

## ALCESTER RFC MATCH REPORTS

Saturday 10th November 2007

**Midlands Division Five West (South)**

**Alcester 3 Rugby St Andrews 16**

Alcester came close to upsetting the formbook with a good performance against the unbeaten league leaders from the East of the county. For long periods of this tight and fiercely fought game, Alcester held the upper hand, and only a somewhat fortunate last minute try by the Saints, gave their margin of victory a more comprehensive look.

Before the game, both sides were joined by the players from the 2<sup>nd</sup> XV pitch for a minute's silence for the Warwickshire fire fighters who tragically lost their lives in the recent warehouse fire. Both Alcester men that died were well known by a number of the players, and one of them Darren Yates Badley was a former player for Alcester at both junior and senior level. All at Alcester RFC would like to pass on their sincere condolences to the families and loved ones of all of the men.

Alcester started down the slope and with the stiff wind at their backs, and the hard and competitive early stages were to set the tone for the rest of the game.

The Alcester forwards, led superbly by veteran player coach Steve Lea, who gave a master class in all aspects of the art of front row play throughout the afternoon, enjoyed the upper hand, but they were made to work hard by a bulked up and determined visiting eight who managed to secure most of their own set phase ball, despite the pressure they were under.

Alcester spent long periods of the half camped in Saints twenty two, without creating real clear cut try scoring opportunities. On the visitors first attack they put points on the board with a well struck penalty kick into the strong wind. Alcester full back Andy Smith levelled the scores with a penalty of his own after the visiting pack conceded a penalty at a scrum.

Despite Alcester enjoying the upper hand they had to settle for a 3-3 half time score, and knew that the second half would be an even tougher proposition with the visitors now playing with the elements.

It was Saints turn to spend long periods in red and blacks territory in the second half, but just as Alcester had met stern defence in the first half, it was the league leaders turn to meet a home defensive line that refused to let their opponents through.

The excellent visiting kicker added a second penalty that had been given against Alcester for offside, before the only scoring chance the home side had in the second half was missed by Andy Smith, as he couldn't get enough power on his kick to see it through the wind against him.

The longer the game went on it became clear that one try would probably be enough to seal victory, but with defences on top it didn't come until the death, by which time

the visitors had increased their lead to 9-3 after Alcester had collapsed a driving maul giving Saints a third penalty.

The King's Coughton men spent much of the last ten minutes inside the visitor's territory searching for the elusive score, but with time up on the clock and possession now with the visitors their chance had gone. One of the Saints backs received the ball deep in his own territory and with all of his team mates yelling at him to kick the ball dead and end the game, he put boot to ball for a strange looking kick which was neither a kick into space nor one to touch. Nevertheless the wind caught it beautifully and sent it spiralling down field, before it dropped perfectly in to the Saints right wing's hands who had a free run in to score under the posts.

This was a cruel way for the game to end for Alcester, however they were pleased with their performance and know that on this showing, their next league win will not be far away.

Alcester have a busy weekend of cup action next weekend. On Saturday they visit Bloxwich in the fourth round of the EDF Junior Vase. On Sunday they host Shipston in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round of the Warwickshire Shield, in a repeat of last year's shield fixture which Alcester won. Both games kick off at 2.15pm.