

Saturday 24th January 2009

Midlands Division Six West (South East)

Alcester 194 Coventry Saracens 3

On the eve of their Golden Jubilee year next season, there is a good chance this game will still be spoken about in Alcester folklore in another fifty years time. Saracens turned up with only 8 players and after much head scratching by both sets of officials and the afternoon's referee, because the visitors had a full front row the game was played to the full league rules.

At the start, Alcester seemed almost apologetic in running clear to the try line and were edgy in moving the ball between themselves, which led to a number of spilled passes. That said the gallant Saracens eight played as if there were at least twelve on the field, showing determination and sportsmanship which deserved an awful lot better than the hand that had been dealt them. No one would have blamed them if they chose not to make the journey to Kings Coughton, but rugby is a game that has the ability of bringing out the best in characters, and these eight should go down in Saracens legend, just as much as the illustrious former colleague of theirs, Darren Garforth, who went on to represent England.

Alcester got into their stride and decided to use the match as almost a semi opposed fitness session. They led 99-3 at the break, with the Coventry side scoring a much deserved drop goal to break their duck, and the visitors had three other kickable penalty opportunities during the game after the home side were over eager in their attempts to get the ball at rucks that had formed.

In the end, Alcester ran in a total of 32 tries. It could have been more with the early nerves at the situation and the sticky conditions leading to some spilled balls as they tried to run their moves. Their most notable miss came when outside centre Sam Kirby and wing Jack Sears broke completely free to the try line, but managed to spill the ball between them right on the line as they tried to exchange passes.

There were fifteen separate scorers from the seventeen players that made an appearance throughout the afternoon. No 8 Mika Pieri led the way with four tries, Mike Badoud, Sam Kirby, Max Biltcliffe, Ollie Braley and Andy Smith all scored hat tricks. There were braces for Phil Birks, Robbie Parker and Scott Carmichael and Jim Watson, whilst Nev Teasdale, Brett Allard, Andy Flynn, Aaron Mason and Jack Sears all scored one try each. The conversions were also spread around, which led to not as many being successful as their could have been. Nevertheless Biltcliffe still managed to convert ten of the scores, Kirby three of them, with Allard, Pieri, Badoud and Sears all slotting over one each.

One of the moments of the match, came late on in the game when Alcester were looking to spread the points around and the visitors were not surprisingly on their last legs, after doing their best to play the game properly throughout the afternoon after chasing down every attack.

The home side raced clear to the line for another try, but they tried to set lock forward Andy Speirs free to score it, a move which prompted a second wind reaction from the visitors with most of their eight galloping back up field to prevent the Alcester lock from getting the ball. Speirs is a former Saracens player, and there was no way that despite their hopeless situation, they were going to let their former colleague score against them, and he remained as one of the two players not to register in the afternoon.

Alcester will need next week's break from league action to get their heads together following this incredible afternoon, before the serious matters return the following week. They make a rare visit to Kidderminster to play the Carolians 2nd XV on Saturday.