

**Saturday September 27th 2008**

**EDF Junior Vase Round Two**

**Alcester 13 Tenbury Wells 5**

Alcester made progress past their first stage of the national cup for only the second time in a dozen attempts, since reaching the last sixteen of the competition twelve seasons ago. They overcame worthy and determined opponents in a Tenbury side, who were a very different proposition to the one that fared so poorly in Midlands Six West last season and were relegated alongside Alcester after failing to win a single game.

Alcester made five changes to the side that won at Atherstone the previous week, but with the slope and bright early autumn sunshine at their backs, made a positive start and were ahead inside five minutes. The home pack stamped their authority at one of the first scrums well inside the visitors half allowing clean ball to be spun left and a smart interchange of passes between the youthful red and blacks backline, set centre Rupert Daffern free to the line for the opening try.

The home side continued to press, but were dealt an injury blow when giant lock Dave Marriott popped his shoulder out and was forced to leave the field. This disrupted the home eight for a short time and the visitors began to get back into the game with some clean ball of their own, particularly at the line out where they held the upper hand for most of the afternoon.

Tenbury had the best chances to score in the middle period of the half, but great defence, principally by the younger members of the Alcester back line kept the green and blacks out. On the stroke of half time the home side was awarded a penalty for an infringement at a ruck thirty yards out and just to the left of the posts. Outside centre Daffern elected to kick for his side and he pierced the uprights well to add to his earlier score and leave his side 8-0 ahead at the break.

The second half started in a similar vein, with a fairly equal share of possession, but the home side was reduced to fourteen men only five minutes into the half, when lock Andy Speirs was yellow carded for failing to retreat ten metres at a penalty and stopping the Tenbury ball carrier in his tracks. With play deep in Alcester territory, the home eight were forced to hold out at three scrums, without a recognized second row owing to the earlier injury and the sin binning. No 8 Phil Birks and open side Mica Pieri stood in to good effect, with the red and blacks seven even shunting Tenbury off one of their put ins. This period spurred Alcester on, and when Speirs returned they regained the upper hand up front which led to the platform for their second try.

Kiwi fly half Ash Newdick burst through a fragile defensive line to score out wide and put his side 13 points up. The young Alcester side visibly tired after this point and the closing stages of the game belonged to the visitors. They went close to scoring on a couple of occasions when only determined last ditch defence kept them out, before they crossed the line to score in the corner, after Alcester had once more been reduced to fourteen men, this time for the binning of Pieri for an altercation at a ruck.

The home side held out to record a good win and continue their bright start to the season. They will be hoping to continue in this vein when they return to league action and make the journey to the Warwick University area to play Coventry Tech.