

Saturday 2nd December 2006 – League

Opposition : Stoke Old Boys

Alcester reclaimed third position in the league with a hard fought win in extremely muddy and sometimes boggy conditions in Coventry. With the under foot surface having claimed Stoke's previous home game the Saturday before, the remnants of those conditions were still all too visible, with the corner of one dead ball area still under a couple of inches of water and the centre field and one wing of the pitch, giving under players weight so much so that it was like running in the proverbial treacle. All this on top of the fact that Stoke is notoriously a difficult place to go and get a result at, meant that the predicted tight game ensued.

Despite having the better of the opening stages, the visitors went behind to a penalty fifteen minutes in after they failed to release the ball after a tackle. Within minutes they were back on level terms when the home side returned the favour, and centre Andy Smith struck a sweet right foot kick through the uprights.

Although Alcester had the advantage at the scrums, the fact that neither set forwards could not get any sort of grip under foot, meant that the red and blacks couldn't really press home their advantage. They were able to pinch one or two of the home throws at the line out however, but for the most part, both packs won their own ball at the set phase, which meant that a lot of the game was played between both twenty-two-metre lines.

Alcester were awarded another penalty for offside at a ruck, and although Smith struck his kick well, the wind that had been at Alcester's backs for the opening stages, just died as the ball reached the posts and it narrowly dropped under the cross bar. Little did both teams know that this would prove to be the pivotal moment of the game. From the twenty-two-metre restart, Alcester skipper Scott Carmichael called for the ball, took it at pace and burst through the first attempted tackle. He got up steam and powered his way along the right wing touchline to score what turned out to be the games only try.

The remainder of the half was equally as competitive, but with no clear-cut opportunities for either side the score stood at 8-3 in the Kings Coughton men's favour at the break.

The second half was to prove to be a very similar affair to the first. Stoke pegged the score back early on with a second penalty, before Smith once again restored his side's narrow five point advantage with another good kick, after the home side had killed the ball at a tackle situation. Skipper Carmichael, and lock Dave Marriott had combined well in the run up to the penalty, with the latter showing off his ever improving fitness on one of a number of powerful runs for the big forward.

Alcester continued to enjoy the slight upper hand at the set phase, but it was not the wholesale domination of the Upton game the week before, not that they had ever expected it to be against a powerful Old Boys pack. With their forwards having the better of things, the visitors looked most likely to add to their score, however chances remained few and far between with the game still being mainly played in the area around the centre of the park.

With defences on top for the remainder of the game, there was no further addition to the score and Alcester claimed a good away win at a place where many visiting sides will struggle this season.

Result : Stoke Old Boys 6 – Alcester 25