

Saturday October 11th 2008

Midlands Division Six West (South East)

Alcester 52 Trinity Guild 11

Alcester's positive start to the season continued, with a resounding win over their opponents from the Baggington area of Coventry, in the bright autumn sunshine at King's Coughton, a result that leaves them top of the early season table, ahead on points difference from fellow unbeaten side Rugby Welsh.

After winning the toss and electing to start up the slope and into the bright sunshine in the first half, the home side got off to the perfect start. Left wing Stuart Whitehead carried on where he left off last week, with a smart finish to a good back line move in the first couple of minutes of the game, to put his side in front. Centre Max Bilcliffe converted to give Alcester a 7-0 lead.

The early jolt spurred the fired up visitors into life, and the next fifteen minutes of the game belonged to them as they pinned the home side back in their own half with a sustained period of pressure. Alcester didn't help themselves with a string of penalties against them for a variety of infringements, which disrupted any possession they did get. Three of the penalties, were in kickable range and the Guild scrum half slotted two of them over, the second one from the same incident that saw Alcester's Fijian flanker Mica Pieri yellow carded for persistent infringement in the eyes of the referee.

The reduction in numbers fired the home side back into life and they upped their game, and even increased their lead during the time was Pieri was away. There was an element of fortune about their second try however, speedster Whitehead, the quickest man on the field, capitalizing on a mistake in the Guild back line to intercept a pass and race in unchallenged from just inside his own half.

When Pieri returned, Alcester regained the ascendancy, and with their line out a much more reliable source of possession than last week's unit, they were able to launch a regular wave of attacks towards the visitors line. From one such attack, full back Andy Smith rounded off another well worked back line move, to give his side a 17-6 half time lead.

With the elements at their back in the second half, Alcester continued their domination. Kiwi fly half Ash Newdick took over the kicking duties, to slot over a penalty, before replacement left wing Jack Sears, on for foot injury victim Whitehead, scored with his first touch, as the home backs once again used their extra speed to get the better of their opponents out wide.

Newdick added a further penalty, before flanker Aaron Mason crashed over from the base of a ruck at short range for his maiden 1st XV score, capping a fine start to the season for one of Alcester's new contingent.

The visitor's stemmed the flow periodically with two incisive back line moves of their own, the second of which was stopped only yards short of the line by some desperate home defence, after they had broke through with their first.

This was only a brief period of respite for the Coventry men, as they had their turn to play ten minutes a man short when their no 8 was yellow carded, after conceding a string of penalties in quick succession.

Pieri, the south sea islander in the Alcester realms, took centre stage in the final quarter of the game, running in two tries following powerful runs and coming close with a third, after catching the ball straight from the restart and being shoved in to touch only five yards from the line. Pieri's brace sandwiched Max Bilcliffe's score, a try which delighted the large home crowd enjoying the unseasonably good weather and the excellent running rugby played out before them by the home backs.

This was another good win by Alcester, against opponents that showed enough to suggest that they will feature in the end of season shake up for honours.

The red and blacks are in positive, buoyant mood following their good start, and they will be hoping to continue that when they switch focus from the league to the third round of EDF Energy Junior Vase against Harborne, opponents they drew 5-5 against in a friendly at the start of the season. The red and blacks have been drawn away in this fixture, but there is a chance the match may be played at Kings Coughton (check the ARFC website for details) after a request from the Birmingham outfit for a potential change of venue.

Alcester return to league action the following week when they visit their fellow joint leaders, Rugby Welsh on 25th October by which time both sides should have definitively heard about the ruling which may mean that their victories last week against Coventry Tech and Warwickians respectively, need to be replayed. Both games ended with uncontested scrums following injuries to the front rows of their opponents, and whilst results stand in similar situations higher up the league structure, somewhat frustratingly at this level the injury hit side can elect to replay a game where passive scrummaging occurs.

Alcester Veterans

Alcester vets, under the leadership of Derek (Decker) Simons, will be making their inaugural appearance of the season at home to the team of local prison officers, Hewell Vikings. There are still places available in the team, and anyone interested can join in the fun by contacting Decker on 01789 765885