

ALCESTER RFC MATCH REPORTS

Saturday 29th September 2007

Midlands Division Five West South

Alcester 15 Coventry Welsh 16

The curse of President's Day returned to haunt Alcester again, as they slumped to a disappointing home defeat in front of Mike Edwards and his assembled guests, and as a result are still searching for their first points of the new league campaign.

Playing down the slope in the first half, the opening exchanges were very even, with the contest being the typically tight affair that matches between these two sides often are.

Alcester struck first thanks to fly half Andy Smith's penalty, before the visitors levelled the scores with a penalty of their own after the home side had conceded one for offside before being marched 10 metres towards their own line by the referee for back chat.

Straight from the restart Alcester regained the lead. The Welsh defence failed to gather Smith's kick cleanly and impressive flanker Mica Pieri stole the ball and powered towards the line. Two rucks followed with the home side in control of the ball and from the second, tight head Steve Lunn dived over for a try which was the final score of the half.

The early stages of the second half seemed to coincide with Alcester losing all cohesion at the line out and they struggled to gain even the scrappiest of possession on their own throw. In contrast the visitors line out was working well and they were forming strong driving and rolling mauls down field which Alcester were struggling to contain.

Within ten minutes of the restart the visitors pegged the scores back to 8-6 following another successful penalty kick. As well as even affairs, Alcester vs. Coventry Welsh matches are also often feisty ones, and when tempers boiled over shortly after half time, a visiting player was yellow carded following an altercation at a maul.

Although now completely on top at the scrum, the home side failed to add to their score despite enjoying their best spell of the half and when the visitors' numbers were restored with the sin bin period over, they took the lead for the first time in the afternoon with a well struck drop goal from their fly half, after an earlier attempt had been dragged wide.

The Welsh men's driving maul was proving to be the most potent attacking weapon on show, and it was the main source of all of their attempts at the Alcester line. They came mightily close to scoring in the corner, after the ball was spun from the back of a maul, but Alcester skipper Scott Carmichael was in no mood to give his try line away cheaply and thundered the attacker in to touch in the act of scoring, with a superb tackle.

Unfortunately for Alcester this proved to be a brief reprise as the visitors finally got the try that had looked likely and predictably it came from another strong driving maul deep inside the home twenty two. The conversion took the visitors 16-8 up with only a few minutes remaining.

Most of the home heads had dropped by now, but substitute wing Stuart Whitehead was in no mood to accept defeat easily. He gathered a kick just outside his twenty two, before setting off on a typically mazy run towards his half way line. Surrounded by opponents and with few support options, he kicked a speculative “up and under” which the Welsh full back allowed to bounce and made a total hash of gathering, allowing Whitehead to nip in and gather the ball superbly above his head before racing clear to the line for a brilliant individual try. Smith converted, but the final whistle blew with Alcester a point short and hugely disappointed at a below par showing.

The King’s Coughton men plan a big week of training to correct some of the areas that went wrong and to prepare themselves for their first ever league visit to another Coventry side, and the former pit men of Keresley, next Saturday.