

Saturday 27th January 2007 – League

Opposition : Southam

Southam claimed their second successive league double over Alcester, and in the process reclaimed second spot in the league, to lead their opponents by one point with a game in hand. Whilst there is still plenty of league action remaining in the season, this was a disappointing defeat for the red and blacks in the push for promotion, especially as they led for much of the game, in an extremely even and hard fought contest.

With Alcester's in form pack, "Dad's Army" meeting the league's best eight, this was always going to be a big forwards battle, and so it proved. It was the visitors who enjoyed the better of things early on, shunting the Southam pack off the ball on a couple of occasions, and it was from this momentum that Alcester made their now customary good start. The visitors moved play deep into Southam territory, and when their forwards set secure ball at a ruck only five metres out, skipper and scrum half Scott Carmichael continued his fine run of try scoring form, by dummying the home defence to create a gap which he exploited to the full, leaving kicker Andy Smith the simplest of conversions.

After Alcester dominated the opening quarter, Southam slowly started to get into the game and could have scored when one of their forwards was held up over the line by some great defence, led by Fijian left wing Mica Pieri who managed to get himself under the ball to prevent the try. Alcester were not without their chances too, but the remaining scoring opportunities of the half fell to the hosts, with their fly half converting the middle one of three penalty kicks at goal, to leave his side trailing 7-3 at the break.

The second half started as evenly, but most of the play was in Alcester territory mainly because they struggled to maintain possession, due to Southam's better playing of the afternoon's match official at the breakdown and ruck situation, where Alcester conceded at least 15 penalties throughout the afternoon. They protected their lead until the final quarter, when eventually Southam crossed for their opening try to lead for the first time in game. Within minutes Alcester were awarded their only real kickable penalty opportunity of the afternoon, but it was from wide out, and prop Matt Bolton's bullet at goal, dropped left of the posts.

The visitors were dealt a blow when lock Dave Marriott finally succumbed to a back injury that had troubled him since the first half, but having already used their only forward substitution at half time when player coach Steve Lea replaced tight head Steve Lunn, they were forced to reshuffle, bringing Dominic Skinner on to the wing and moving Pieri into the pack.

A tiring Alcester side continued to struggle to keep play at the Southam end in the closing stages, due mainly to the penalty count against them, and in the end the home side scored the game's clinching try in the final few minutes, near the posts, allowing an easy conversion to make the game safe.

Despite their disappointment at defeat, Alcester took heart at having run one the division's strongest sides close on their own patch, and remain determined to continue to push the league's top two until the end of season.

The King's Coughton men now have a two week break from league action and are scheduled to visit neighbours Redditch next Saturday.

Result : Southam 15 – Alcester 7