

Midlands 1

Newport 73pts v Kenilworth 12pts

Newport racked up the highest score in the league this season and with it also the biggest winning margin in any game with a complete demolition of bottom placed Kenilworth who were already relegated prior to this fixture. Nevertheless the visitors played with great spirit and never gave up proving to be a credit to their club and giving every indication that they will bounce straight back.

The back division remained the same as last week but in the pack Grant Cowe, who was making his last appearance before taking up an RAF posting elsewhere, was given a deserved place in the starting line up as part of his farewell. Jordan Grass, Steve Byrne and youngster Jake Leonard made up a decent looking bench.

Although there are always things to work on this was an outstanding display of total rugby and sets them up nicely for the visit to Moseley Oak in two weeks time where victory will see them secure the title.

Newport's powerful pack destroyed the Kenilworth scrum at the first, and every other time of asking, forcing them into a hurried clearance kick that went straight down the throat of Henry Vaka who ghosted past several defenders before putting winger Sam Hughes, who was a lively threat all afternoon, in for an early try to make it 5-0. Kenilworth responded well and declined a couple of kicks at goal in favour of putting the penalties into the corner but these were well defended and the chances came to nought. Monty Maule then danced his way through and went in under the posts to make it 12-0 after eleven minutes and then Chris Perry intercepted a chip through and then raced in from half way, Liam Holder's second conversion stretching the lead to 19-0 after just fourteen minutes.

Hughes and Vaka then combined neatly to send in Jamie Robinson for the bonus point try. The pack then again shoved the Kenilworth eight off their own ball and Ash Paterson shot in round the blind side to make it 33-0. Kenilworth were again shunted off it on half way and Vaka coasted in from distance. The ball was then spun wide from a scrum and Holder was on the end of the line to cross and convert his own try for a half time score of 45-0.

Skipper Tom Cowell who had fielded every Kenilworth re-start with great authority and Vaka were withdrawn to ensure their fitness for the crunch game at Moseley and with Kirk Robinson suffering some ankle damage Grass, Byrne and Leonard all entered the fray and made meaningful contributions, particularly Leonard who was very authoritative despite his tender years and wasn't shy in barking out orders to his forwards.

The second period resumed with Kenilworth finding a hole through the middle of the home defence right from the off and went in under the posts for their

first score, another could have followed soon after but Paterson was on hand to touch down over his own line following a Kenilworth chip and chase.

Normal service was resumed when Hughes hit a great line on what was obviously a well rehearsed move from the training ground, Holder converting for 52-7. Kenilworth continued with their endeavour and were able to add a second score on sixty five minutes to bring it back to 52-12 but that was the end of it as far as they were concerned as Newport re-established complete control. Carwyn Howells didn't miss a tackle all day and along with Mike Venn and Cowe produced countless turnovers to put the home side back onto the attack.

Holder was in again on sixty nine minutes, Paterson on seventy two and finally Venn to crown an impressive personal performance from a catch and drive, Holder converting all three to give a final score of 73-12.

Newport are playing some beautiful rugby that is a pleasure to watch but the threat of second placed Bournville, who won narrowly at Wolverhampton, still remains and only a win at Moseley will guarantee the title comes to Shropshire. It is the players who must deliver on the day and make sure they claim the prize that they fully deserve.

Team : Holder, Hughes, Perry, Vaka, Jamie Robinson, Maule, Paterson, Kirk Robinson, Venn, Howells, Parker, Goulson, Wells, Cowell (Captain), Cowe
Bench: Grass, Byrne, Leonard

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