

Old Halesonians 17 Newport 62

Despite never reaching top gear Newport recorded a comfortable 5 point win over Old Halesonians this Saturday. The result maintains their third position in the Midland Premier Division, but the Management Team and players know that there is plenty to work on before they take on unbeaten Peterborough Lions at home next weekend.

The first half, it has to be said, was error strewn and despite having the bulk of the possession Newport did not manage to convert that into the unassailable lead that they should have. Within the first five minutes both teams had converted simple penalty kicks, awarded for offside infringements and the score remained at 3-3, until the 17th minute. Newport kicked a penalty to touch and an excellently worked catch and drive from 6 metres out, allowed Jake Goulson to score.

Mid-way through the half Old Hales had a player yellow carded for an adjudged deliberate knock-on. The resulting penalty was kicked to touch and from the ensuing line-out Newport's forwards made valuable yards, before the ball was spun to midfield, where Henry Vaka jinked through, to score under the posts. Holder duly converted and the score now stood at 15-3 in favour of Newport.

Five minutes late Liam Holder was denied a nailed-on try, when the referee bizarrely called the play back for a late tackle on Ash Paterson. The Newport backs had made the extra man count, Holder only had space in front of him and with the physio able to easily attend to our scrum half without impeding play, it did seem a harsh call.

On 34 minutes the best attack thus far, with Mike Venn and Jake Goulson making strong carries, ended with a knock-on 5 metres out. Indeed throughout the first period several opportunities went begging and it is irrefutable that Newport need to be far more clinical. Against the top few teams clear cut chances are likely to be limited and their effective execution is critical.

Towards the end of the half tighthead, Jack Wells made way for Joe Maka, to make his debut in Newport colours and within minutes his bulldozing carry led to the ball being recycled and fed to Vaka to add his second try.

With the conversion successful, the half-time score at 22-3 did not reflect Newport's massive advantage in the possession stakes and Old Hales, who lacked bulk and experience, but certainly not heart, were still in the contest.

This was more evident when the home team capitalised on repeated Newport infringements early on in the second half and their front row replacement crashed over from a 5 metre tap penalty. At 22-10 it was apparent that the home crowd sensed they may be about to witness a shock comeback.

This is when Newport clicked into gear and within eight minutes the scoreboard had moved on another 14 points. First Valka added his third, after poaching the ball from a ruck and sprinting away, again untouched and then Maka showed what a devastating ball carrier he is, crashing through the home defence, after a penalty was awarded five metres out.

At 36-10 Newport were now in control of the game. Robinson had replaced Roach and Cummings was on for Vaka, denying him the chance to equal last Saturday's four try haul.

Old Hales did not allow their heads to drop though and good pressure led to a well worked line-out, taken off the top and delivered to the fullback at full tilt. He sliced through the Newport defence, to add their second try of the afternoon.

Newport were far from finished and the final ten minutes saw a further four tries added. They were now evidencing the fitness and mobility of their forwards. Robinson was clearly hungry for work and made several wholehearted charges at the opposition and Venn, Buckley and Morgan seemed to be covering every blade of grass.

Buckley and Venn both contributed tries and with the addition of two from Mr. Reliable, the unshowy, Chris Perry, the final scoreline was 62-17.

Newport have shown this season that when sticking to the script and keeping the tempo and intensity high, they have individuals and units that can devastate teams. The lapses in concentration and the unforced errors clearly need to be minimised and it will be a game not to be missed, when they do put together a genuine 80 minutes of the rugby they are capable of.

Team : Archer, Holder, Perry, Vaka, Francis, Maule, Paterson, Buckley, Morgan,
Venn, Roach, Goulson, Wells, Cowell(Captain), Grass

Bench : Maka, Robinson, Cummings

Phil Gittus