

## Special Feature

# Henry: A World Cup Winner

My son Henry's Rugby career has been a good story so far, however on Sunday 23rd June 2013 it got a whole lot better! At the IRB Junior World Cup in France, England beat Wales 23-15 to win this competition for the first time in its seven year history and Henry was in the match day team and on the pitch at the end of the match.

### Tigers

Back in 2012 after Henry had completed his A-Levels at

Cokethorpe School we had hoped that London Wasps who are our "local" Premiership club and for whom Henry had trained and played a couple of "A" games might offer him something. Sadly no, but one of their coaches Chris Lloyd, called us and asked if he could mention Henry to Leicester Tigers where he knew the Academy coaches well. Literally the same morning Tosh Askew of Leicester was in touch and invited us to go and look at the Tigers' set-up. A week later we visited and spoke to several of the Leicester coaching team who stressed the levels of commitment, professional fitness and strength of character needed to be successful at Tigers. Henry was offered a one year academy contract subject to him "fitting in" - were they serious? Henry and I both knew that he would be like a "pig in you know what". He started at Leicester, where he now lives, on 7th August 2012 and just loved every minute. Within a month or so he had been selected



for the Leicester 'A' team where he played six times keeping his place and scoring five tries. In December, a little out of the blue, Henry got asked to join the England U-20s training squad potentially for the U-20s 6 Nations tournament in February and March. He played in at least part of three of England's five games and contributed to England winning the 6 Nations, in scoring against France at Worcester.

### World Cup and What Next?

The last part of his season really revolved around the IRB U-20s Junior World Cup an annual tournament which this year was in France. Henry was by no means a certain selection and was quite prepared to take a summer break and prepare with Tigers for 2014. However, two days later one of the selected squad was injured and Henry was in!

He played some part in all matches and scored three tries and was involved and on the pitch in the dramatic final when England won the U-20 World Cup for the first time coming from 15-3 down at half time - fantastic for him and for us as a family. With this already achieved I'm sure that he will already have new ambitions. Next season he has been offered a contract to play at Leicester and will train with the first team squad.

Not bad for an "unfit schoolboy"!

**Andrew Purdy**