

## The Slaughter of Stoke

The Legion fresh after a Xmas break full of mince pies, turkey and beer were in the mood to give the gravy guzzlers of Stoke a real good stuffing. And what a performance it was running out 69-7 winners against the Potters across the Staffordshire border. Manager Lowbridge was that enthralled by the amount of Legionnaires willing to play he was brimming in confidence before the game kicked off. A trio of Gnosall bandits emerged for the fixture, a late cancellation of their proposed game meant they jumped on the bandwagon of the Newport 2<sup>nd</sup> team producing sterling performances prompting Lowbridge to bring forward the papers and pens for each man to sign on.

On a grim, grey, January day, (I am a poet and I don't know it), well let's face it Ladies and Gentlemen whenever you travel to Stoke the sun very rarely shines and your left feeling a little more depressed than when you arrived. Nether the less the Legion were unusually pretty organised and on time for this occasion, the only set back of losing their Skipper once again to the 1<sup>st</sup> team who was called into save the day, meant Vice Captain Michael Woodhouse took charge for the afternoon. Followed by the fan club Michael is becoming an integral part in side, almost as they say the glue that holds everything together.

After a very short but impressive warm up Stoke kicked off straight into the hands of the raging bull Pardesi who offloaded to not so Sherlock Holmes, leaving the lock forward to gallop through 4 would be tacklers before recycling the ball to the Legion backline that spun it out wide for winger Buttery to race away and just be held short of the line. It was clear to see this table topping band of men were up for it. Chris Upsher returned from injury to take on the tight head shirt and it was as though he had never left, running lines even he didn't realise were baffling the Stoke defence allowing part time boxer Rocky Pennells to race clear and score his first of the afternoon. One slight hiccup was that without a regular goal kicker no tee had been brought out, leaving Scrum half Nathan Potts to make a complete Hash of a drop kick for goal 7-5.

Stokes only real threat came straight from kick off when a few defensive frailties allowed their big ball carrying no.8 to power over and score under the posts with their fly half converting. The Legion however hit back and Dave Pugh who had been milking a few cows earlier that morning spotting a gap wider than Simon Harris Belt Buckle to sprint through and take the game to Stoke. A poor clearance kick saw Pugh catch from his own 10 metre line and race clear once more making everybody on the touch line ask, what was in that milk he was taking that morning? Manager Lowbridge has specifically asked Pugh to bring some for the water bottles next week. Finally tee gate had been resolved having asked Gnosall man Joe Mason to see if one was left in the changing rooms. Obviously this didn't quite register as he came back with a tee, but Lowbridge wasn't after one that required sugar. Warmed him up though so it did, obviously the Gnosall-Wolverhampton/Irish barrier wasn't that clear.

A kicking tee was found and potter managed to slot over Pugh's and his own try that he scored on the stroke of half time. 7-24.

Lowbridge was pretty happy at half time there wasn't much too work on as the offloading game Newport were playing was simply quite breath taking. Who needs Nobby Styles eh? Next to come to life was outside centre Riley, the young man was showing a clean set of heels when he was given some space to attack leaving a number of Stoke players for dead scoring two almost identical tries. A Knee injury though ended his game short on 50 minutes but enough to show he is one to sign in the off season for sure. 7 – 38.

Not to be undone by his centre partner Pennells grabbed another one for good measure after fending off more tacklers than a South Carolina bull rodeo. Good phase play once again from Newport saw the ball go through a good set of hands before Pugh once again raced over for his 3<sup>rd</sup> try of the afternoon, the man was simply on fire. 7-50.

Not to think this was simply like the Telford Islands at the minute, one way traffic, but Stoke did have a couple of stirring runs themselves. However the Legions defence held strong, just like Lowbridge beloved football team who were currently away to Stoke in their 2-0 win at the Britannia. Hits from Holmes, Jones, Kendall and Pardesi were heard by the men in gold and black and spurred them on. It was off such a hit young winger Jones managed to kick the loose ball through a near 80 metres and score under the posts for his 1<sup>st</sup> of the afternoon. His second came after Woodhouse broke offloading to the on rushing Pennells who had either Holmes or Jones to pass to for the line he opted for Jones and so would I. 7-62.

There was time for one more score and this one went to flanker Mason who returned from Gnosall having been at Newport previously with an extra toe, Finger and Caravan, to crash over after good work from Thomas who himself had a Spontaneous outburst of good hands during the match. Final score 7-69.

The score line will flatter Newport slightly however Stoke stuck at it for 80 minutes and were a credit to their club. Dave Pugh was 10/10 this week but mentions should go to Thomas, Pardesi, Kendall and Uspher for completing 80 minutes after Xmas and Pennells. Also the three Gentlemen from Gnosall were particular helpful in the cause.

On rolls the Machine

Viva Le Legion

Report Chief Mark James Artemis Ophelia Lowbridge

Pardesi, Granny Smith, Upsher, Holmes, Woodhouse, Howells, Thompson, Milk Man

Potts, Goode, Buttery, Pennells, Riley, Jones, Belshaw

Tyrone, Mason, Riley