their early match jitters by playing sound defense.

Minnesota was first on the board when flyhalf Mitch Bootes (Plymouth) slotted a penalty kick from 20 meters. A few minutes later off another penalty, Minnesota quick-tapped from just inside the Manitoba half. A quick pass to second row Garrett Bender (Southside) saw him off to the races for a long break that brought Minnesota close. The reward came with a Minnesota try in the right corner. Just 8-nil at the half, but Minnesota had found their confidence. Their ball handling and decision making improved greatly after the break, and they started to dominate the visitors. Minnesota turned up the heat in the second half, lead by three tries from hard running second row number eight Bryant Larson (Mounds View), and solid tackling from everyone, making it a very long day for the Canadians.

Bootes, the Minnesota flyhalf, made sure there would be no coming back by the Manitoba side as he converted three of the four tries, two coming with spectacular kicks from near the touch line, and added a penalty kick in each half for good measure.

The U-20 continued the Minnesota dominance in the second game with strong, fast attacks throughout the game. The senior team started quickly, scoring almost immediately when center and Captain Nick Johnson found space between the centers for a long run, with the wing finishing for a quick 5-0 Minnesota lead. With Johnson and number eight Andrew Hanske leading the way, Minnesota cruised to a 25 to nil halftime lead. The halfback combination of brothers Nate (#9) and Sam Augsburger (#10) kept the backline active, spinning out quality ball to Johnson and Ben Sauer (Plymouth) who spent much of the day punishing the Canadian backs with their hard runs.

Minnesota managed just two unconverted tries in the second half as the Manitoba defense picked up their work rate and make some solid tackles. Manitoba did a better job of holding possession and were rewarded with a late try to avoid the shutout. The final score was 35-5 in favor of the MN Select boys.

"We are very proud of both MN teams," commented Dave Shepherdson, Head coach for the MN U18 Select Boys team. "Many of the U18 guys are only in their second year of playing rugby. Despite this we have also had four boys chosen by the USA National Selectors to try out for the Eagles National team. They are Jack Powers, Hopkins RFC, Willie Hankerson, South RFC, Brant Larson, Mounds View RFC and Mitch Bootes, Plymouth RFC."

About the Minnesota Amateur Rugby Foundation (MARF)

The Minnesota Amateur Rugby Foundation (MARF) is a charitable foundation committed to fostering, and supporting the development of national and international amateur rugby in Minnesota. Since its inception the foundation has maintained a 501(C)3 status as a charitable organization. This provides for the raising and distribution of tax-exempt funds in support of local youth rugby programs, referees, and toward players representing Minnesota in National and International competition.

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Rob Wagner also provided information for this release.



Andrew Hanske on his way to scoring one of the five tries for the U-20 team



Nick Johnson MN U-20 breaks through



MN U-18 Fly-Half Mitch Bootes makes a run in the first half