

Saturday 25th November 2006 – League

Opposition : Upton–Upon–Severn

Alcester made a welcome return to winning ways, with a commanding performance against an Upton side that had recorded a shock win over high fliers Southam in their last league outing. No 8 Nick O'Connor profited from the domination of his pack, by helping himself to a hat trick of tries, all at the back of unstoppable drives from his forwards.

The persistent rain of the previous twenty-four hours had stopped by kick off time, but it had left very heavy conditions at King's Coughton, which made it unlikely that a fast free flowing would ensue. This helped the mud lovers that are the red and black forwards, and after being stung by some of the criticism they had received following their below par performance at Rugby St Andrews a fortnight ago, they responded with their best showing of the campaign, to starve the visitors of any possession throughout much of the eighty minutes.

Alcester started down the slope in the first half and they showed their intent early on with a series of powerful forward drives at the heart of the visitors defence. Flanker Phil Birks, who had a superb afternoon in the middle of the line out, took a towering catch from one early Dickie Moore throw, allowing his forwards to get the shunt on for a unstoppable driving maul from ten yards out, which culminated in O'Connor crashing over for the opening score.

With a slight wind at their backs, it really was one way traffic for the King's Coughton men in the opening twenty minutes and after the visitors were penalised for killing the ball at a ruck, centre Andy Smith added to the score with a well struck penalty kick.

Alcester continued to dominate particularly upfront and skipper Scott Carmichael restored to his favoured scrum half position, was using his forwards on the drive to good effect. Following several such moves down the centre of the field towards the Upton line, he cleverly switched play left and the ball found it's way to left wing Stuart Whitehead who rounded his man to score.

Upton must have wondered what they had done to upset Alcester on their first visit for a number of seasons, as the home side took out their frustrations of three successive defeats on their opponents. When the home side were awarded a scrum just over five yards out, it was no surprise when O' Connor doubled his try count as his pack drove him over the line at pace.

With a healthy 18–point advantage at half time, the home side were challenged by player coach Steve Lea, himself having an excellent game at tight head prop, to keep the points against to zero. His side took this challenge seriously and playing up the hill against an increasingly stiff wind, they were forced to defend for the first real sustained period of time, in the opening stages of the second half. When Upton ran at Alcester they were met with some big hits with all members of the team standing their ground when called upon.

Soon the visitors ran out of steam, and with little secure ball from their pack, with the home side shoving the visiting eight off the ball at the scrum and Birks pinching well over half of their line out throws, Alcester soon regained the ascendancy. They came close to adding to their score on several occasions, with over eagerness by some of the men in red and black shirts and good defence by the visitors keeping the score the same.

In the final quarter of the game, Alcester did add to their tally, with O'Connor's hat trick score, again from a push over try. Smith converted to round off the scoring.

This was a game that really was as comfortable a win as the score line suggests and if there were any criticisms on a good afternoon for Alcester, it could only be that the really should have won by a bigger margin. The visitors were simply over powered by the home pack, which on this showing would be more than a match for any other side in the division. They know they will be in for more of a battle next week as they hope to build on their fourth placed position, when they travel to Coventry to face Stoke Old Boys for another league fixture.

Result : Alcester 25 – Upton–Upon–Severn 0