

Newport Legion XV Vs Towcestrians 2nd XV

02/09/2016 (Midlands Elite Reserve League)

How did the Legion manage to burn their Toast?

This weekend saw the return of league action to The Old Showground with the Legion hosting Towcestrians RFC. Having been promoted back into the elite reserve league, the Legion knew the high standard of rugby played at this level and were aware there will be no easy fixtures this year as they have competed in this league in previous years.

With the sad demise of Lord Mark Lowlowbridge the Third of Pontsbury; the Legion will be led into battle this year by Captain, Commodore Pierre Von Pistol under the watchful eye of Admiral of the Fleet, Michael Wooden Trojan Horse Woodhouse. A lot of work behind the scenes ensured that the Legion had a strong armada to put out for the opening game of the season.

Knowing very little about Towcestrians, the Legion were apprehensive of what to expect of a team that no Newport team have played before. After watching a very slick and professional warm up from the visitors, all was set for a titanic battle.

With rousing words from Commodore Pistol and Rear Admiral Kendall, the Legion chose to play down the infamous Forton Road hill and from the kick off, immediately exerted their dominance in all areas of the pitch. Stringing together phase after phase of high tempo, front foot running rugby, the Legion soon moved themselves into the Towcestrians twenty two and after a dangerous high tackle, decided to get the first points on the board via the boot of Scott McKenzie.

Receiving the re-start, the same tempo was kept as the Legion starved Towcestrians of possession whilst progressing up the pitch into an attacking position where they could impose their dominance once again. With the pack shoving the opposition of virtually every scrum, the cracks in the defence we exploited and one man wrecking ball, Charlie Hill barrelled over from close range to score the opening try which was duly converted by McKenzie.

Further infringements from Towcestrians allowed McKenzie to add a further penalty when the Towcestrian's centre was despatched for 10 minutes on the naughty step for trying to hug Lort's neck a bit too exuberantly. With the pack still demolishing all that was in front of them, the Legion had a scrum five and could simply not be stopped as the scrum marched forward, allowing our new Spanish flamenco dancer, Joaquin Jiminez to control the ball at the back and simply touch the ball down for the second try. With McKenzie pulling the conversion, the half time score stood at a commanding 18-3 to Newport.

What came next proves the clichés that rugby is a game of two halves, you have to play the full 80 minutes, and at this level, any lapse in concentration will be punished. With the Towcestrian manager obviously inspiring (or threatening) his team during the half time chat, they came out of the blocks like Tyson Gay on speed and immediately exerted the same pressure that the Legion had in the first half. Whether the Legion became complacent or just switched off, Towcestrians quickly scored two tries reducing the arrears to 18-17. Realising that they had put themselves in danger of

squandering their half time lead, the Legion rallied round and for the next 20 minutes a back and forth battle ensued. Towcestrians took advantage when live wire Harris was despatched to the sin bin for politely informing the referee that he was not right and could he review his decision. This is of course a highly censored version of the actual events and will be a sore point for Mr Harris for some time to come.

Once again, the Legion were forced to rally around and right their wrongs to try and kickstart their push for the victory. The scrum, which was still much the stronger pack gave Jiminez the chance to break from the base of the scrum and charge towards the try line like an enraged bull at Pamplona chasing a stupid tourist dressing in white with a silly white neckerchief. Unfortunately, the Towcestrian's full back must have been a grand master matador in a previous life as he dragged the charging Spaniard down just metres from the line. With poor support, a penalty for holding on was awarded to the opposition and the pressure was quashed.

With Newport looking like they were on the ropes, Towcestrians proved what is needed to play in this league and scored 3 tries in the last 10 minutes to turn the scoreboard upside down, inside out and notched up a 35-18 lead to the dismay of the Legion and all their loyal supporters on the bank. The Legion did manage to hit back late on with a hot stepping Josh Evans skipping his way through from close range to score the final try of the day. McKenzie adding the extras left the full time score at 35-25 to Towcestrians.

An agonising defeat for the Legion after such a good start but credit must go to the opposition. They could have opened the floodgates at half time but mounting a comeback similar to Floyd Mayweather, they proved why they finished 4th in this league last year and have shown Newport what is needed to compete at this level.

The Legion travel to high fliers and big spenders, Hinckley next week which is sure to be another massive clash where Newport will look to right their wrongs and prove their worth in this league.

Lots of positives from a lot of players. Hill in the front row was a one man wrecking ball all day. Parton the colt who got the late call up showed great maturity and proved he can mix it with the big boys. Former Legion protégé Tom Lort was superb at 12 but this week's Man of the Match goes to our Super Spaniard, Joaquin Jimnez who led from the front and battled all day long.

TEAM:

C.Hill, L.Kendall(VC), R.Biggin, O.Parton, H.Holmes, A.Brazendale, G.Gribble, J.Jiminez,

S.Mckenzie, P.Thomas(C), T.Lort, Kai, R.Nordvang, J,Evans, A.Mayer

BENCH: R.Harris, R.Mayer, C.Howells

Written by: Commodore Pierre Von Pistol III