

North Midlands Cup Final

Bromsgrove 16pts v Newport 40pts

Newport crowned a record breaking season with a resounding victory over a resilient Bromsgrove outfit to lift the region's major cup for the third time. Although never at their free-flowing best they outscored their opponents by six tries to one and once they had weathered the early storm the result never really looked to be in any doubt.

Their squad is far stronger than in recent years so the loss of Sam Brown and Jack Price (both cup-tied), Will Roach (Cellulitis), Toby Mann (Wedding – his own) and Sam Hughes (work commitments) didn't prove too much of a handicap with Jake Leonard, Rhys Morgan, Mike Venn, Dave Archer and Billy Wara all making the starting line up. There was also strength on the bench where some of the successful Newport Legion were given their chance in the spotlight.

Bromsgrove kicked off and Newport made a hash of collecting it, so it was Bromsgrove who had an early run of possession in and around the Newport twenty two. It was obvious from the off that Bromsgrove would look to move them around but they made little impact against an outstanding Shropshire defence. Eventually they had to settle for three points from the metronomic boot of fly half Rich Mahony after Newport were penalised for a side entry that halted a Bromsgrove drive for the line.

Bromsgrove were clearly not there to make up the numbers and they were bringing Chris Hooper into the line from full back and he was proving to be a very effective battering ram and difficult to contain. Seven minutes in a Bromsgrove move broke down in midfield and the highly impressive Henry Vaka was on hand to snap up the loose ball fifty metres out, a swift exchange of passes with Chris Perry saw the mercurial Fijian cross in the corner to make it 3-5.

Newport were then penalised for not releasing in the tackle and then marched back a further ten metres for giving a bit of "lip" to the highly impressive Championship referee Neil Chivers. Mahony slotted the kick and Bromsgrove were back in front at 6-5 but not for long, Liam Holder latching on to a Vaka offload with the help of some skilful juggling to go in under the posts and convert his own try for a 6-12 advantage.

Half an hour in and Kirk Robinson received his first yellow card of the season for leading with the shoulder, the result of which saw Mahony knock over his third penalty to narrow the deficit to 9-12. Bromsgrove then looked likely to make their numerical advantage count almost immediately but were brought back for a forward pass to the rampaging Hooper. Still Bromsgrove attacked but then skipper Tom Cowell, who led by example all afternoon, delivered a turnover sixty metres out, the ball being moved swiftly left and Vaka was in for his second, Holder converting for an interval score of 9-19.

A tight opening to the second period ensued with Bromsgrove very conscious that they would need the opening score of the half to get themselves back into it but a Vaka break followed by a long kick for winger Billy Wara to chase down looked to have been cleared but Vaka was on hand to touchdown for a simple score to complete his hat-trick when Bromsgrove spilled the ball on their own line, Holder tacking on the conversion to make it 9-26 after fifty two minutes.

Jordan Grass was having an outstanding game, heading up the tackle count as he usually does closely followed by Jack Wells, whilst Nathan Parker, Kirk Robinson and Oli Buckley were consistently breaking the gain line with hard aggressive running. Mike Venn, back in the side after missing the last two games was a constant nuisance at the breakdown as was Morgan who managed an energetic half after a long standing ankle problem. Jon Evans, Chris Campbell, Laurence Few, Charlie Hill, Rhys Harray and Nathan Smart were all brought into the fray from the bench as the heat began to take its toll and all were to play an important part in seeing out the victory.

Bromsgrove were pressing on the Newport line only for Evans to produce a turnover that forced Bromsgrove to concede a penalty and allow Newport to clear their lines. Newport were then penalised on halfway and then Leonard was invited to take a ten minute rest after offering some advice to Mr Chivers.

It was during this period that Bromsgrove secured their only try of the afternoon, when after a number of phases they created space out wide for former Newport loanee Ollie Bache to cross for a try that Mahony converted to bring it back to 16-26 after sixty six minutes but that was to be the end of any potential comeback as first Rhys Harry was up in support of a Maule break to score under the posts after Buckley had done most of the damage, Holder converting to extend the lead to 16-33.

The last score of the game came when the two youngsters, Harray and Leonard combined, the former producing great sleight of hand to put Leonard away and score from forty metres out. With Holder retired to the bench Monty Maule, who had orchestrated proceedings from fly half extremely well knocked over a difficult conversion for a final score of 16-40.

Cue the celebrations and Newport had put the icing on the cake to what has been an outstanding season by lifting some much deserved silverware, the magnificent trophy no doubt on prominent display when the town of Newport comes together on Saturday to celebrate the successes of the year at the club's Annual Awards evening.

Team: Holder, Archer, Perry, Vaka, Wara, Maule, Leonard, Robinson, Morgan, Venn, Parker, Buckley, Wells, Cowell (Captain), Grass
Bench: Evans, Hill, Campbell, Few, Harray, Smart, Weston

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