

Saturday February 14th 2009

Derek “Decker” Simons

All Alcester sides observed a minutes silence before their games this weekend, as a mark of respect to “Decker” who sadly passed away the previous week after a short recent illness, following a long battle against cancer.

Decker was the current Veterans side manager, and junior section coach, and had been a long standing and highly regarded member of the King’s Coughton club. In his playing day he was a tough and uncompromising prop forward for Alcester and the former Bidford Rugby Club and he will be sadly missed by fellow club members past and present.

Midlands Division Six West (South East)

Alcester 15 Rugby Welsh 3

Alcester made it a very Happy Valentines Day at Kings Coughton, with an excellent win against their previously unbeaten opponents, the only side to have beaten them in league action this season. In the process, they have exchanged places with Rugby Welsh and now lead the table by one point, ahead of next week’s crucial visit to third placed Trinity Guild, the only other team to have taken a point off Rugby Welsh this season.

Alcester coach Steve Lea prepared his side well for this game. The 11.30am meet time for a 2.15pm kick off, demonstrating the importance that was attached to this crucial fixture with a team meeting and a longer than usual warm up session, filling the time before kick off.

The home side gave a competitive 1st XV debut to full back Jamie Randall who vindicated his selection with a solid performance, before picking up a knock towards the end of the first half that saw him replaced at the break.

The detailed preparations paid off for Alcester, and playing down the slope in the first half they took command of the game, without really creating the clear cut try scoring chances that their domination of possession warranted.

The home eight were well on top at the set phase, particularly at the scrum, where the visiting no 8, as he had done in the fixture between the two sides earlier in the season, did well to salvage any ball behind his retreating pack.

They did have scoring chances, including from the boot and kicker Max Biltcliffe was just wide with his solitary penalty effort of the half, after the visitors had been penalized for holding on at the tackle.

On the stroke of half time, the home side broke the deadlock. Clean ball at the line out on the right hand side of the field, deep inside the visitor’s half, was moved quickly left by the home backs. Outside centre, Sam Kirby, who had an excellent game, beat his man not for the first time in the afternoon, and was integral in the move that led to the score from a very familiar source, skipper Scott Carmichael rounding off the move wide out left.

Up the slope in the second half, Alcester expected an early onslaught from the visitors, but such was their domination up front that it was no surprise when they increased their lead ten minutes in, through the impressive Kirby, although there was more than a hint of a forward pass in the run up to the score.

Despite the home domination, the visitors were not without their moments and the open phases were very keenly fought which made for, at times, a bruising encounter that one would come to expect from a meeting of the league's top two.

As the game entered the final quarter, the visitors enjoyed their best spell of the game, and after coming close to scoring a try, they took the three points that were on offer to their kicker as Alcester strayed off side deep inside their own territory. The fly half came close to scoring again, as the home side was forced to hold their breath as the visitors came back in to the game.

The Welsh domination was short lived however and the Kings Coughton men upped their game again and regained the ascendancy. Centre Max Biltcliffe, who had a rare off day with the boot from place kicks, came desperately close to nudging his side further in front as his drop goal attempt fell inches short. The score to close the game followed very shortly after, however. Left wing Stuart Whitehead on as a half time substitute for Randall, and making his first appearance of the year, finished off a backs move in typical style with a pacy finish in the corner.

Coach Steve Lea and skipper Scott Carmichael, praised the efforts of all eighteen players used in the afternoon, but singled out the performance of their youngest as being worthy of the man of the match accolade. Ollie Braley started the game on the left wing and whilst looking dangerous with ball in hand, he did his best work in the first half in defence with several brave tackles, including two on the visitor's best player, their no 8 who was most influential in the Rugby Welsh win over Alcester earlier in the year. In the second half Braley moved to full back and really came into his own, with an assured performance in defence and with a skillful and exciting showing in attack, featuring in a number of attacking moves in the half, which delighted the large and vociferous Kings Coughton following.

Whilst celebrating this excellent result, Alcester realize that they are in for another very tough game, when they visit Baggington to face third placed Trinity Guild next week. Kick off is again 2.15pm.