

Old Halesonians 2nd XV VS Newport Legion XV

14/10/2017 (Midlands Elite Reserve League)

A dominant performance give the Legion maximum points

This week, the Legion travelled with the 1st XV to do battle with Old Halesonians who are languishing at the bottom of the table having been beaten by over one hundred points the previous week by league leaders, Hinckley. Keen not to do a Wolverhampton Wanderers usual trick and slip up against the bottom of the table team, possibly the strongest Legion team ever assembled filled the team sheet with three promising debutants in John Leary, Simon Price and Nathan Smart. All of whom increased the strength of the Legion.

With Thomas out of action indefinitely and taking up a managerial role instead, the team were led by Newport stalwart, Luke Kendall who led from the front all game. After a rather 'flat' warm up the game kicked off and the Legion were shocked inside 30 seconds after some weak defending allowed Old Hales to run through a number of would be tacklers and dot down for what would be their only score of the afternoon. The shock was like taking a cattle prod to the crotch and after a dressing down from Kendall; the Legion woke up and re-started the game 7-0 down. The next 10 minutes was a close fought affair with end to end action but with almost constant whistle blows and stops in play, neither side could take control of the game.

With a pack as strong as strong as a wolf pack, the Legion battered and barrellled up the pitch, led by one man wrecking ball, Charlie Hill who was a menace to the opposition all afternoon, taking at least 3 defenders to bring him down on any one of his numerous carries. From a ruck on the Old Hales 22, MacKenzie put in a outrageously cheeky box kick, which the onrushing, Parker was able to rise like a well baked loaf of bread on #GBBO and take the ball, offloading to Evans who managed evade defenders to squirm in under the posts. MacKenzie adding the extras, 7-7.

It was this score that proved to be the bouncing bomb that blew the damn as the flood gates opened and Evans quickly added another score in the corner after some good hands and patient phase play which left the defenders short out wide. 7-12 after 22 minutes. The mesmerizing prop was not done there though and was clearly loving his return to the Legion as he barrellled over minutes later to complete his hatrick inside 30 Minutes! With two more tries from Jiminez and Sergeant, the half time score stood at 31-7 in favour of Newport.

Wanting to make a statement to the rest of the league, the modus operandi was to keep bashing down the door in midfield and then exploit the mismatches in the defence. Many of the spectators will have noticed an abnormally large figure lurking on the wing for Newport. Adam Copsey, usually a No.8, sacrificed his lung capacity to squeeze into the 14 shirt which terrified the opposition winger when he realised this wasn't a joke and that Copsey has a turn of pace similar to the hare been chased in Snatch by that Greyhound and Lurcher. He demonstrated this frightening turn of pace when Pennells created a two on one and Copsey not only gassed the winger and full back but also had the sense to put the ball under the posts for an easy conversion for MacKenzie.

With the opposition starting to fall apart and argue amongst themselves, Newport took full advantage and attackers were soon lining up to go on attacking runs from anywhere and everywhere on the pitch. Holmes was unleashed from his shackles and entered the pitch along with promising youngster, Owen Parton. Both made a real impact when they came on and added to the woes for the opposition who realised that Newport were able to replace quality players with quality players from 1 to 18. Brazendale was also introduced on 60 minutes into the back row and caused havoc for defenders as he found gaps after gaps to coast through.

As the defence tired, Parker was able to find a considerable gap to scythe through and after leaving defenders in his wake, scored a try to capitalise on a solid performance. Another try from super wing, Copsey with 10 minutes to play left the Legion on the plus side of 50 points with every player hungry for more.

Credit to the new players who learnt the pod systems and attacking shape last minute, the backs and forwards were operating in sync and with the pack constantly providing front foot ball, the backs were able to find spaces and Henry Holmes's new best mate, Simon Price was able to cut a line through two defenders to score on debut. With last play looming, another debutant, Nathan Smart, collected the ball deep in his own territory and set off on a mazy run to round several defenders and dot down under the posts for the final try of the game. With MacKenzie preoccupied with handbags with half of the Old Hales pack (which he still came out on top from), Smart converted his own try and left the score at 7-62 in favour of Newport at the fulltime whistle.

With exception to the first 10 minutes, a solid performance from 1-18 moves the Legion up to 2nd in the league, which is the highest position ever achieved by a Newport 2nd XV. They know that to retain this position and possibly even make an assault on Hinckley who top the table, every game will need to be treated as a cup final. The hard work starts again next week as the Legion travel to Luctonians for what will be the biggest test faced this season. Having been narrowly defeated by Luctonians last season, the Legion will be keen to prove their worth and with Captain Flabrador's birthday to celebrate, will be working towards that elusive first ever win over Luctonians!

Man of the Match this week is a tough call with so many good performances. Mentions to Copsey, Parker and Brazendale but MOM has to be Jon Evans. A hatrick is rare in itself. A hatrick from the front row is almost unheard of!

TEAM:

C.Hill, L.Kendall(C), J.Evans, N.Parker, S.Seargent, L.Few, C.Howells, J.Jiminez,

S.Mckenzie, J.Keary, S.Price, J.Pennells(VC), R.Nordvang, A.Copsey, N.Price

BENCH: O.Parton, H.Holmes, A.Brazendale

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