

Saturday February 21st 2009

Midlands Division Six West (South East)

Trinity Guild 15 Alcester 13

After the highs of the previous week's win against Rugby Welsh a result which moved Alcester to the top of the league, the red and blacks were brought back to earth with a bump, and down to second place in the division again with a narrow defeat in Baggington, at the same time as the Welsh men regained top spot following their home walk over victory.

Alcester's undoing came in the opening quarter of the game, as the pumped up home side grabbed the initiative, particularly up front where the normally reliable red and black scrum were under pressure from the off, and struggled to give scrum half Robbie Parker any real clean possession.

As the visitors struggled to contain the Guild men, they conceded several penalties and were caught napping from a quick tap one near their line as the home side moved the ball swiftly left to score in the corner.

This wake up call sprung Alcester into life and they enjoyed a sustained spell of pressure inside Guild territory for the first time in the game. Now it was the home side's turn to hang on, and this presented red and blacks kicker Max Biltcliffe with two penalty opportunities, the second one of which he was successful with to move his side back with two points at 5-3.

Momentum swung back towards the home side and once again Alcester were forced into some desperate defence to keep out their hosts. The referee was starting to lose patience with both sides for the numerous penalties conceded, and Alcester pack leader Phil Birks was unlucky to be singled out for the game's first yellow card as he was adjudged to have killed the ball at a ruck.

With the numerical advantage, Trinity upped their game and scored their second try through their open side flanker, but still only with fourteen men the visitors hit back when scrum half Robbie Parker set off on a trademark mazy run from a quick tap penalty and fed flanker Aaron Mason who crashed over. Biltcliffe was unlucky to hit the post with the conversion attempt and his side trailed 10-8 at the break.

Player coach Steve Lea introduced himself to the tight head position as an early second half replacement for Nev Teasdale, and his fresh legs galvanized the Alcester scrum which meant they were able to play rugby consistently on the front foot for the first time in the game. Now well on top the Alcester side pressed deep in home territory and after coming close to scoring their second try, it was their turn to have the numerical advantage as the replacement Trinity no 8 was sin binned for killing the ball as the visitors looked for quick recycling from an attacking ruck.

The reduction in numbers didn't stop the home side having to be at their street wise best to keep Alcester out, as a high tackle on Sam Kirby and an off the ball challenge on skipper Scott Carmichael in the same move, prevented a score. These incidents prompted some

“handbags” between both sides following which Fijian flanker Mika Pieri was yellow carded bringing both sides down to fourteen men.

From the restart, Alcester quickly moved play back down field and as the forwards probed down the left hand side, they recycled it well so that scrum half Parker could move play to his backs lined up on the right hand side, which culminated in replacement wing Mike Badoud showing great strength to force his way over and put his side in front.

Now the home side were sprung back in to life and only determined defence by the red and blacks kept them out from a series of short range drives near their line. With time running out and Alcester ahead 13-10 it looked like the next score would win the game and to the visitors frustration it came from the home side’s dangerous outside centre. Although he had showed his form earlier in the game, he had largely been contained by the visitors defence, but on this occasion he found some space, and with tiring legs around him, he was able to set off on a jinking, mazy run which avoided the several would be tacklers on his tail to score from just inside his own half. The home kicker hit the upright with the conversion attempt.

As played entered the final minute, Alcester were awarded a penalty right in centre field on the half way line. Skipper Carmichael, asked Max Biltcliffe to go for goal, but with the wind slightly against him this was always going to be a big ask for the young Alcester centre and his kick dropped well short, allowing the home side to claim the win.

With a break from league action next week, Alcester now trail Rugby Welsh by one point, with Trinity Guild a further point back in third.

visitor’s territory and it was from one such run that the penalty was awarded which led to Alcester’s score.

Skipper Callum Armstrong took control at the penalty situation and fed his lock forward Nick Rymsza who made ground towards the line, but the visitors had failed to retreat sufficiently for the penalty and the same combination from the next opportunity, led to the Alcester second row forward crashing over for a deserved score, following a powerful run. Fly half Armstrong converted the try.

In the end Alcester had to be content in defeat with finishing the game much the stronger of the two teams. The man of the match award was given to prop, Elliott Preston, one of the unsung heroes of the team, but always solid in the loose head position as he proved again today, as he and his fellow pack enjoyed the better of the confrontations at the set phase.