

Saturday September 23rd 2006 – League

Opposition : Bredon Star (Home)

Alcester recorded their first win of the season, with a commanding performance in their league opener against opponents who were a previously unknown quantity to the King's Coughton men.

Starting down the slope in the warm conditions, Alcester soon got on top, with their much bigger front five denying their opponents any regular supply of ball. With the visitor's game designed to move the heavier Alcester pack around the park, the home side did struggle in the early stages at the ruck situation and conceded five penalties in quick succession at this area of play with the referee adjudging Alcester to be handling in each one. He singled out the unlucky Sam Vernon at the fifth one, and the Alcester centre was sent to the sin bin.

The reduction in numbers did nothing to stop the home side's domination and when the Alcester forwards pinched a Bredon line out throw, skipper Scott Carmichael crashed over under the posts, from the back line move the followed. Andy Smith converted.

When Vernon returned to the action, he was soon replaced in the sin bin by no 8 Nick O'Connor for another handling offence at a ruck, but despite playing half of the opening period a man short in the pack, the home side were totally on top up front and were denied further scores only because of some over anxious play with the ball in hand near the visitors line. Smith was wide with a penalty opportunity just before half time, but at the break Alcester had to settle for a slender 7-0 lead.

Playing up the slope in the second half, the Bredon team must have been hoping that their older and bigger opponents up front would tire, but with the constant battering that the visiting eight were getting from the Alcester men, it was the visitors who were forced to hold on. The referee was losing patience with Bredon for the same reasons that he sent the two Alcester men to the bin in the first half and having set his stall out in the first half with his actions, he had no option but to send a Bredon player to the sin bin for killing a ball at a ruck.

Whilst the visiting team were down to fourteen men, Alcester doubled their lead, thanks to a brilliantly taken try from right wing Stuart Whitehouse. Alcester full back Robbie Parker claimed a misplaced Bredon kick deep inside his own half and set off on a break to the right flank where he fed his fellow speedster Whitehouse just inside his own half. The home number 14 then proceeded to out pace a couple of would be tacklers and jink past several more on his way to score a fine individual try under the posts. Smith again converted.

Alcester were so much on top that Bredon rarely ventured into the home half, and when they did have a rare break they were quickly tackled by their opponents. On one such occasion Parker and replacement no 8 Phil Birks combined well to keep out the Bredon inside centre. Birks, on as a substitute for Nick O'Connor, was making a welcome return to 1st XV action after missing the whole of last season with a cruciate ligament injury.

Bredon suffered the same fate as the Alcester men, with a second man sent to the sin bin soon after the first one returned, and when Sam Vernon scored Alcester's third try, with Smith again converting, it was just a question of how many Alcester were going to win by.

In a second half that went on for over fifty minutes (it seemed like hours to the home forwards in the heat of the Warwickshire sun!) Alcester ran in two more tries with both Carmichael and Whitehouse completing their doubles.

This was a pleasing win and a seemingly good performance from the Alcester side, although the measure of how well they played will probably come next week when they visit old adversaries Coventry Welsh.

Result : Alcester 31 Bredon Star 0