

Saturday 29th December 2007

Alcester "A" 29 Evesham 3rd XV 10

Alcester rounded off the year with a welcome win, against a plucky Evesham 3rd string, bolstered by several student players home on Christmas leave.

Featuring half of the side that are likely to take the field in the resumption of the league campaign against second placed Upton on Severn next week, the home side started brightest and were in front early on.

With the wind at his back, outside centre James Woodhams spotted a gap in the visiting defence as he broke clear of his own half, and sent an intelligent kick through for wing Stuart Whitehead to chase. The Alcester speedster won the race the ball to right foot it over the line and dive on the ball to give his side the lead.

With the home side dominating most areas of play, it was no surprise when they doubled their lead inside 15 minutes as inside centre Damien Webb crashed over following another spell of pressure deep in Evesham territory. Full back Rich Smith converted.

On their first foray up field, Evesham showed that they were in no mood for this to be one way traffic and responded with a try of their own after one of their back row forwards picked up and barged over from the base of a ruck, near the Alcester line. His fly half converted.

The rest of the half belonged to Alcester, and it was a question of how many the home side would score before the break. Woodhams, fly half and skipper for the day Robbie Parker, and scrum half Ollie Chester all crossed, with Smith adding the extras for one of the tries, to leave Alcester with a healthy 29-7 lead at the break.

In the second half Alcester used the opportunity to give run outs to all available players, including new prop Joe Ewings, playing his first game in four years and making his first ever start in senior rugby. Ewings acquitted himself well in the tight and was active in the loose for a very promising debut.

Against the wind, Alcester elected to run everything they got from all areas of the pitch, but they fought a losing battle for most of the half against the boots of the visiting back line who moved play back into Alcester territory each time they got the ball. Evesham reduced the deficit by a further three points after the home pack had strayed offside at the fringe of a ruck, and although this was the only score of the half, it was Alcester that continued to look most likely to add to the try count.

Damien Webb was the unluckiest of home players as he just failed to add to his first half score when he was held up over the line on two occasions.

All in all, a good game to end the year with, as attention now turns to the visit of second placed Upton on Severn to King's Coughton on 5th January, kick off 2.15pm. Alcester narrowly lost to the league high fliers in late November, in a game that saw them dominate for long phases, and therefore the red and blacks sights are set on revenge.