

Improved Huns Look to Build on Good Start

Written by Alex Goff

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The Austin Huns get started on their Texas DI season, again.

The team actually played their first league game in December, a 42-25 defeat of the Dallas Harlequins highlighted by center Angus McLean's three tries.

Head Coach Kirk Tate says this was no fluke.

"We are very confident," Tate said. "We feel really good about this squad, and our preparation has been solid."

The Huns decided some years ago to start working harder to recruit by developing better relationships with colleges and also in the community. They have several community outreach projects, including fundraising for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund, Soles for Souls, Toys for Tots, and Bikes for Kids. In addition, their annual Bloodfest 7s tournament doubles as a blood drive.

All of that has, over time, increased their recruiting. The players on the squad now are essentially the same group that finished 3-6 in league play.

"Most of these guys have been with the club three to five years," said Tate. "And we've been working hard to develop players. This is only our 5th year in DI, after 35 years in DII, and we realized we needed a different approach in DI. We felt we ended last year strong, and this year we committed to being better prepared."

The victory over the Harlequins was a fair reflection of how good his team is, added Tate.

"It wasn't like we just played out of our skins or did anything unusual," he said. "It was the result

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of us playing our pattern, playing solid defense, and playing with discipline. That's what we expect to do."

Leading the way is the center pairing of McLean and Hugh Stitt, the latter being the team's goalkicker, and a good one. The back row is also impressive, with Pete Kanicki playing well at openside and No. 8 Anthony Arnold an imposing presence.

Long an also-ran in their own city, playing second fiddle to the Austin Blacks, the Huns now look to being a force in Texas at large. They take on an improving Houston Area Rugby Club which lost a close one 26-22 in the rain last week. For the Huns to be thought of as contenders, they will need to win this sort of game.