

Saturday December 20th 2008

Midlands Division Six West (South East)

Alcester 32 Old Wheatleyans 11

“Alcester scythe through the Wheats!”

Alcester ended the competitive element of their year on a real high, with a superb second half performance against opponents who are also likely to feature in the end of season promotion shake up. With leaders Rugby Welsh's home game being postponed, Alcester took their place at the top on points difference, although the Rugby men have a game in hand going into the New Year.

Starting up the slope, Alcester struggled to get into their rhythm in the opening stages and were forced to defend for much of the first quarter of the game, against well organized opponents who played to their strengths well. By the time the home side lost lock forward Andy Flynn to the sin bin for a high tackle on the Wheats right wing, the red and blacks trailed 11-0, and could have been further behind if it were not for some determined and disciplined defence.

The yellow card seemed to galvanize the home side and they enjoyed a sustained period of possession and territory for the first time in the game. When Flynn returned, the home side continued to have their share of possession and they ended the half by registering their first points of the game through a Max Biltcliffe penalty, which referee Sam Kincaid awarded although the kick did look to have gone wide.

It was not until the start of the second half that the strength of the nagging wind now at their backs, became evident, and they were able to use this to their real advantage to keep play deep in Wheats territory. After a sustained period of pressure, Alcester reduced the deficit with their first try of the game. Right wing Mike Badoud raced in to round off a good move by the home backs.

From the restart, Alcester went straight back on the offensive. Skipper Scott Carmichael claimed the restart kick and dummied and powered his way down field on a forty yard run which took him deep into Wheats territory by the time he was stopped. The ball found its way to full back Ollie Braley who showed great strength and determination to hold off the attempted tackles of several defenders, as he powered to the line, aided in the final few yards by members of his pack who had arrived to add their weight to the drive to the line. Biltcliffe converted the try.

By now, Alcester were completely in the ascendancy, and with the pack at their dominant best at the set phases, half backs Robbie Parker and Carmichael were given plenty of possession on the front foot to launch wave after wave of attack. Their domination was sustained despite the loss of hooker Brett Allard to injury. Player coach Steve Lea replaced him, and was effective in the role despite his somewhat unorthodox hooking method.

Alcester's talismanic skipper himself was the next to cross the line following another powerful run, before left wing Stuart Whitehead rounded off the try scoring, after his somewhat speculative chip ahead caused chaos in the visitor's defence and he reacted quickest to the dive on the loose ball over the line. The reliable boot of Biltcliffe converted both scores.

This was a composed performance by the King's Coughton men, where they over came the tense opening stages where they were being comprehensively out played, to gradually get in to their stride and finally come through and claim a good win. Central to the recovery and overall performance were the two leaders in the team, both of whom rarely put in anything other than a wholehearted and committed performance, qualities that were particularly evident today. Pack leader Phil Birks matched the all round efforts of his skipper and led the tackle count in the game, with some trademark thunderous hits on opponents.

Alcester now have a break from action until the New Year, but they will host their annual President's XV vs. Chairman's XV match on Boxing Day. Kick off at King's Coughton is scheduled for 11.30am and all friends old and new are welcome to come and enjoy a festive drink and watch the action.