

Derby 2nd XV Vs Newport Legion XV

02/12/2017 (Midlands Division 1 Reserve League)

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

The first weekend of December saw the Legion accompany 1st XV on the trip to Derby to play a league fixture that would decide who went into the Christmas break in 2nd position in the league. With the return of stand in manager, Thomas, a massive weight was removed from the weary shoulders of Captain, Kendall as the regular organisation was back to normal. A welcome return in the front row from Head of International Cotton Sales, Matt 'Sergio' Pardesi who has enjoy a spell of R&R in the land down under since February. With his golden tan and the chest hair showing, he squeezed his way into the 3 shirt after laughing at the size of the 1 shirt and played like a rampaging bull all afternoon.

With the Derby 1st XV pitch looking like a building site as they have a new 4G pitch installed, the 1st XV fixture was moved onto the 2nd XV pitch and the 2nds were moved to the mud bath. After warming up on the pitch, it was clear that it would not be the free flowing and expansive style of game that Newport excels at.

From the kick off, it was clear to see that Derby wanted this to be a physical dog fight as the early exchanges saw some thundering hits from Pardesi and Smart. Newport found themselves getting dragged into the arm wrestle that they wanted to avoid and with the forwards running phase after phase, the ball was often over played and the backs were left dismayed at the missed opportunities to release them. With Newport controlling the early possession, Derby were forced to live of Newport mistakes and credit to them, they took their chances where they counted. Derby were the first to feel the wrath of a referee who had clearly read one too many dictatorship novels as he gave the Derby touch a stern dressing down after the ball was adjudged by the referee to have gone into touch but the touch judge had not raised the flag. A decision that baffled both teams as on the sideline as the player was clearly NOT in touch. Having been relieved of his touch judge duties by the referee, a more 'competent' touch judge was requested from the man in the middle. This was a decision that Newport soon wish hadn't happened as Derby crossed in the corner for the first try of the game. A suspicious knee mark in the bog suggested that the player may have been in touch before scoring the try but with the 'competent' touch judge in sync with the referee, the try was awarded. With the extras missed, the score stood at 5-0 after 15 minutes.

The shock of conceding spurred the Legion on to advance up the pitch and with the pack charging forward like a group of angry hippos fighting over a muddy watering hole, they were soon knocking on the door of the Derby line. After 8 phases of forward play it was the backs that finished the job with Keary scything through a gap and extending his inspector gadget arms to score. A try which he dedicated to assistant manager Laura as a birthday present. With a kick from in front of the posts, MacKenzie would rather forget the shank bigger than Carwyn's lamb dinner that saw the score left at 5-5. As the large Derby pack began to tire, Newport enjoyed more possession but again, overplaying and not knowing when to release the ball meant that possession was coughed up again and again.

As Smart continued to put in crunching hit after crunching hit, the inevitable injury came to his glass back that is more fragile than a quail's egg. Even after recently coercing the current 1st XV physio therapist into giving him one to one treatment at all hours of the day, his back was in no state to continue and after a blatant act of adultery by being treated by the opposition physio, he was forced to leave the pitch. A rejig in the back line saw Rune the Viking enter the field and slot in at 13.

Derby added a penalty awarded by the commandant after a seemingly innocuous 'too much chat' call. Half time score 8-5 and Newport were left ruing their missed opportunities. The half time chat consisted of, 'we're

90% there, we just need the extra 10% and the flood gates will open'. A pre planned change at 9 saw youngster, Rhy's Harrhy (or Rhydian as Goulson refers to him) get his shot at his preferred position of Scrum Half. A very promising debut from the youngster who has bags of potential and who could be devastating in the open on a pitch with some grass on it.

The second half was much the same as the first and Newport were dragged back into the dreaded arm wrestle that they desperately wanted to avoid. Credit to Derby, they had a game plan and they implemented it well, taking Newport to a place where they really didn't want to be playing. Derby soon extended their lead to 13-5 and then 18-5 and Newport seemed to be creaking. It was Harrhy who gave the Legion hope with a darting run from the base of the ruck, he left the Derby big boys in his wake, stepped the full back to score under the posts. The youngster, obviously more used to scoring on finer pitches instantly regretted his decision to dive as he scored as he got stuck in the mud and winded himself for the next 5 minutes. MacKenzie's boot's now switched to the 'on' position; he added the extras and the Legion moved to 18-12. Derby then took advantage of another penalty under the sticks to extend their lead to 21-12 with 5 minutes to play.

It was the super Spaniard, Jiminez, who scored the final try of the game after impressive phase play and ball retention, one of his illusive runs saw 3 defenders unable to stop El Torro as he dotted down and with Mackenzie adding the extras, Newport were now within touching distance at 21-19. A comedy moment deep in the Legion half saw the ball riffled up Price's rear end by Keary that will mean that he has 'Gilbert' imprinted on his arse for weeks to come.

With the final play of the game being a scrum to Derby, Newport knew that a monumental effort was needed to turn the scrum against the head. Like any good Captain, Kendall politely asked the referee to ensure that the scrum was a straight feed at this critical point in the game. The commandant, took this as verbal chat and awarded Derby a penalty which effectively ended the game. A poor performance and too many missed chances were Newport's downfall and they will be keen to right the wrongs in the return fixture on Newport's lush green grass in the New Year.

That's it for league action for the Legion for 2017 and they will return in 2018 against Newbold on 06/01/2018. A friendly against RAF Cosford is scheduled on 13/12/2017 with a 19:30 Kick Off. Any travelling support must let Peter Thomas know in advance due to security checks before entering the base.

Viva La Legion

TEAM:

M.Pardesi, L.Kendall(C), R.Biggin, J.Goulson, S.Sergeant, C.Campbell, C.Howells, J.Jiminez

S,Mackenzie, J.Keary, R.Harrhy, S.Price, N.Smart, T.Riley, J.Riley

BENCH: H.Homes, L.Few, R.Nordvang

Written by: Commodore Pierre Von Pistol III