

Nuneaton 2nd XV Vs Newport Legion XV

20/01/2018 (Midlands Division 1 Reserve League)

Tough conditions leave The Legion 'Bogged down' in 1st gear.

This week's action saw both the 1st XV and Legion XV travel to Nuneaton for the return league fixtures. The Legion won by a solitary point back in September so it was clear that this would be another close encounter. This was further reinforced when Nuneaton requested if they could field a squad of 24 players with a few returning injuries. Newport accepted, thinking that the introduction of 9 substitutions may disjoint Nuneaton and give the Legion the advantage. This was not the case as the pitch was that boggy, the Nuneaton substitutes provided a constant replenishment of tired legs.

A meet time of 10:45 and depart time of 11:00 was set and with 5 of the 1st XV also on the bus, time keeping was imperative. As the Legion soon realised, Levi Roots was back behind the wheel of the coach and having taken 2 and a half hours to get to Syston, who knew how long we would need to get to Nuneaton. Unfortunately, time keeping is not a strength of the Legion and with MacKenzie and Baker having to stop at subway to buy the Captain a foot long Chicken and Bacon Ranch sandwich; they made it onto the bus at 10:59:50! Unfortunately, the same could not be said for Henry Holmes who was still in bed at 11:15 so the decision was taken to leave him behind and see if he could make his own way to the match.

Arriving in the East Midlands for the third time in a week, this time with all of the kit on board an accounted for by appointed Kit Monitor, Kendall, the team was greeted by horizontal snow, accompanied with wind to rival Kendall after a McDonalds. Finding out that the 1st XV billiards table of a pitch was not to be played on, all games were moved to the next available pitch which meant the Legion were to play on a flood plain that hadn't had chance to absorb the deluge. With the welcome return of Field Marshall (he's pretty incredible) Cramoysen pulling the strings at fly-half, the warm up looked sharp and the Legion. Even with regular Man Of The Match, Goulson and top try scorer, Harray having to spectate the 1st XV game, the Legion were quietly confident as the game kicked off.

From the first whistle, it was clear that the physicality required to match Nuneaton would be higher than the majority of games played so far this year. As Nuneaton tried to impose themselves with late tackles and elbows out rugby, they controlled the early possession and territory with the Legion struggling to put more than 3 phases together without coughing up possession. With the ball like a bar of soap, both teams struggled to play any style of expansive rugby and instead, a tactic of kick it long and make the opposition collect the slippery pill was employed by both teams. On 20 minutes, Newport found themselves flirting with their own 22 and when a clearance attempt went sailing out on the full from outside of the 22, Nuneaton were awarded a lineout deep into Newport territory. A strong catch and drive from Nuneaton and with the never ending dross coming from the Nuneaton supporters, cries of 'he's in at the side', 'he's dragging it down', 'I ate a big red candle'. The Nuns pack were able to drive themselves over to open their account and make the score 7-0. A few lessons in the rules of rugby wouldn't go a miss for the supporters and maybe tuning into 'Rugby

Tonight' on BT Sport would allow the supporters to shout more relevant cries rather than what resembled a toddler who is overdue a feed.

Loose kicking from Newport allowed Nuneaton to counter well and halt any promising attacks. With the premature departure from the game of Copesy and Thomas, Holmes had finally made his way to the game and entered the field like a collie dog that was just happy to be out in the open chasing a ball around. As the half time whistle blew, the score stood at a tight 7-0 and it was still all to play for.

The Legion managed to raise the intensity in an already high tempo game and cracks started to appear in the impressive Nuns defence. With desperation came the infringements and Cramoysen was able to slot two penalties to close the score to 7-6. A déjà vu moment crept in with the previous game ending with a one point deficit!

Despite relentless tackling and bullocking runs in attack, the legion were unable to put themselves in a position to take the lead and after giving away a soft penalty for offside after fumbling a kick take inside the 22, the Nuns centre, with hair like Sir Lancelot and a boot like a trebuchet, he extended the Nuns lead to 10-6 with 10 minutes to go and the 13-6 minutes later. A valiant last few minutes saw the Legion attack again and again but unfortunately, they could not breach the line and Nuneaton become the first team in two years to keep the Legion from crossing the line in a game. With the legion not having plenty in the tank, Nuns were able to sneak a last minute try under the posts. Lancelot was obviously feeling remorseful as he pulled the kick wide to leave the score at 18-6.

Credit to the Nuneaton team, they were by far the best team that the Legion have faced this year and the win was well deserved in a tight game that kept the spectators on the edge of their... ditch with water in. Man of the Match this week for the Legion goes to Vice Captain, Master of Merlot, Making Newport Great Again Ambassador, the Flabrador himself, Mr Luke Kendall for his 80 minute performance where he toughed it out and led from the front. His Man of the Match performance is shared this week with Jake Goulson who managed to inspire the Legion throughout the game whilst not even being in attendance. This marks the third week in a row that Jake has been awarded with MOM and people must surely be asking... how many more times can the maroon blooded, Newport stalwart win this ward.

Viva La Legion

TEAM:

M.Pardesi, L.Kendall(VC), J.Wells, A.Copsey, C.Campbell, L.Few, G.Gribble, J.Jiminez

S,MacKenzie, J.Cramoysen, R.Nordvang, J.Keary, P.Thomas(C), D.Hartshorne, K.Baker

BENCH: R.Biggin, H.Homes, S.Abdulrahman, S.Knight

Written by: Commodore Pierre Von Pistol III