

Luctonians 2nd XV VS Newport Legion XV

21/10/2017 (Midlands Elite Reserve League)

No luck needed at Luctonians as Newport claim the ever illusive Lucs scalp

This week, the Legion travelled the long, monotonous, twisty journey to take on Luctonians in what would be a thrilling encounter. Having been heavily beaten in 2015 and narrowly losing out in 2016, would it be third time lucky for the Legion...

With an impressively strong team sheet, the Legion morale was further buoyed up by an addition to the squad who himself, had more caps for the club than all other 17 players combined! Mr Jake Goulson was welcome into the ranks of the Legion and throughout the game, showed why he has amassed such an impressive amount of caps for the club with a solid performance that galvanised the rest of the team.

Captain Chaos, Luke Kendall was keen to point out on the journey "looks windy over there" as he calculated the risk factor of the hypotenuse created by the trees been blown at right angles. With this in mind and with the addition of horizontal rain, it was decided that the Legion would play with the wind and rain at their backs, trying to build a commanding 1st half lead. The game kicked off into the driving wind and with the ball swirling around, it was spilled forward, giving Luctonians a scrum inside the Legion 22. With the referee taking an instant dislike to Biggin, a penalty was awarded to Lucs for 'boring in'. The Lucs 10 drilled the ball low and hard through the posts to give an early 3-0 lead.

From this point, it was all about using the conditions to gain territory and with some excellent tactical kicking from Spider Pig, MacKenzie, the Legion were soon inside the Lucs 22 and with carry after carry, the legion were intent on battering down the door and coming away with points. Phase after phase of hard carries gave MacKenzie the chance to attempt his trademark 22 box kick. With the high balls moving about more than Henry Holmes' at a young farmers party, the mark catch was spilled by the fullback and the opportunist Dawley Dipper, Nathan Smart dived on the ball to get the first points on the board. With MacKenzie unable to become the wind whisperer and the conversion was pulled wide. 3-5 after 12 minutes.

A good take from converted winger to number 8, Copsey let the speedster gallop out of a few would be tackles putting the Legion straight back on the front foot. Once again, clever tactical kicking meant that the Legion were soon back into Lucs territory and with strong carries from Hill, Goulson and Kendall, the defence became increasingly stretched which allowed Sergeant to bounce out of two tackles before opening his inspector gadget like legs to outpace the covering fullback and score the second try of the game. With MacKenzie and the wind now in tune, the conversion sailed through the posts. 3-12 after 28 minutes.

Knowing the influence of the conditions, more scores were needed in order to build an unassailable lead. Credit to the pack, they worked tirelessly all game with their carries and as the conditions meant the backs could not really spread the ball wide, a tight game was the best method of attack.

Obviously feeling the cold in the backs, Hard Yards, Price decided that if he couldn't warm himself with his usual tippie of Black Rat Cider, he'd stick the ball up his jumper and smash into the defensive line on several occasions. It was off one of these collisions that saw him evade the would be tacklers and force himself over the line to score the third try of the afternoon. With MacKenzie duly adding the extras, the score stood at 3-19 in favour of Newport. The last score of the half though, would go to Luctonians as their pack used their impressive rolling maul tactic to advance like Sherman Tanks 30 odd metres up the pitch and after some gallant defending, they simply could not be stopped from rolling over the line to take the half time score to 8-19.

This usually commanding score line still left the half time team talk on tenterhooks as Lucs would now have the wind and rain with them for the second half. Knowing that they were in for a battle, Kendall and Thomas ensured that the team understood what was expected. With Biggin at loggerheads with the referee and McLinton's nose very warm and muddy from being deep in a crevice all first half running touch for his friend, he was added to the front row to try and quash the discipline issues arising in the pack. With Brazendale also bolstering the pack, Newport looked in control as Luctonians decided not to use the conditions and instead opted for their 'go to' tactic of the rolling maul. This tactic was either on Sir Clive Woodward level of genius or blind luck as infringement after infringement meant at one point, Hill, Brazendale and Howells were all sin binned for side entry at the maul leaving Newport with only 12 players!

Against the run of play, another MacKenzie tactical bomb was spilled by the defender allowing the legion to enter the Lucs 22 for what seemed the first time in the half. Keen to capitalise on this advantage, Sergeant once again managed to evade defenders and with his second score of the afternoon, capped an impressive performance. This score gave Newport some much needed breathing space but it was short lived as Lucs used their numerical advantage to batter down the door giving them a score that not only closed the gap but had the Legion seemingly on the ropes. With 5 minutes to play, all Newport needed to do was to hold the ball. A message that obviously wasn't heard by Pennells who, after breaking clear, decided to pull the pin and attempt what is now known as 'grenade ball' where the ball is thrown in any direction and then hit the deck!

Holding on for the last seconds, the final whistle was celebrated as if a world cup had been won which shows what this victory meant to the boys. Beating Luctonians for the first time moves Newport up to second in the league, with only Hinckley above. Next week sees rivals, Burton were promoted with Newport last season come to the Old Showground. Having convincingly beaten the Legion in the 2016 League Cup Final, the Legion will be looking forward to the game and hopefully some revenge.

MOM this week goes to the Birthday Boy himself. Captain Chaos, Luke Kendall. He led from the front all game and was an absolute champ on the fun bus

TEAM: C.Hill, L.Kendall(C), R.Biggin, J.Goulson, S.Seargent, H.Holmes, C.Howells, A.Copsey,

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

BENCH: L.McLinton, H.Redwood, A.Brazendale

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