

PROUDLY sponsored by Avonmore Milk, Munster Schools Rugby is celebrating its 100th year in 2009.

In order to commemorate this momentous occasion Avonmore Milk is looking back at some of the great heroes of this competition which provides a platform on which rugby players can catapult themselves onto a national rugby stage. In many instances players have gone to succeed at both a provincial and national level.

Anthony 'Axel' Foley is one of the most successful players of his generation. In a career that spanned over 12 years, Anthony has represented his province 202 times, more than any other Munster player. He has scored 38 tries for Munster and has also collected 62 international caps.

Anthony's rugby career started at St. Munchin's College in Limerick where he played Senior Cup rugby for 3 seasons. Undoubtedly the highlight of 'Axel's' career was when he captained Munster to their first European Cup success in 2006. Ahead of the Avonmore Milk Munster Schools Cup Final this Sunday, Anthony spoke to Avonmore Milk to find out more about his time playing Munster Schools Rugby.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE SCHOOLS CUP TO YOU?

The Munster schools cup was everything when you were in school. When a cup game was on everyone in school knew about it and everyone wanted to go. When the games were on there were big crowds and cheerleading. To be involved in those big cup days was really special.

WHAT'S INVOLVED ON GETTING ON THE MUNSTER SCHOOLS TEAM?

It took a very high level of commitment, mostly on your time. I was lucky to be involved with the Senior team in St. Munchin's for 3 years. We would train with the school 3 times a week and often had 2 games in the same week. As a team, we would come in over the Christmas break and train while all of our class mates had the time off. However, this was what was needed if you wanted to win the competition.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHERS CURRENTLY SEEKING TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

I think it's important to keep everything in perspective. The most important thing is to play the game for the enjoyment of it. Give it your best shot and give it the commitment that it deserves. However, it is important to realise it is only a competition and if you lose, dust yourself off and get ready for

HEROES of the PAST



the next challenge. Be those challenges in rugby or at work there will always be something else around the corner.

Proper nutrition is vitally important for all schools players and it's essential to lead a balanced life. Everything in moderation is a good policy to stick with. When you're getting nutritional advice, go and get the best advice that's out there.

HOW DID IT IMPACT ON YOUR LATER CAREER?

The experience definitely stood to me. Unfortunately, in my case it was a bad experience. When we played Christians Brothers Cork in the final in 1992 we were fancied to beat them but unfortunately lost on the day, I realised that day that the favourites don't always win. Having to deal with the heartache and regret definitely stood to me when I had to deal with regret later in the coming years. It also made me appreciate the medals and achievements I received later on in my career.

HOW DID THE EXPERIENCE YOU GAINED FROM THIS COMPETITION STAND TO YOU IN YOUR LATER CAREER?

It certainly did help me both personally and subsequently in my rugby career. However, it was chalk and cheese in a lot of ways, especially when the game turned professional. We would have never seen the inside of a weights room when I played schools rugby. Nowadays, the step up is a lot more organised with professional coaching and a greater attention to detail taken by schools for the Munster Schools Cup.

DO YOU HAVE ANY REGRETS ABOUT YOUR TIME IN THE MSR COMPETITION?

I would have loved to have won a Munster Schools Medal. I obviously never will but thankfully I went on to have had great success in my career. While at the time it was very disappointing I can appreciate it now for what it was. Playing in a Munster Schools Final was a huge occasion and a brilliant experience. If you go out and give your best and you lose, it definitely doesn't mean you're the worst team and if you win it doesn't mean you're the best but if you're willing to give your all that's the most important thing.

WHAT'S YOUR STRONGEST MEMORY FROM YOUR TIME THERE?

When we went to Cork in the semi finals and beat PBC. It always a special occasion when you can beat a Cork team in Cork!

The Avonmore Milk Munster Schools Rugby Cup Final will be held on:

Sunday 15th March in Musgrave Park at 3pm

For more information visit www.munsterschoolsrugby.com