

## **ALCESTER RFC MATCH REPORTS**

### **Midlands Division Five West South**

#### **Saturday 8th March**

##### **Alcester 5 Dudley Wasps 17**

Alcester slipped to another home league defeat, this time at the hands of Dudley Wasps. The result leaves Alcester staring at the very real possibility of the first relegation in the clubs history.

Fielding a largely unchanged side from the one that has seen an uplift in fortunes of late, Alcester went into the game in confident mood following back to back league wins that had seen them bring their fate largely back into their own hands. However, this pre match optimism was brought back down to earth inside 2 minutes at a windy Kings Coughton, as the visitors instantly took control from a series of errors from the kick off. A knock on from the whistle allowed the visitors possession deep in Alcester territory, from which the home side defended valiantly before giving a second scrum some 15 metres from the Alcester line. The home pack were then harshly adjudged to have charged into the scrum, and from the resulting free kick the Dudley number 8 took full advantage of an Alcester defence still trying to reorganise and crashed over under the posts, despite the best efforts of Alcester number 8 Mekatoa Pieri to hold up his opposite number over the line. The Dudley 10 made no mistake with the conversion and Alcester trailed 7-0.

This early score clearly gave the Alcester side a wake up call, and playing up the slope into a strong wind then began to make the knowledge of playing in familiar conditions at Kings Coughton pay, with a period of excellent rugby that saw them camped well within the opposition half for the majority of the next half hours play. However, unforced errors, combined with some unusual refereeing decisions gave the Dudley defence regular opportunities to clear their lines using the wind just as Alcester had the opposition line in their sights.

This period of pressure was, however, undone on the stroke of half time when an under pressure Alcester fullback Tom Burgess was forced to clear his lines in a hurry, resulting in a 5 metre scrum to the opposition. From this, Dudley used their backs well by adding the blind side winger to the move, creating an overlap. Tom Burgess appeared to have thwarted this with an outstanding tackle just 1 metre from the Alcester line, but the overlap paid dividends with an offload to the waiting Dudley winger, who scored 10 metres from the left hand upright. Again, Dudley's number 10 read the windy conditions well to add the extras. Alcester trailed 14-0 at the break.

Hoping to capitalise on the wind in the second half, Alcester began well and pressurised from the kick off, forcing a hurried clearance that resulted in an attacking lineout 30 metres from the Dudley line. Alcester won the ensuing lineout and began to apply pressure with good interchanges between backs and forwards. This tied up the opposition defence and allowed prop Matt Bolton to make a break from a well timed Robbie Parker pass to race 25 metres to the line and score in the corner. Tom Burgess, faced with a crosswind was unable to add the extras.

This appeared to bolster the resolution of the opposition, who then set about protecting their lead by reverting to a forward based game, of which supporters of Alcester have become accustomed to. This made the task of Kings Coughton men all the more difficult as they were now being starved of ball. This opposition tactic paid dividends when James Woodhams, who had replaced Nev Teasdale was bizarrely adjudged to be on the wrong side at a ruck, giving the visitors a penalty opportunity. Once again, the Dudley 10 held his nerve and slotted an excellent kick in the face of the stiff wind.

Alcester tried in vain to get back into the game from this point, and despite periods of pressure, including reaching the oppositions line could not find a way through an experienced and well organised Dudley defence. The game from this point reached a stalemate with neither side really threatening the scoreboard.

Alcester will look to reorganise in time for the visit of Tenbury in 3 weeks time – a game that Alcester must win and hope that other results go in their favour to take it to a last game showdown at Pinley.