

ALCESTER RFC MATCH REPORTS

Saturday 27th March 2010

Midlands Division Four West (South)

Alcester 37 Rugby Welsh 12

Alcester put the Exiles to the sword for the second time in three weeks, and in the process recorded a third consecutive win, and a fourth in five matches, which has moved them from a dangerous flirt with the relegation dog fight, back at the end of January, to a very creditable fourth in the league table.

Starting up the slope and against the slight early Spring breeze, Alcester started brightly and after having the better of the opening exchanges, they took the lead when lock Pat Lamb powered over following a series of forward drives deep inside the visitor's twenty two.

Although the Welsh men used the boot and conditions effectively to enjoy spells in Alcester territory, the home side were able to move their way out of trouble with relatively comfortable effect, by some accurate kicking from the boot of fly half Andy Smith and by some good interchanges of passing, at least early in their forays up field. They struggled to make their most of their obvious domination in open play, however, mainly because the last pass was dropped on several occasions.

Midway through the half, with composure restored, they added to their score thanks to an excellent try by inside centre Sam Kirby, deputising for club skipper Scott Carmichael who had his other club "hat" on this weekend, on tour with his under 14's charges in Somerset. Full back Martin Gurr added the extras.

They came close to adding a third try, most notably when flanker Ed Hartley was held up just short of the line, but from the resulting scrum his no 8 brother, Rich, crossed for his side's third score and a 17-0 lead at the break.

With the wind at their backs in the second half Alcester were hoping for more early scores, and they had fresh legs out wide to help them, having replaced wing James Woodhams with Ollie Braley early on in the half. It was opposite wing Sean Sudworth, however, who profited from a stray Welsh kick that his pack had charged down near the line, and he was found accurately in space with the gather and pass that followed, for his sides fourth score. Gurr hit the upright with the conversion attempt.

Somewhat against the run of play the visitors responded with a try of their own, which was converted, but Alcester restored their advantage when the impressive Kirby doubled his try count with another well taken score. Andy Smith took over the kicking duties from Gurr to add the extras.

The home side made their second change when lock Andy Flynn was replaced by another veteran giant Dave Marriott, but by now the visitors were enjoying their best period of the game and they deserved their second try when it came.

Alcester's final change came when player coach Steve Lea came on for his usual 20 minutes cameo, replacing hooker Jimmy Watson who had made a superb maiden start in the no 2 position, after having previously operated in the back row, at centre and on the wing for his side this season. Lorne Currie moved from prop to hooker to facilitate Lea's arrival.

With the introduction of Lea and Marriott adding extra power to their scrum, the home side resumed the ascendancy. Full back Gurr looked destined to race in for another Alcester score as he hacked a loose ball deep into the visitor's territory and was clearly winning the sprint to it, but he was tackled without the ball and Smith slotted over the resulting penalty.

The home side rounded off the scoring with a sixth try and a second for no 8 Rich Hartley who is relishing the step up from colts to senior rugby with every game. A happy Alcester side go into the final two games of the season over the next fortnight in decent form. They entertain another Exiles side next week in the shape of Coventry Welsh, who they lost narrowly to in the first meeting in Holbrooks in October, before they make the tough trip to Stoke Old Boys the following Saturday for their final competitive outing of the campaign.

Whatever the outcome of those two games, this has been a solid season for the Kings Coughton men, which is underlined by the fortunes of the other two sides that came up with them; last week's opponents Birmingham Exiles and today's foes Rugby Welsh, who both are destined for an early return to the Midlands Five level.

Kick off at Kings Coughton on Easter Saturday is 3pm.