

Midlands Premier Division

Newport 53pts v Old Halesonians 0pts

Newport got back to winning ways with a comfortable bonus point victory over bottom of the table Old Hales who are having to endure a torrid season, this being the sixth time thus far that they have been “nilled”. Not that their efforts didn’t deserve at least one score for their afternoon’s endeavour but they came up against a home side determined not to cough up easy points and reinforce their reputation as having the meanest defence in the division.

With the crucial trip to Peterborough Lions looming next week Newport opted to make some changes in personnel. Jordan Grass and Chris Perry were absent whilst Rhys Morgan and Will Roach were rested as a precaution. Winger Billy Wara was out with a broken thumb and Lewis Dorey sidelined with a hamstring injury. However, on the plus side Sam Hughes and Mike Venn returned to the squad after illness and Jason Francis made a much awaited appearance after recovering from a broken hand.

Newport were to produce a sublime first twenty five minutes of rugby by which point they had raced into a 29-0 lead and already secured the all important bonus point. What followed was something of an anti-climax but nevertheless a job well done after the disappointments of the last couple of weeks.

The key to the Old Hales woes were that during this Newport purple patch they hardly touched the ball such was the superiority of the home side.

Old Hales kicked off and after some sustained pressure from Newport a somewhat lucky bounce allowed Dave Archer to avoid the touchline and nip in from forty metres untouched for the opening try, duly converted by Liam Holder for a 7-0 advantage.

Newport attacked again from the re-start where Nathan Parker was outstanding all afternoon in collecting the Old Hales kick-offs, Monty Maule chipped through, Archer collected to feed Jon Evans who dotted down for the second try after just seven minutes. Holder had a difficult afternoon with the boot and couldn’t convert but Newport led 12-0.

Hales at last laid their hands on some ball but were losing it in contact against a resolute home defence. A quick throw in spun wide and Hughes was sweeping in at the corner and getting round under the posts to give Holder an easier conversion and a 19-0 lead. Francis, Parker and Jack Price then combined well before the latter was brought to ground resulting in a head injury to the Hales full back who was forced to leave the field and play no further part in the match.

Newport won the resultant scrum, moved it quickly wide and there was Henry Vaka to ghost in unchallenged and make it 24-0. Parker again took the re-start, made yards and then Vaka broke to feed Hughes for his second and a 29-0 advantage.

No-one could question the spirit of the opposition and when the visiting scrum half, a livewire throughout, shot through the middle of a ruck it looked like he had the pace to make the line from fifty metres out but a scrambling Newport defence got back to halt him just short. The ball was quickly recycled and the angled kick to the corner just ran out of play before the visiting winger could make the touchdown, probably their best chance of the afternoon.

The ball then popped out of a Hales scrum sideways and Sam Brown scooted away down the right, then fed Francis whose chip ahead just eluded the chasing Hughes. Newport's initial burst had been somewhat quelled by the visitors and so we turned round at 29-0.

Skipper Tom Cowell, again with an eye on next week, retired to the bench bringing on Jack Wells who performed well and added to the selection headaches for "Le Crunch." Venn was also introduced for Oli Buckley and five minutes into the second period a Newport penalty to the corner saw a good catch and drive halted but the ball went wide to Hughes who completed his hat-trick in an impressive return to the side.

Kirk Robinson then broke from a scrum on half way bulldozing through a number of would be tacklers to take him inside the Hales twenty two before feeding the supporting Price who crossed for try number seven and 39-0.

Vaka then found his way to the bin for a ten minute rest after a high tackle but it made little difference to proceedings as Francis and Parker combined well to put Jake Goulson over by the posts. Holder had since departed injured and made way for youngster Rhys Harrhy to come on for his debut and going into his preferred position of scrum half a reshuffle of the backs was required. Maule converted from in front to make it 46-0.

Old Hales, meanwhile, had managed to exert some serious pressure through their forwards but all to no avail, Newport working hard to keep out a catch and drive before progressing up-field from where Maule danced through under the posts and converted his own try for a final score of 53-0

Team: Holder, Hughes, Vaka, Archer, Francis, Maule, Brown, Robinson, Price, Buckley, Parker, Goulson, Hill, Cowell (Captain) Evans
Bench: Wells, Venn, Harrhy

Next week Newport face the long trip to Peterborough who currently sit 11 points clear in second spot but with the Shropshire outfit having two games in hand over their Cambridgeshire counterparts a win would put Newport right back in the frame. It will not be for the faint-hearted! Kick-Off is at 2.15pm

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