

Academy 11 Hollywood 10

Academy may not be the most successful club in Ulster, but they are winning the games that matter most. And it was by the closest of margins that they were able to stave off the challenge of junior side Hollywood in the first quarter-final tie of the Smithwick's Boston Cup.

But it was only in the dying embers of an exciting game that saw Academy squeeze through to the semis with a try from flanker Ray Cromie.

Up until that point, Hollywood had given their senior rivals quite a contest, and in many ways were slightly unlucky not to get the victory laurels after holding on grimly to a 10-7 lead.

Hollywood, who had already dumped out Portadown in the first round, equalled Academy up front, and were always featuring highly in the most forward exchanges.

Academy, however, playing against the wind in the firsthalf, took the lead early on, when scrum-half veteran Stuart Knox, wriggled through to score after a penalty move.

Hollywood, though, came back strongly to take the initiative when winger Alastair Brown swept in for a great try, and former Irish league goalkeeper Ricky Adair banged over a superb dropped goal.

And it was Adair who stretched Hollywood's lead 10 minutes before the interval with a well-struck penalty. However, Academy struck a crucial blow right on the half-time whistle when Paul Gamble landed a long-range effort.

Despite constant pressure, Academy found it hard to pierce the junior's defence. But their effort was finally rewarded when Cromie found enough energy and strength to go over for the winning try five minutes before the no-side whistle.

Academy v Athlone

This Keane Cup started late at Roughfort owing to a traffic holdup on the Motorway. Athlone stepped off the Motorway onto the pitch 20 minutes late and almost immediately Academy's Rae Cromie stormed through the 22 to send in Niall Blankney at the corner.

Although the visitors had just stepped out after a long journey they showed plenty of spirit and even with the two outstanding forwards missing on duty with Connaught they still showed plenty of spirit.

Academy were in one of their running moods and although missing four regulars were seldom out of the visitor's 22 and Rae Cromie had just reward when he went over at the posts after 20 minutes. Paddy Martin added the points. Athlone eventually raised the seige and Paul Conellan failed with a penalty attempt. Athlone were coming more into the game until Martin landed a long range penalty to stretch the Academy lead to 13-0 at half time.

Academy lost Blankley at half time. A brilliant run from half way and two lovely dummies by Peter McCormick spreadeagled the Academy defence to score far out. Conellan added the points.

Academy came again and Martin struck the upright with a fine effort. Martin put in a short punt to defeat the defence and Alan Kirk who had been showing up well on the wing gathered to score.

Wing forward Gordon Henderson who had moved to the wing took off from 50 metres and finished up behind the line.

Result — Academy 21, Athlone 6.

ACADEMY — S. Sharkie, A. Kirk, P. Campbell, N. McCreary, N. Blankley, P. Martin, S. Knox, I. Mills, D. Walsh, T. Tennent, G. McCormick, W. O'Reilly, R. Cromie, I. Whan, G. Henderson.

ATHLONE — P. Conellan, B. Moylan, B. Walsh, C. McCarthy, P. McCormack, K. Slevin, S. Grogan, T. Baines, L. Rattigan, K. Harten, J. Lennon, T. Conlon, D. English, C. Couper, J. Gaynor.

Referee — D. Harkness (Malone).

Celebrations as Academy regain Keane Cup

ACADEMY FIRST XV rugby team were in jubilant mood on Saturday evening after regaining the Keane Cup.

In the annual fixture with Athlone, the local side sprinted to a comfortable 21-6 victory.

From the kick off, wing forward Ray Cromie stormed into the Athlone 22' and sent Niall Blankley in for a try on the wing.

Academy continued to dominate, producing some fine rugby which duly resulted in a try for Cromie under the posts after 20

minutes.

Blankley was forced to retire at the interval with a leg injury and number eight Gordon Henderson moved out to the flank to replace him.

Athlone took advantage of this and a fine run from their winger ended in a try in the corner which was well converted.

The seven man Academy pack moved up a

gear and a neat chip by Martin was gathered by winger Alan Kirk for a try.

In the final minutes number eight Henderson at last got the chance to show his pace on the wing. Sprinting from half way, he charged over to complete the scoring and earn the Cup for Academy.

On Saturday, the firsts take on Ballyclare at Roughfort in a friendly (12 noon).

Team: Sharkey, Blankley, McCreary, Gamble, Kirk, Martin, Knox,

Tennant, Walsh, Mills, McCormick, O'Reilly, Whan, Henderson, Cromie.

In the junior matches, Academy Thirds came out on top with a 12-6 win in a league match against CIYMS.

Peter Lawther scored a try before retiring with concussion.

The Fourths travelled to Queens and romped to a 40-4 league win - winger Gault Caldwell helped himself to three tries, centre McDonald notched up two, as did winger Steven

Everett while out half Rodney Briggs kicked six out of seven attempts.

However, the talking point of the day was how did prop Al Crawford appear in the centre to chip delicately for Caldwell's last score?

To complete a successful day, the fourths edged home 7-6 against Shorts in the league.

Fixtures - Sem North (friendly Thirds v Bang home): Fifth (league, av

Academy pull off narrow victory

ACADEMY FIRST XV narrowly defeated Holywood 11-10 in the second round of the Smithwicks Boston Rugby Cup last week.

Having pulled off a resounding shock victory against Malone in the first round, they met the County Down giant killers in windy conditions.

Against the breeze, Academy took the game to

their Junior opponents and produced a fast but tight rucking pattern. Holywood out-half Adair was able to relieve the pressure until Academy scrum-half Stuart Knox broke free from a ruck and burst over between the posts for a try in the 15th minute. It was unconverted.

Holywood came back with a well-worked backline move for a try in the corner and Adair demonstrated his long-range kicking with an excellent penalty and dropped goal to leave the score 10-4 at the whistle.

Academy used the wind advantage in the second period but the wet conditions made handling difficult for the back line.

Winger Alan Kirk had a try disallowed and Mark Gilbert lost possession crossing the line as Academy fought to get level.

Paul Gamble scored a penalty after several unsuccessful attempts from Graham Cloke.

Academy pressured continually as the match drew to a close but stout

tackling by Holywood looked like keeping the local side out.

From a ruck on the Holywood 22, Knox probed to the right before feeding Academy's outstanding player of the night, wing-forward Ray Cromie, who produced a surging run to barge over for the match-winning try.

Academy will play in the semi-finals on December 6.

On Saturday, Academy drew 7-7 with Ballyclare at Roughfort.