

Midlands Premier Division
North Mids Cup Semi-Final

Bournville 16pts v Newport 57pts

Newport put the disappointment of two narrow defeats behind them by claiming two victories in one match, this fixture serving as not only a standard league fixture but with the added reward of a place in the North Mids Cup Final awaiting the victors.

Rhys Morgan, who has been outstanding thus far was given a rest to allow a troublesome shoulder to settle down whilst Jake Goulson came into the second row with Will Roach taking the No 8 berth, Mike Venn switched to the open side flank with Oli Buckley covering the blind. The same seven backs were on show as last week with Jason Francis recovering from a knock to make a welcome return on the bench alongside Charlie Hill and Kirk Robinson.

Newport kicked off and immediately Roach was penalised for taking out the Bournville catcher in the air, whereupon Bournville kicked the resultant penalty into the Newport twenty two. The visiting defence was strong but eventually yielded a penalty for side entry, Warner knocking over the kick for an early 3-0 advantage. Bournville then knocked on in their own twenty two and from the resultant scrum Newport built pressure through the phases before Roach burst through the defensive line and crossed under the posts, Holder converting to make it 3-7 after seven minutes. It wasn't long before a quickly taken tap from Ash Paterson followed by good carries from the supporting Henry Vaka and Buckley drew a penalty that Holder put into the corner and a good drive from the resultant line out saw Goulson peel off and score stretching their lead to 3-12, Holder unable to convert.

Bournville then failed to clear a grubber kick through their defence and Newport reclaimed possession Monty Maule slipping a tackle to stride through and put Nathan Parker, who had another excellent game, in under the posts for a third try and, with Holder's conversion a 3-19 advantage. Newport were defending well but then a poor exit invited the pressure back on and a missed tackle in midfield allowed Bourns to stride in under the posts, Warner's simple conversion making it 10-19 at the break and a lot closer than it should have been given Newport's dominance.

The home side were soon attacking in the second period, just as they had in the first but Vaka made a trademark interception some 60 metres out and Holder tacked on the extras for a 10-26 lead. Eleven minutes into the second half there was a flare up between both sides, the result of which was a red card for the Bourns prop (stamping) and for the mercurial Vaka (leading with the head by way of retaliation), a dismissal that could prove crucial if given a lengthy suspension.

Bournville sensed their opportunity and Warner slotted two further penalties on fifty one and fifty six minutes to reduce the arrears to two scores at 16-26.

It was at this point that Newport took the game by the scruff of the neck, as with both teams reduced to fourteen the game became much looser as Bournville tried to play their way back into it. Holder added a penalty before the crowd groaned in anguish when skipper Tom Cowell chose to chip over the defence but were then embarrassingly applauding when a wicked bounce went straight into his hands allowing him to feed Francis who had only just appeared from the bench to go in under the posts, Holder converting for 16-36

The floodgates then well and truly opened as Maule benefitted from another quick tap to glide through and put Dave Archer over, Venn turned ball over in his own half before feeding Billy Wara to finish off and finally Francis was in for his second after brushing off several tacklers down the right flank to add the eighth and final try of the day, Holder's conversions giving a final score of 16-57.

Defence was good with Jordan Grass again heading the tackle count, impressive performances also from Roach and Venn whilst the back division always seemed to have the measure of their free-running opponents.

Peterborough's loss at Scunthorpe means Newport are still in third but have closed the gap to just two points in pursuit of the runners up spot.

They also have the Final to look forward to when they play the winners of the Birmingham & Solihull and Bromsgrove tie which is due to be played next weekend with the final being played on Sunday 13th May.

Team: Holder, Archer, Perry, Vaka, Wara, Maule, Paterson, Roach, Venn, Buckley, Parker, Goulson, Evans, Cowell (Captain), Grass
Bench: Hill, Robinson, Francis

A weeks rest now before Newport entertain Shropshire rivals Bridgnorth who have recovered somewhat after a poor start to the season. A sell-out lunch will precede the game which kicks off at 2.15pm on Saturday 25th November.

Written by: Chris Wilde