

ALCESTER RFC MATCH REPORTS

Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th March 2010

Midlands Division Four West (South)

Rugby Welsh 5 Alcester 20

Alcester recorded their first away win of the season, with a much improved performance where they played some of their best rugby of the year so far to deservedly come away from Alwyn Road with both points.

With half of the Alcester side delayed en route and only arriving 15 minutes before kick off, it looked like it might be a completely different story as they were unable to warm up and prepare properly, but this was soon forgotten as they quickly got into their stride on a blowy but dry day in the east of the county, conducive to the sort of running rugby the red and blacks like to play when at their best.

After both teams had periods of pressure in each other's half in the opening ten minutes, Alcester upped a gear and started to move the ball around well where forwards and backs linked superbly in two prominent moves up field, the second of which resulted in open side flanker Ed Hartley rounding off to score, following numerous exchanges of passes en route to the line.

The try lifted the visitors still further, and they played some excellent rugby in the run up to a second score. The recalled Mika Pieri, playing his first game following a suspension, operated in a less familiar role at outside centre, but he was no less effective there than his usual back row berth and he and his fellow centre, skipper Scott Carmichael, both punched holes in the home defence with their direct running style. This created gaps for others, such as the effervescent scrum half Robbie Parker, to exploit in a flowing move, which Carmichael rejoined to round off. In the blustery conditions kicker Max Biltcliffe was wide with a second conversion attempt.

With his side now well on top, Parker was enjoying the space afforded to him and he set off on a number of darting, elusive runs which brought his side close to the Welsh line. On one such occasion he raced clear of the defence, only to be caught by a home defender less than five metres out, but he was able to release Biltcliffe for a clear run to the line. Unfortunately for the young Alcester wing and his side, he fumbled the pass towards him and knocked on, missing what can only be described as the rugby equivalent of an open goal in the process.

Undeterred, the visitors pressed on and just before half time, another one of the Kings Coughton young guns, lock Stuart Fletcher took centre stage, with a well taken try after picking up at the base of a ruck inside the Welsh twenty two and showing a good turn of pace to race clear of the home defence to score. This was the highlight of a man of the match showing by the teenage second row forward, who was responsible for a number of turnovers in his side's favour and generally did some great work around the park as well as turning his best performance to date in an Alcester shirt in the tight.

Now fifteen points to the good, the visitors were caught napping in the moments that remained before half time when the Welsh outside centre scored following a lovely, pacy break to the line, which kept his side in touch at the turnaround.

Alcester brought Ollie Braley on at half time for Biltcliffe and soon after were forced to make another change, when veteran second row Andy Flynn came on for Phil Birks who had picked up a couple of knocks following his usual all action performance. Flynn's entrance to the game, saw Fletcher move to the back row to fill in for blind side flanker, Birks.

As the game moved in to the final quarter, the visitors pack had assumed the ascendancy without completely dominating, but from one advancing scrum just inside the Rugby half, no 8 Rich Hartley picked up and set off on a powerful run which saw him blaze clear of the home back row and race clear to the line, to emulate the try scoring feat of his brother Ed earlier and to kill the game off for his side. Replacement kicker Andy Smith, who had an otherwise faultless game, fared no better than Biltcliffe or the home kicker had, in the cross field wind that was still blowing.

The visitors had the better of the closing stages and came close to adding to their score, none more so than when second row Pat Lamb, just failed to force his way over after following up more good work from the centre pairing of Carmichael and Pieri.

Alcester left the home of rugby, in a buoyant mood after this victory that moves them to fifth place in the table, ahead of the visit to bottom, but improving side, Birmingham Exiles next Saturday. Amongst a good and solid all round team performance, the showing of the front row also stood out. Stalwart prop Nev Teasdale was recalled alongside player coach Steve Lea, who had to play the whole eighty minutes rather than his cameo twenty he normally puts in each week. Both of the veterans, with a combined age of 91 between them, had to answer an availability dilemma at prop, with the first choice front row and first choice replacement all out of action this week. In between them, hooker Russ Morey had more reasons that most to celebrate. After joining the club in October, the ex Warwickian no 2 ended up on a winning side for the first time in Alcester colours after the second XV games and handful of 1st XV starts he had made to date, had all previously ended in defeats.

Kick off for next week's game in Bickenhill is 3pm.

Exercise Rhino Poppy



On March 14th 2010, a team of eight cyclists from 1st (United Kingdom) Armoured Division Headquarters and Signal Regiment will start a 1000 Mile cycle ride to raise awareness and much needed funding for the 'Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal', and 'Help for Heroes' charities.

We will be carrying with us the match ball to be used in the final of the Anglo-Welsh Rugby Cup. We'll be visiting all 16 clubs involved in the competition on route. Starting at Newcastle Upon Tyne at the ground of the Newcastle Falcons, we'll ride in 7 days to '6 Ways Stadium' in Worcester where the final is being held. The match ball will be presented to the referee before kick off.

To see more information on our progress and Ebay auctions, go to our website:

www.rhinopoppy.co.uk

The Team of cyclists will arrive at Alcester Rugby Club on Saturday 20th March at 5pm and stay the night in Alcester.

Please come along and support this good cause and those taking part.