

ALCESTER RFC MATCH REPORTS

Saturday 22nd September 2007

Alcester 24 Bloxwich 14

Alcester opened their season's account with a win in the autumn sunshine at King's Coughton. They were made to work hard for their victory, however, particularly in the second half, where their visitors from the Black Country fought back and even led the match for a short period.

The opening exchanges were fairly even and after a quarter of the game the match was still scoreless, with a Andy Smith drop goal attempt the nearest either side had come to breaking the deadlock. The Alcester fly half, making his first start of the campaign dragged his kick just wide of the upright, but he was soon to open his own personal points account for the season. The other real stand out action of the opening period was the unlikely sight of tight head prop Steve Lunn showing his backs the way, with a perfect right foot clearance to touch from inside his own twenty two, after he found himself with the ball surrounded by opponents.

As the play moved back up field., the home forwards won clean ball at the line out, set the platform for their backs, and the ball was spun quickly in to midfield, before full back Mike Conway joined the line at pace on a perfect angle to race clear of the opposition defence and score under the posts. Smith converted.

Conway was called into action again shortly afterwards as a combination of him and lock forward Andy Flynn combined to stop the Bloxwich right winger scoring in the corner, as the visitors underlined their attacking threat. Most of the remainder of the half was played in Bloxwich territory, however, and again it was from the line out that Alcester profited. The home side took a clean take at the front of the line out, inside the visitor's twenty two metre line, and scrum half Robbie Parker set his back line free to use the full width of the pitch, once again allowing Conway to join the line to make the extra man and score in the corner.

With the slope at their backs Alcester were determined to build on their 12-0 lead, but they were rocked back when Bloxwich scored two converted tries inside the opening ten minutes of the half, although they were helped by some very poor tackling by the home defence. Both kickers exchanged penalty misses, before Alcester began to regain the ascendancy as their pack really began to get on top at the scrum. Once again however it was from the line out where Alcester set the platform to reclaim the lead.

Lock Andy Spiers took a clean take in the middle of the line out, only five yards out, and his pack drove towards the line, before being halted just short of it, however this move had dragged some of the visitors defenders in and the ball was moved to the centre where Sam Vernon exploited a gap to dive over and nudge his side back in front.

The closing stages belonged firmly to the home side and they were given a boost by the return to action of skipper Scott Carmichael, coming on as a substitute in the

closing stages, after a hand injury had kept him out of last week's league defeat at Dudley. Not surprisingly Carmichael was soon in the thick of the action with a trademark powerful run at the Bloxwich defence which saw him finally hauled down just a couple of metres from the line. He set the ball back perfectly however allowing flanker Mica Pieri to pick up and power over from short range, capping an impressive personal performance for Alcester's Fijian. Smith brilliantly converted from wide out right, in the final action of the game.

Alcester hope to build on this success next week as they resume league action on one of their special days in the season's calendar. Alcester's president Mike Edwards plays host to his guests in his annual lunch, before old adversaries Coventry Welsh are Alcester's opponents at King's Coughton.