

## Pre-Season Friendly

Newport                      55pts                      v                      Pwllheli                      36pts

Newport made it two out of two in their build up to the new season but not before they were given a fright or two by their visitors Pwllheli, North Wales champions for the last three seasons. Newport's opponents arrived with a young side but it soon became apparent that they contained some talented, clever and committed players within their ranks

The visitors were given the advantage of wind and slope in the first half and a careless start saw the hosts soon in trouble and 0-7 down following quick thinking by the Pwllheli scrum half who proved troublesome all afternoon and was the catalyst for many of the visitors attacks. Newport were soon level, however, when impressive new winger Meli Navaka made up for a somewhat nervous start by making good ground and set up the position from where Luke Kendall fed the onrushing Nathan Parker who crashed over by the posts for Liam Holder to convert.

The latter made a good break moments later and some controlled phases saw Luke Stevens go over in the corner to make it 12-7. Pwllheli struck next though and took the lead once more after their 9 darted through the slightest of gaps to dot down, converted to make it 12-14 and signal the end of the first quarter.

Immediately, Monty Maule had a kick charged down and the hosts were lucky that Pwllheli were unable to gather the ball cleanly with the line at their mercy. A further Pwllheli score had only been delayed, however, when some poor defending out wide allowed Pwllheli to cross in the right hand corner for a 12-19 advantage.

Newport were far from their best at this stage and were either knocking on in contact or having the ball stripped out in the tackle but some stern words soon saw them starting to put their game together and build on their dominance up front shuffling their front row around to good effect where they had six players to fill the three positions so all were kept reasonably fresh. A series of good phases saw skipper Tom Cowell driven over from short range, Tom Cookson converting before Kirk Robinson broke from the back of Newport's ever improving scrum and Chris Perry and Henry Vaka combined well to put Navaka in for a second try in quick succession leaving it 24-19 at the break.

It was in the third quarter with the wind at their backs that Newport were able to turn the screw. First a driving scrum saw Cookson and Maule combine allowing Vaka to scythe through and score followed by a fairly simple catch and drive try for Jake Goulson both converted by Cookson to make it 38-19.

Then came the try of the match, Nevaka tidying up some loose ball on his own twenty two before chipping over the defence, re-gathering nicely and then outstripping the cover for a fine individual score, Cookson unable to convert this time but the lead had now been stretched to 43-19 and the result

put beyond doubt. Newport then countered from a Pwllheli kick downfield, the backs linking up nicely to put Rune Nordvang over in the corner for 48-19. Just before the end of the period Pwllheli broke from the back of a scrum fifteen out and some weak tackling saw the visitors score their fourth try of the afternoon to reduce the arrears to 48-24.

With players tiring, defences faltered in what had been a breathtaking and pulsating encounter. Pwllheli went in for a converted try before Vaka shot through at the other end so now 55-31, the visitors adding the final score of the afternoon following an excellent line break and good support play to see it finish 55-36.

And so everyone was agreed, a worthwhile exercise for both camps, but lots to work on before both clubs begin their respective League campaigns on 2<sup>nd</sup> September.

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