

ALCESTER RFC MATCH REPORT

Warwickshire Fire Fighters Memorial Trophy

Alcester 10 Redditch 7

Alcester's Golden Jubilee season got off to a bright start as they won the fire fighters memorial trophy for the first time with a rare win against their nearest neighbours, their first at senior level in over a decade.

With both sides missing some key players and with both coaches electing to make this a squad game with rolling on an off substitutes played over four quarters of twenty minutes, the match was at times a little scrappy as the teams struggled for any continuity.

Playing down the slope with the slight breeze at their back in the first quarter, the visitors enjoyed the best of the opening exchanges and their vociferous, and sometimes boisterous, support had something to cheer when their side went ahead after their scrum half spotted a gap in the Alcester defence and dived over following ball won at a line out.

With the benefit of the elements in the second quarter and following several changes for both sides, Alcester clawed their way back in to the game and had a well struck Max Bitcliffe penalty to show for their efforts, after the visitors had been penalised for an infringement at a ruck.

The sides turned around again for the third quarter with Redditch ahead 7-3, but the penultimate period remained scoreless, although hard fought, with the most notable moment being the sin binning of one of their lock forwards for illegal use of the boot at a ruck.

Redditch were still down to fourteen men at the start of the fourth quarter and the home pack reaped the benefit of that by getting clearly on top for the first time in the game. Skipper Phil Birks took a clean catch in the middle of a line out from the accurate arm of hooker Simon Green, and his pack drove on deep inside home territory, a drive in which tight head Lorne Currie was prominent. When the maul was halted, scrum half Robbie Parker spun the ball wide and fly half Sam Kerby capped a fine display by powering through a slight kink in the visitors defence and racing in under the posts, allowing Biltcliffe an easy conversion.

Alcester closed out the game to claim an excellent victory in their first run out of the season. Although this was only a pre season squad game and they still have much work to do ahead of the league campaign which starts in mid September, there were a number of encouraging signs in this win against a Redditch side that will continue to ply their trade a level above Alcester, following the promotion for both sides in their respective divisions last season.

Coach Steve Lea praised the contribution of the several new faces in the Alcester line up, most notably backs Sean Sudworth and Ian King, who did their best work in defence in this game, Australian new recruit Lorne Currie at prop and former Alcester player, hooker Simon Green, playing his first game in nearly ten years, following several years out of the country.

Sponsor Martyn Sanders, who donated the trophy following the sad loss of the four brave Warwickshire fire fighters in the warehouse fire in November 2007, presented the trophy to Alcester skipper Phil Birks and long serving lock forward Andy Flynn.

Alcester's packed schedule of events for their Golden Jubilee seasons continues next week. On Saturday September 5th there is a memorial game at the club between a Derek "Decker" Simons XV versus a Colin "Gork" Dean XV, in memory of the two club stalwarts that have both passed away in the last couple of years. Kick off at Kings Coughton on Saturday is 2pm.

On Sunday September 6th an Alcester side play host to a Warwickshire Presidents XV kick off 3pm. All friends old and new welcome to both days.

ALCESTER GOLDEN JUBILEE SEASON CELEBRATIONS

To commemorate Alcester's 50th season, a book has been released to commemorate the occasion, entitled:

'IT'S ALWAYS WORTH A TRY !' '50 YEARS OF RUGBY AT ALCESTER'

This 109-page book, issued to mark Alcester Rugby Club's Golden Jubilee, is a pot-pourri of on and off the field activities, together with personal anecdotes from club members and distinguished personalities in the game.

There is a foreword by England Manager, Martin Johnson CBE, and greetings from the Club's Patron, the Marquess of Hertford, and the Presidents of the Rugby Football Union and the Warwickshire RFU.

Among the highlights are vivid descriptions of the early struggles the club had to overcome; accounts of 'extra-mural' activities, including some remarkable work for charities; and contributions from veterans, aptly entitled Old Farts' Corner.

The book concludes with a look to the future, in which the club's flourishing junior section is seen as key.

The book is priced at £6 at the Club, or £7, by post, from Alcester RFC, Birmingham Road, Kings Coughton, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 5QF

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