

MATCH REPORT



HBE UNDER 17 vs Penshurst Panthers
Round 2 - 3/05/2026
The Home of Football - Rofe Park, Hornsby Heights

Conditions were superb at the Home of Football - Rofe Park for the U17s Eagles 3rd fixture of 2026. The Eagles were looking for their first win of the season after two competitive losses to start the year. Our opponents for today were the Penshurst Panthers - a new team for me.

Today's match was a rare morning game which I was a fan of but judging by some of the sleepy heads amongst our line-up, I'm not sure if the boys were as keen. The team warmed up behind me in the warmish conditions with Luke leading the drill, doing his best to wake up the team from their slumber with his famous enthusiasm. There was another milestone game today with Will celebrating his 100th match - Congratulations Will on this amazing achievement! Everyone loves having you as part of the mighty Eagles set-up!

We had a few outs to deal with today as Tyler, Ethan, Alistair, Linden and Curtis were all unavailable. No matter, the best thing about having a large squad is that we can now cover the gaps quite well. We also welcomed back a couple of big guns in Ollie and Jake S.

The clocked ticked over to 10:45 pretty quickly and play was underway. As usual, there was plenty of action early. A clearance from Ollie and an intercept and tackle from Jake S gave us an attacking chance in the opening minutes. Jake's kick just missed to the right, giving us a behind to start proceedings. From this, the Eagles were able to keep the ball at our attacking end with Harry, Jake G and Josh all contributing.

Suddenly, the play switched and we were under pressure - Aiden saved the day with back-to-back tackles. Penshurst weren't about to go away though and chipped away at us with a couple of behinds and eventually a goal - the swirling breeze helping the ball get through the sticks. Henry and Jack A got us going again with some handy clearances giving us an attacking chance. From a throw-in, Tom gained possession and booted a super goal from the right of the posts! We now had a major score on the board and the positive play continued with Will expertly finding Jake S with a free kick from the back boundary line. Jake did the rest, slotting a beautiful goal from a distance! Henry continued the good work and took a classy intercept mark that sent us forward again. Somehow, Penshurst were able to counter and went the length of the field to score their second goal.

MATCH REPORT



The Panthers were on the front foot all of a sudden but Ronin, Sam, Emmett and Harry were able to combine to snuff out a dangerous opposition attack. Despite their efforts, the Panthers kept at us and managed to respond with another 6 points. From the restart, Ollie picked up a tap from Lucas and was able to find Jake S who kicked the ball through for a behind. We had a couple of other chances at the end of the quarter but didn't hit the scoreboard. The first quarter was a close one and the visitors led 20-14.

Onto the 2nd and Penshurst were on the attack almost straight away, a customary intercept mark from Henry stopped their raid. Emmett was also brilliant at the back, kicking beautifully and stopping a certain goal with a super smother play. Immediately after this, play was halted due to an unfortunate incident... The medics rushed on to attend to a Panthers player who looked as if he'd hit the ground hard after a contest. The quarter ended up being abandoned as we waited for an ambulance to come for the injured player. The ambulance came quite quickly and thankfully we have since heard that the Panthers player is ok. It was a stark reminder to us all of the physical nature of our game and how sometimes things can go wrong. Panthers led 21-14 at half time.

Play began in the 3rd after the extended break. Penshurst looked to have handled the enforced interruption a little better than us, getting on the attack and snapping a sharp goal. Their ascendancy continued and despite Henry and Emmett's efforts to keep them out, they soccered the ball through for another goal. The Eagles started their comeback with a nice kicking and marking sequence that featured Henry, Jake S and Sam. Aiden benefitted from this attacking play, booting a cracker of a goal from his left foot! A great tap from Lucas in the ruck got us going forward again. Ollie, Will and Lucas kept up the momentum with some combined play but Penshurst were able to respond. No problem, Henry ripped back possession and sent the ball forward finding Jake S who in turn, found Zach. Aiden won a free kick from a contest and kicked in the direction of Josh. Josh, as ever, was there to pick up the crumbs and smashed it through for a goal!

HBE were starting to get on a roll with a stunning tackle from Will winning applause from our supporter group. There was further acclaim from the Eagles fans after more great fight from our team. Harry, Ollie, Will and Lucas featuring heavily in the play. Jack A topped it all off with an excellent tackle to end the 3rd term. We certainly had the better of the back end of the quarter and we had reduced the Penshurst lead to just 5 points. Panthers 33 Eagles 28 going in the last quarter...

Things started well in the final stanza of play with Lucas, Jasper, Will and Ollie on the attack. Callum had an early shot but just missed to the right. Penshurst countered but Henry, Ollie, Jack R and Ronin were able to work the ball out of trouble. From this positive play we had another shot but unfortunately no score. Momentum was still on our side and from this Jasper and Ollie worked together to register a behind for our team. From the ensuing kick-out, Jake S intercepted a Panthers kick and found Josh. Josh never needs much encouragement when there's a goal to be had and he booted it through for his second to give us the lead for the first time since the opening minutes.

MATCH REPORT



From a free kick, Lucas kicked to Jake S who took a dazzling mark and we were able to lock it up forward for a while. Ronin and Emmett snuffed out a rare Penshurst attacking chance in this period and sent the ball straight back where it belonged. From this, Ollie was able to kick a beauty of a goal giving us a bit of a buffer on our lead. The Panthers weren't about to give up though but Hornsby responded by stepping up their own effort. Henry, Luke, Jack R and Jake G all combined in a great late quarter defensive push. Ollie continued the rearguard action with a great tackle of his own, Henry continued to mark the ball for fun whilst Aiden hunted down the Panthers like a Class A predator. We grabbed a few more behinds to add to our total before the final siren blew. Final score Eagles 45 Panthers 34!

Unsurprisingly, there were plenty of big smiles and happy banter as our boys made their way off the field. The U17 Eagles gathered together to congratulate Will on his 100th and sing the team song. Final words came from Coach Tim who lauded the team's effort and attitude and rightly so too! It was a fantastic first win, kickstarting our season with a comeback victory over a so far undefeated team.

Words - Greg Allan

