

Syston 2nd XV VS Newport Legion XV

13/01/2018 (Midlands Division 1 Reserve League)

The Legion systematically slay Syston to complete the double over the Leicester based team.

This week, the Legion travelled to Syston for the return league fixture with Newport running out 33-10 winners when the teams last met at The Old Showground in September. The Legion were strengthened in the pack by the surprise addition of the previous week's 1st XV Man of the Match and Newport stalwart, Jake Goulson who led from the front all game and galvanised the team together in the true spirit of community rugby.

With the troops assembled somewhat on time, the Legion set out on what should have been an hour and a half journey to Leicester. It soon became apparent though that nobody had told the driver that there was speed was of the essence and the coach meandered around the East Midlands with Goulson reminiscing about his university life and pointing out the best places for food, sleeping among other activities as the bus trundled along at close to walking speed. After 2 hours on the coach and with the sat nav still saying 15 minutes to go, it was clear that the warm up would be very rushed. It's a good job that the Legion do not need long to warm the engines.

Arriving at Syston at 13:40, the Legion quickly donned their battle attire and after the palaver of having their beloved Jess the physio commandeered by the 1st XV, struggled to apply the necessary strapping in time for kick off. So with the shortest warm up in history and only one phase of team run through completed, the game kicked off.

From the start it was clear that the Legion pack were far superior to the Syston pack and they used this to their advantage in the early minutes as they set about bullying the opposition every ball, controlling the majority of possession and in turn, the territory. With the scrum pushing Syston even off their own ball, the Legion were perplexed to be being seemingly penalised for being so dominant at scrum time and struggled to convert the early dominance. 5 minutes in and Newport we awarded a penalty in the Syston half. Harrhy stepped up but pulled the kick just wide and the pressure was briefly alleviated.

MacKenzie took the 22 drop out and after some mesmerising footwork, the Legion pack we're soon knocking at the door of the Syston line. Managing the pod systems well and playing phase after phase, Syston were so occupied with defending the pods that they left a Grand Canyon sized gap around the fringes for Harrhy to simply stroll over. Converting his own try the score stood at 7-0 after 8 minutes.

Keeping up his impressive strike rate, it was Harrhy again who popped up minutes later after supporting a break from Abdulrahman down the left wing. Coasting in unopposed he scored his second of the afternoon but after all that running, his legs must have been jelly as he could not add the extras from out wide. The Legion pack grew ever impatient with the referee as the dominance in the scrum was only met by penalties against Newport. Back chat to the man with the whistle meant that Syston could advance on the Newport line and with a 3 man overlap, they looked certain to score. Unfortunately for their Jack in the Box of a fly half, he threw the ball straight into the open

arms of Harry who scampered away from 75 metres to score his hatrick inside 40 minutes. Switching off cost the Legion dear as Syston were able to grab a try on half time after some poor defence and loose kicking. The half time score stood at 19-5 and the Legion still looked well in control but just needed to get the referee back onside. As arduous task as he silenced all back chat and even questions from the captain yet allowed the Syston rabble to constantly give their opinion of proceedings.

It was the inability to play to the referee's style that cost the Legion and after only 6 minutes of play, Syston had used penalty after penalty to control possession and score two loose tries. With the Score now tied at 19-19, the game was at a tipping point and with Syston only interested in moaning to the referee and distracting the Newport players with 'questionable' chat, the Legion let their rugby do the talking and quickly restored their lead though Jack Wells who crashed over for what he says is his first try in two years! Shortly after, a break on the wing from Copsey resulted in Goulson being able to canter in like Red Rum and even step the full back. A final try from flanker turned winger, Salman Abdulrahman (Jey) gave the Legion a commanding score line of 40-19. Thinking that his team weren't focussed enough, Harry decided to tell his teammates that it was only a 6 point game and the final 10 minutes became a case of backs to the walls as Syston scored their fourth try. With five minutes left on the clock, the cork on the champagne finally popped and the game spilled over into anarchy with punches flying and even the use of teeth from a Syston player which goes against all that rugby is. Unfortunately, the referee did not see this disgraceful offence or a certain red and rightful length ban would surely have been inevitable and would have marred what was otherwise a competitive game. With the vertically challenged in height but plenty to say verbally hobbit of a fly half taking a liking to 6ft 5" Goulson's eyes, a historical enactment of David and Goliath looked imminent. History was not to repeat itself though and David was sent running back behind the forwards like a scalded child looking for protection from their mother.

With the game won, the final moments were tense as the game threatened to spill over once again. As in true rugby fashion, the final whistle went and all was forgotten and the teams met in the bar for the obligatory boat race which ended with Syston winning two out of the three events. An average performance from the Legion as they know they could perform better but a win is a win. On rolls the machine to Nuneaton next week.

Special mentions to Harry and Jimenez but this week's Man of the Match goes to Jake Goulson for carrying hard, defending like a man possessed and galvanising the whole team to #makenewportgreat

TEAM:

M.Pardesi, L.Kendall(VC), J.Wells, J.Goulson, C.Campbell, C.Howells, J.Price, J.Jimenez,

R.Harry, P.Thomas(C), S.Abdulrahman, J.Keary, R.Nordvang, A.Copsey, S.MacKenzie

BENCH: L.Luca, H.Holmes, J.Bates

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