

2017AUG27BRCvsClevelandwriteupbyCleveland

## Recap: Cleveland Crusaders @ Buffalo RC



*By Justin Rutledge | 09.07.16*

## Division 2

This past weekend was a reversal of fortunes when the Crusaders made the ride up north to face Buffalo in the team's final set of preseason matches. The first side dug out a 31-15 win, while the Reserves were defeated in the second match of the day.



The defense for the Crusaders' first side was the deciding factor for the first side on Saturday. Buffalo's runners often caught the ball flat-footed, allowing the defensive line to surge forward and put the attack under pressure. Often, this pressure resulted in runners being tackled behind the gain line and a broken play. On occasion, Buffalo tried to use misdirection to displace the defenders around the breakdown but the Crusader defenders stayed in place and held firm at the gain line.

As good teams often do, the Crusaders turned sustained defense into offense. When Buffalo mishandled the ball or were weak in at the breakdown, Cleveland often came up with the ball. At one point, Captain Zach Webb snatched up the ball during a broken play. Support surged to the ensuing breakdown and after the ball was whipped out of the ruck the Crusaders struck in short order. As the match went on, the Crusaders kept up the pressure and stayed out ahead of Buffalo on another 90-degree day.

## Division 3

The Reserves had a much harder time than the first XV. The team showed flashes of brilliance, but those flashes were few and far between and often went unsupported. These isolated runners resulted in pressure at the rucks and turnover ball. The mess at the breakdowns often put the Reserves on the back foot, and as the pressure mounted the points began to tick away. The one positive take-away from Saturday was the resilience of the new blood on the team. Nicholas "Hermie" Tamjidi was tenacious on the goal line, snuffing out one attempt at a try and putting his body on the line to stop another. Nikolay Merushkin's hard-hitting defense was recognized with Man of the Match honors by Buffalo.

Both sides are off for the Labor Day weekend. After that, the league matches begin. Both sides have huge match-ups to start off the season. The Division II side will play host to the Detroit Tradesmen, while the Reserves will face the Rovers.