

Saturday September 30th 2006 – League

Opposition : Cov Welsh (Away)

Alcester narrowly succumbed to their "bogey" side in Holbrooks on Saturday afternoon, but where in previous seasons they have often not done themselves justice against these opponents, this was a game they could and probably should have won.

The visitors started well, and it soon became clear that they had the upper hand up front, particularly in the front five where the King's Coughton men shoved their opponents off the ball on numerous occasions throughout the afternoon. Such was their superiority in the opening stages that the home side were struggling to get any ball and it was no surprise when the visitors took the lead on the fifteen minute mark, when no 8 Nick O'Connor crashed over out wide, after a series of forward drives at the heart of the Welsh defence.

Alcester have been playing Coventry Welsh for long enough to know that they are capable of fashioning a score even when under pressure, and the home side began to show their intent of spraying the ball wide away from the visitors pack. The Welsh men enjoyed their best spell of the half and after a missed penalty kick at goal and some try saving defence from Keith Beech, they opened their account by clinically punishing mistakes in the Alcester defence to level the scores.

Under lining their newfound resilience, Alcester regained the upper hand thanks to their total domination of the scrum. They forced their opponents to a hurried clearance deep inside their own territory, and from the resulting line out, front jumper Andy Flynn found his second row partner Dave Marriott on the peel up the tramlines. When Marriott was hauled down five yards short of the line, it was Flynn who picked up at the base of the ruck to barge his way over the line for what looked like a routine score. Unfortunately the unsighted referee adjudged the ball to have been held up, much to the big lock's frustration.

Tight head Steve Lunn was next to force his way over the line, but there was no dispute in the no try award here, as the Welsh defence outnumbered Lunn's support to prevent downward pressure. Despite their almost total domination of the half, the whistle for the break arrived with the scores level.

At the restart, the home side reshuffled their pack and they were now much more competitive, particularly at the line out which became their most regular supply of ball. Now it was the home side's turn to enjoy the upper hand, and whereas Alcester didn't make the most of their chances, the Welsh men took the lead in the opening minutes of the half when a stray kick from the Alcester defence was charged down over the line and an attacker reacted quickest to pounce on the loose ball.

Alcester continued to dominate the scrums and win their own line out ball, but they were restricted to rare periods in the home side's half, as the Welsh men played right on the edge of the offside line to pressure the visitor's kickers into hurried clearances. It was the home side that could have added to their score, but Alcester were grateful to centre Sam Vernon's excellent defence on two occasions when he prevented seemingly certain tries from his opposite number.

Welsh were able to close the game out to claim the win and the Alcester men left Burbages Lane as glum as the faces of the Sky Blue fans leaving the nearby Ricoh Stadium after their late defeat to Plymouth.

Alcester have a break from league rugby next week, travelling to south Birmingham to face Kings Norton.

Result : Cov Welsh 10 – Alcester 5