

## ALCESTER RFC MATCH REPORTS

Saturday 12th April

**Pinley 0 Alcester 12**

Alcester recorded an excellent, hard fought win at third placed Pinley, but their efforts to starve off relegation look to have been in vain with Harbury beating Keresley leaving the Kings Coughton men needing an unlikely 95 point winning margin against basement boys Tenbury in next week's final game of the season, to move out of the bottom three.

Alcester elected to start with recalls for veteran player coach Steve Lea at loose head, and Director of Rugby, Nick O'Connor at no 8 and both of them were instrumental in their side's success.

The visitors started well, and it soon became clear they had the upper hand up front, particularly at the line out where flanker Phil Birks completely dominated proceedings throughout the afternoon. This set the platform for the Alcester backs to launch wave after wave of attacks, and their early domination paid off inside ten minutes, when fly half Matt Williams broke left to send wing Sam Vernon into the corner to open the scoring.

Roared on by their travelling support the visitors enjoyed much the better of things in the first half, and should have been further in front at the break, but Williams was just short with two penalty attempts and under a small pile of bodies flanker Mica Pieri was denied what looked like a good try, by an unsighted referee.

The home side threw everything at Alcester in the opening exchanges of the second half, but the red and blacks fronted up to the intimidating atmosphere that is a visit to Wyken Croft, to keep Pinley out. They did have to withstand a sustained period of pressure near their line, and right by the Pinley club house, where the most vociferous of the home support were situated.

During this period, Pinley looked to have scored when their right wing got over the line, but he was superbly held up by Pieri and the Alcester front five shunted their opponents off the ball from the resulting scrum allowing Williams to clear the danger with an excellent kick down field. Withstanding this storm lifted Alcester again and they were able to better use the possession they were dominating to keep the play in the Pinley half.

The visitors had two further penalty attempts but first Williams and then substitute full back Tom Burgess, couldn't convert their opportunities into points which meant that Alcester had to fight hard to keep Pinley away from their half, with only a slender lead.

With the red and blacks continuing to dominate the scrum, Pinley were forced to shuffle their pack to attempt to steady the drives against them, but this made little difference to the upper hand the visitors had, which was proving a frustration for the Coventry men, and the sometimes feisty nature of their game came to the fore.

Alcester showed remarkable discipline to concentrate on winning the game of rugby, and they got the score their pressure had threatened inside the final ten minutes.

The back row broke from the back of the scrum and Pieri picked up at the ruck that had formed near the home line to burrow over as he had done in the first half, but this time with a different result as the referee was able to see clearly that he had touched down. Williams converted to move his side 12-0 in front.

The frustrations proved too much for the home fly half who spent the final minutes of the game in the sin bin for dissent.

This was a fully deserved win for Alcester, erasing the memory of the bitter 3-0 home defeat they suffered at the hands of Pinley in December. In the end, however, the several narrow defeats of this sort and above all the 2 league points they had deducted earlier in the season, have proven costly with the first relegation in the clubs history likely to be confirmed next Saturday. With the sort of showing that the side produced at Pinley however, a quick return to this level will be possible.