

Midlands Premier Division

Newbold-on-Avon 13pts v Newport 62pts

This was a game between two sides promoted to this division last year and it was Newport who prevailed as they continued their rich vein of form that has seen them destroy all before them in rattling off three straight victories and racking up nearly 200 points in the process.

The game was not quite as straightforward as the score-line suggests with Newbold only really capitulating in the last quarter when Newport's superior fitness, athleticism and class eventually took its toll on the tiring bodies of the Warwickshire outfit.

Newport were forced into two changes in the starting line up, the impressive Oli Buckley away on holiday with Jack Wells staying at home to celebrate the birth of his first child. Jon Evans moved up from the bench to tight-head and Mike Venn came in on the flank. A combative looking bench was made up this week of Nathan Parker and two debutants, Charlie Hill and George Griffiths all of whom were to play their part in an enthralling contest.

The home side put out what would probably be the heaviest team in the division with the obvious intent of bullying the leaguer leaders into submission with hard, straight and direct running but the Shropshire side were able to keep their opponents out of their twenty two with another outstanding show in defence that negated such tactics. Once that benchmark had been laid it was apparent that their hosts were not a side capable of scoring from distance.

Despite the size of their opponents it was Newport who had the upper hand at scrum time where Evans and the ever improving Jordan Grass dominated their opposite numbers. From one such scrum Monty Maule, who again orchestrated proceedings to perfection, put in a raking kick to the home twenty two forcing the defender to take it into touch, Newport won the line out and after tying in defenders the ball was spun left where Jason Francis added to his try list by opening the scoring on four minutes.

Rhys Morgan, who was a constant threat all around the park turned over ball in his own twenty two where Chris Perry made good yardage before feeding the supporting Liam Holder who just made it to the corner to score after eleven minutes to make it 0-10. Newbold hadn't really threatened thus far but on their first sortie into the Newport red zone they scored a fine try to reduce the deficit to 5-10. Perry was then forced to retire through injury bringing Griffiths on, thankfully a like for like swap in the centre. Some backchat when Newport were penalised at the scrum gave Newbold an extra ten metres and the chance to reduce the arrears to 8-10 with a well struck penalty.

The next score came on thirty two minutes, a neat move from the base of a Newport scrum on half-way sending Henry Vaka off on a mazy run that wrong-footed several defenders and brought him a try under the posts for Holder to convert and extend their advantage to 8-17.

Newport were going through the phases and moving the heavyweight Newbold around the park, a beautifully weighted chip from Maule dropping into the arms of Dave Archer on the right wing who finished off in style to make it 8-24 at the break.

If Bold were to get back into this they would need the next score and it duly came after the visitors fluffed their lines at the kick off and Newbold exerted enough territorial pressure to produce a crash ball try from short range demonstrating for all to see how good they were at executing such tactics. Although the conversion was missed the try had brought them back to within two scores at 13-24.

Their recovery didn't last long, however, when a series of great phases through Will Roach, Mike Venn and Jake Goulson finally saw the ball released to Maule who after dancing his way through found the rampaging Morgan up in support, who again made good ground before delivering the perfect pass for Archer to get his second and extend the lead to 13-29.

There was then a bit of misfortune for Newbold when the referee missed what appeared to be a late tackle by Morgan that saw them spill the ball in a promising attacking position, only for Holder to rub salt in the wounds by sprinting sixty yards to score and convert from the touchline to make it 13-36.

Morgan did eventually get his come-uppance, however, when yellow carded for leading with the elbow but Newbold's appetite was now ebbing and they couldn't take advantage of the extra man, Ash Paterson picking his way through the middle of a ruck to scamper in under the posts from short range, Holder converting for 13-43.

It was now "flood-gates" time. Roach side-stepped his way through several tackles but for the second week in succession was held up having done all the hard work. Bold were then penalised at the resultant scrum and Paterson's quick tap and feed to Vaka brought the next try before the Fijian intercepted on half way minutes later and went in to complete his hat-trick and make it 13-57.

There was just time for one more, a Newport penalty to the corner, perfectly executed catch and drive and a try for Morgan, richly deserved for an outstanding marauding performance, Holder's conversion making a final score of 13-62

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

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