

Midlands 1

Newport 41pts v Dudley Kingswinford 14pts

Newport produced the performance demanded of them by the management and coaching staff last Saturday to comprehensively defeat their combative and spirited visitors. Newport were very aware of how dangerous DK can be with their style of play which revolves around moving the ball away from set piece very quickly and being first to the breakdown but with a few changes in personnel the home side have become a much more athletic and mobile outfit than when beaten heavily at Heathbrook back in November.

The team was much the same as that which triumphed at Crewe last time out with the only change to the starting line up being the return of Ash Paterson at scrum half and James Plumb taking a place on the bench following a period away with the RAF on helicopter duty.

Newport gave DK the benefit of the slope in the first period and the game started at a frantic pace but it was only a matter of two minutes before Matt Squires was sent to the sin-bin for a dangerous "tip-tackle". Liam Holder put the resultant penalty into the DK half whereupon Mike Venn took the line out off the top where it sped across the Newport back line, winger Jamie Robinson making ground before chipping ahead for Henry Vaka to collect on the full and cross for the opening try, converted by Holder for an early lead of 7-0. The visitors were made to pay in full whilst down to fourteen, a Sam Hughes break eventually seeing skipper Tom Cowell batter his way over the line for another try, converted by Holder to extend the lead to fourteen points.

Cowell, who played his best game since returning from injury, should have had another moments later but he ran out of fuel five metres short and his attempted inside pass to Paterson was spilled. Several more chances were missed and there was a suggestion that Newport would pay for their profligacy when DK got themselves back in the game with a catch and drive try following their first meaningful spell of possession after thirteen minutes. Warning bells were beginning to sound as Newport had conceded no less than four such tries in the previous encounter!

Always a threat in broken play DK then had an opportunity to come further back into the game when Kirk Robinson was given ten minutes for not retreating the statutory ten metres at a penalty. However, it was Newport who were to add to their score whilst being reduced in numbers, Sam Hughes showing some marvellous feet to scamper in for a great individual try.

Robinson had just returned to the fray when Jake Bates was given a yellow card and sent to the "naughty seat" just before the break. DK put the penalty into the corner and when the catch and drive was successfully defended by the Newport pack a neat peel off the back caught the home defence napping, the conversion reducing the margin to 19-14.

DK, having had very little of the play, would have been very satisfied to be well in the game at the interval and looking to press home an advantage in the second period when although playing uphill would have the benefit of a fairly strong breeze.

Newport should and would have been well clear at this point had they executed more precisely and the words of Head Coach Bob Adams were still ringing in their ears when Holder kicked off to start the second half. Kirk Robinson was having his best game of the season with several bullocking runs bulldozing would be tacklers aside and it was one such run that took Newport to the DK twenty two where Newport drove over the line and Jack Wells was adjudged to have been held up. There was then a long delay following a serious injury to Bates, who having just returned to the field of play, suffered a dislocation at the elbow and was in obvious distress.

The game re-started some eleven minutes later with a Newport scrum from which fly half Monty Maule jinked his way over for a neat try after the forward drive had been halted to make it 24-14.

Immediately from the re-start Robinson embarked on another of his runs and fed Chris Perry who looked certain to score before being tackled just short but the ball was re-cycled and popped to Cowell who crashed over for his second of the day for 29-14.

Again Newport scored from the re-start, Vaka taking the ball in his own half and jinking down the left hand touchline to score in the corner to extend the advantage to 34-14. Grant Cowe, Carwyn Howells and James Plumb had all been introduced and made good contributions, Cowe strong over the ball and making turnovers, Howells tackling everything and Plumb also making some excellent cover tackles whenever DK threatened.

Newport's final score came when Vaka chipped from deep in his own half, the ball seemingly covered by the retreating defence but Hughes was deemed to have won the race to touch down for Newport's seventh try of the afternoon, converted by Holder for a final score of 41-14.

Team : Holder, Hughes, Perry, Vaka, Jamie Robinson, Maule, Paterson, Kirk Robinson, Venn, Bates, Parker, Goulson, Wells, Cowell (Captain), Jon Evans
Bench: Cowe, Howells, Plumb

All in all an excellent performance against a capable and determined outfit. Newport should have been out of sight by half time given their domination of ball and territory but they were somewhat wasteful in attack and some sloppy defending allowed DK to be a lot closer than they should have been at the break. Second half different story, some outstanding attacking play coupled with an aggressive, organised and resolute defence gave them a most deserved victory.

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