The first experience of the extraordinary Rugby road trip to Devonport was a highlight for the boys of the U14.

A game of 3 x thirds – Tasmanian Rugby is endlessly creative it seems – we were the floggees for the first two thirds. Our boys were great at the break down and competitive in the scrums and lineouts but the tackling and final passes were not so outstanding which allowed the two or three runners from Devonport room to move.

The coach is big on enjoyment and learning in the first year but he detected that some boys after 3.5 hours of passenger status, had not yet got off the bus. So a rocket from the coach was due after the second third! Great stock phrases like “pack of bloody spectators”, “pull the finger out” and “get amongst it” littered the impassioned tirade. Short of putting them off, it seemed the reaction was “now we’re a real Rugby team – we are getting a blast from the coach at two-thirds time!”

The effect was immediate – instantly runners appeared from everywhere – gaps were produced and intensity heightened. The breakdown was the key and, starved of possession, the Devonport boys had no answers to the onslaught. The floggees had become the floggers! The Hutchins U14s had finally got off the bus. Paddy Bourke launched himself from the halfback position and ran 30m to the tryline – only to turn a right angle and run straight over the sideline. Run Forrest Run was the cry. Asked about it later Paddy said “I was just enjoying running with the ball.” Good for you, Paddy. That’s what it’s all about.

Hugh Jubb finally hit paydirt after many promising runs over the first two thirds. He broke the line and had too much pace to score under the posts. Angus Szoke has grown in leaps and bounds as a Rugby player this year – and led the boys well. He also got just reward for a great game of determined tackling and tight work. A penalty tap from 5 metres out and a no-nonsense approach to use his strength to fight his way over.

Tomas Hopkins inspired with his regular intelligent breaks from no.10 – always on hand to support, reading the game well and ensuring continuity at the ruck. Ed Bowden has become the Energizer battery man – appearing all over the park and defending with grim determination – and always dangerous with the ball in hand. It was great to see Felix Graves run with the ball with purpose and confidence on a number of occasions. Pocket rocket Tom McShane ran the ball up straight and hard. Oscar Broadby was immovable at the face of the ruck and secured much possession for Hutchins. Hamish Allen enjoyed running the ball and looked dangerous on occasions. Sam King played his usual stalwart role with determined running and committed defence.

Oli Lamb was looking forward to his first game and read the game well. Alex Titchen was very committed to the breakdown and looked quite dangerous with the ball – his ability to secure possession and ensure continuity for us was valuable. Josh Orlikowski went looking for the ball from his wing and showed an astute reading of the game when asked to play fullback. Connor Noble was targeted for close defence by our opposition but still managed to bullock plenty of yards every time he ran. Liam Usoalli was a standout as the assistant coach on the day – a great effort to turn up and be useful despite his injury. Thanks Liam!
Unfortunately our hosts were unable to produce the promised BBQ so the Hutchins boys hit the road for a feast at Campbell town. A delayed lunch was on offer. The coach was not on his game and made the rookie error of omitting the “no sugar” speech and Jelly Belly gobstoppers (the size of your fist) appeared. The sugar took effect around Oatlands and the horse had bolted – there was no restraining the heightened excitement and pipey voices (bring on adolescence) as the good ship Hutchins sailed into Hobart, passing Dark Mofo’s Spectra for the last time. The coach had a 21st and a Lions party at some friends’ house, managed to find his bed and rest at midnight. A big day for everyone.

Despite the overall loss it was a great day for seeing the future strengths of this team – who are still so new to Rugby. The great majority of the boys are in year 7 and this augurs well for 2014 but, with some determined work, 2013 is not over and the Taroona boys will get a run for their money before season’s end, mark my words.

Rev Matt