



**CASHBACK
2024/25**



CASE STUDY

Alness Academy

Pupil F From Quiet Beginner to Rugby Scholar

ALNESS ACADEMY

Pupil F From Quiet Beginner to Rugby Scholar

It's been another year of meaningful progress across our CashBack communities. This report for 2024-25 reflects the dedication of our staff, clubs, and partners in delivering rugby programmes that go beyond the game—strengthening young people's confidence, wellbeing, and life skills in thirteen communities across Scotland.



The Alness Academy CashBack School of Rugby program has been running for just over 4 years and within that time, there has been a vast amount of young individuals whose lives have been positively influenced and are making smarter choices towards their future. Amongst these many individuals, there is one specific character that to myself sticks out more than the rest!

This particular boy joined the School of Rugby program following his entry into S1 after a very brief introduction to the sport during his final few weeks at Bridgend Primary School. To his PE Teacher at the time, he was described as being “a very quiet lad who kept his head down and never really did anything out of his comfort zone”. Which if you got the chance to see him now, would never cross your mind!

When it comes to his personal development, he says that being involved with the program has “made me more confident. I spoke to more people, I made new friends and developed a love for the sport of rugby”. When pupils come into the program at Alness Academy, the main qualities that get targeted for improvement are personal confidence and general behaviour, as the individuals that become involved have shown these to be the biggest issues. When asked about his favourite memories during his time in the CashBack program, he stated, “My favourite memories from the CashBack program were the friends I made when I first joined up. I also loved where the CashBack has brought me and the games

we got to play there”. So to hear that his confidence has been greatly improved and he has noticed a considerable difference on his own, is one of the things that makes his case so special.

After speaking to his mother, she mentioned how after a fixture “he would want to go straight home, and never wanted to stay at the clubhouse and socialise”. When we began talking about social life during his earlier years she said he only kept a very small handful of friends because of how difficult socialising was for him. This only further reinforces how special it is for him to have made such a development in his character, as his family members and friends have described him as a totally different and much happier lad now.

Being a part of the CashBack program also gave Pupil F the opportunity to join his first ever rugby club, Ross Sutherland RFC, which he continues to play for to this day. Growing up he was always a taller individual, being nearly 6' 4" when he was fifteen, but he was also on the lighter side in terms of his weight. Due to this, he began playing on the wing due to his speed, general quietness, and low rugby knowledge compared to some of his more experienced teammates. However, it didn't take long for him to grow his confidence and knowledge, prompting a move to second row, which is where “he was destined to play”.



Continuing on with his rapid development in the sport, during a recorded fixture against Orkney RFC, he was spotted by the Caledonia Pathway coach as the stand out player, and received an invitation to join the Caley U16 training squad. As he was located in Alness, this meant there would be a tremendous amount of travel to and from the Regional Performance Centre in Dundee, which his mother described as “very tiring” further mentioning that “being self employed means schedule adjustments can be done however for other families it can easily be very difficult”.



Despite this, he never let the long days and hundreds of miles travelled put him off, and his mother was determined to help her son work towards his dream. With his rugby journey and ability still progressing rapidly, selection for the U16 Caley squad was becoming frequent. His consistency and determination towards the sport also netted him a selection for the U16 Glasgow Warriors side, which was quickly followed by a contract to become a Supported Junior Player for Scottish Rugby. At this stage, he began to focus on his nutrition as he knew he needed to further put on a fair amount of weight in order to keep up with the physical demands of the game and to aid his physical development. His mother said “it was difficult as he was still in school and travelling constantly, so trying to get him to eat what he needed was challenging but he kept himself accountable for it which I am so proud of”.

Perhaps the most amazing part of his journey since joining the CashBack program back in 2021, is where he is currently, working through a rugby scholarship at Glenalmond College. The offer for his scholarship arrived after impressing the head coach, who witnessed him make a sprint from the 60m line. He said “the scholarship offer had arrived in my emails the following day and I didn’t hesitate to accept”. Since then he has been progressing well throughout the year, still attending his U17 Caley training twice a week, and getting the experience of going to Amsterdam for pre-season training.

After discussing further with how his rugby is developing at Glenalmond, he listed that he is part of the 1st XV squad and has been chosen as the lineout leader, which consists of “making new lineout moves, call out what moves we’re going to do and be jumping as well”. Returning back to the focus of this case study, which is the significant development in his confidence and rugby ability, everything mentioned prior truly shows the positive impact of what joining and being a determined member of the Alness Academy CashBack program has done for this individual.

As a final note, his mother mentioned during conversation, “it was after a wee while playing rugby, maybe two years into him joining the program, all he wanted to do was play rugby after school, that was his dream”. He had mentioned this to myself during training sessions and in passing conversations however hearing it come directly from his mother made it feel that little bit more special. He remains to stay very humble and grounded in the position he is in and never takes it for granted because of the work and determination that he has shown to get where he is. He has stated, “it can give people from Alness and smaller areas around Scotland a bit of hope that your dreams can come true!”.



Michael McClenaghan

CashBack Development Officer - Alness Academy