

ALCESTER RFC MATCH REPORTS

Saturday 31st October 2009

Midlands Division Four West South

Alcester 36 Dudley Wasps 19

Alcester returned to winning ways and preserved their unbeaten home league record that stretches back to the last time Wasps visited Kings Coughton in March 2008. The red and blacks were able to avenge that defeat and record a third league win of the campaign, but only after a really nervy opening, which saw the visitors dominate the first quarter of the match and race into a 12 point lead.

Alcester showed four changes to the side that exited the National Vase in disappointing circumstances last weekend, and importantly were able to include their skipper Scott Carmichael as one of those changes, as he started in the fly half position in place of the injured Andy Smith. Playing up the slope, they had little answer to the "blitz" start by the Dudley side, although they contributed to their own early downfall by missing numerous tackles, as the visitors crossed for two tries before Alcester had started. Wasps had other opportunities to increase their lead, in their dominant opening period, but a missed penalty kick as well as several spilled balls out wide in good attacking positions, prevented them from really taking the game away from Alcester.

With the home pack dominating the set phases, Alcester got a foot hold in the game and responded through a try by Kiwi Ash Newdick, making his first senior start of the campaign. Fellow centre Max Biltcliffe converted.

Dudley were still looking the more likely side to score again with ball in hand, but by now Carmichael had reorganised earlier defensive frailties and Alcester returned to the tight unit that had a good points against record in the opening weeks of the season. The game completely turned around within a fifteen minute spell either side of half time, thanks to some dogged determination by the home side, some good fortune and an implosion in the visitors ranks which saw them completely lose their heads and organisation for a short time. First, Jamie Bowen rounded off a counter attack from Alcester as they profited from some scrappy play by Dudley, and flanker Jim Watson pounced on the loose ball to set up the attack. Then straight from the kick off for the second half, the visitors conceded a penalty for an infringement at the maul which formed when the restart was caught. Biltcliffe hit the post with his penalty attempt, but the visitors were unable to clear their lines as the ball bounced loose and following several phases near the Dudley line, flanker Ed Hartley crossed to give his side the lead.

Within minutes Alcester were further in front. The dominant home pack caught and drove a line out deep inside the Wasps twenty two, and when the first attempt at the line was halted, they rolled right and substitute back rower Meka Pieri was driven over to score with his first touch. Biltcliffe converted.

The relentless turn round of the game continued with the half less than fifteen minutes old, and Alcester profited by a mistake from the referee which saw him award them a penalty rather than a scrum on the half way line, as the visitors got in front of their kicker from the restart. While Dudley protested, Pieri tapped and went, powering through a distracted defence, before feeding the ever impressive Hartley to cross for his second score, under the posts, allowing an easy kick for Biltcliffe. The visitors complaints continued and the referee sent their fly half to the sin bin for dissent.

With Wasps now down to fourteen men, they were one short in defence when they spilled the ball in attack and the pacy Bowen gathered the loose ball before sprinting in from just inside his own half.

With their numbers restored and with Alcester taking their foot off the pedal with the game won, the visitors came back in to the match in the closing stages and crossed for a third try to bring some deserved respectability to the score board.

Alcester were glad to get this game won, when not at their best, and against opponents that are an awful lot better than their league position suggests. There were several good performances in the home fight back, which was principally led by the dominant home eight, in which the display of Ed Hartley was only just edged for the man of the match accolade, by that of tight head Nathan Webber. Alcester's giant prop, making his first start of the campaign, was his usual dominant self in the tight, but also was solid in defence, making several great hits on opponents, particularly as the fight back began in the middle of the first half.

Alcester continue with league action and a tough away trip to leaders Evesham, next Saturday. Kick off on the banks of the Worcestershire Avon is 2.15pm.

With less than five minutes to go, Alcester were awarded another penalty, but the referee had them four points behind rather than the actual score line of three in arrears, and they elected to kick for touch when another successful penalty would have levelled the scores. There was still time after this, and in the final play of the game, for a dramatic Alcester draw when they were awarded another shot at goal, but Randall couldn't find his range on this occasion and the Coventry hosts hung on to claim their first league win of the season.

Pete Goddard nominated "Moley" Alderman as his man of the match, for an all round great defensive display and countless tackles throughout the afternoon.

Alcester RFC Annual Bonfire Evening

Alcester host their popular annual bonfire and fireworks evening at Kings Coughton on Friday 6th November. As well as the fireworks that start from 8pm, there will be various other attractions, including the barbeque and bar that will be available after the gates open at 6.30pm, with the lighting of the bonfire from 7.30pm. On site parking will be available, with the entrance price set at £5 adults and £3 under 16's. Pre school children enter free. Everyone will be made welcome.