

## Luctonians 41 - Newport 19

With the first teams doing battle at The Old Showground, the legion were tasked with an away trip against an in-form Luctonians side who had started their season with two convincing victories. Despite only travelling with 14 players, it was Newport who started on the front foot. The forwards carried hard from the off, with Rhys Morgan and Charlie Hill continually making inroads in the Lucs defence. The early dominance of the pack resulted in quick-ball for the backs. The ever-lively George Crow kept the Lucs defence on the back foot before spinning the ball wide to Danny Bourne for the first score of the day. Crow added the extras to give Newport a 7-0 lead within five minutes.

From the restart, Lucs put the ball long and immediately put Newport on the back foot. Newport attempted to run the ball out, but were turned over after some good work on the floor by the Lucs number-eight. This was the first spell of possession for Lucs, using the extra man well and getting the ball wide to their dangerous outside backs. The momentum was now with the home-side who entered Newport's 22 and looked sure to break the deficit. This was until a brilliant read from Mackenzie, who intercepted the ball and left the Lucs defence for dead to score a great solo try.

The ball was again put long from the restart and after continued pressure around the ruck area, Lucs forced a penalty in midfield. This was kicked to the corner and the Luctonians pack began to turn the screw with their driving maul. Some resolute defending from the Newport pack on their own line kept Lucs out, forcing phase after phase. The patience of the home side eventually paid off, with a good blindside move releasing the dangerous number-eight to score their opening try. The pace of the game was getting too much for some, with Nick Gregory tactically 'losing his contact lens' in order to gain an extra breather.

After a frantic first 20, Newport employed Lucs' earlier successful tactic in putting the the ball long and hounding their opposition into a mistake. Newport turned the ball over, and after a number of phases from the tight-five, Milo crashed over to give Newport their third try of the day. Crow added the extras to extend their lead.

Lucs knew that a strong finish was needed as half-time approached, and two quick tries gave them exactly that. Neither converted, so Newport took a narrow lead into the break. A close first-half, made even more-so by the ref, who was slightly confused around what the score actually was. This was rectified and the second-half kicked off (Luctonians 15 - Newport 19). The home side started as they finished the first-half, building a number of good phases, before putting the ball wide to take the lead for the first time.

The third quarter saw a period of deadlock, with both teams enjoying their share of possession, but unable to make any significant breaks. Hill and Morgan were again leading the Newport charge, this time in defence, flying off the line and cutting their opposite numbers in half. Henry Holmes determined to put in a good show on his last run out for the legion, continued the good work of his teammates; holding up the Lucs ball carrier in the next tackle. Repeated cry's of 'I've got a ball' were enough to reassure the ref that the scrum was to be awarded in Newport's favour. From the resultant scrum, Crow sniped from the base and made good yards before being brought down from a high tackle. Captain Kendall elected for the posts, but Crow's effort went just wide and Luctonians kept their lead.

As the final 20 minutes approached, it was Lucs who began to control the game with some good territorial kicking. The lucs scrum half cleverly put the ball in behind, which was collected by the winger to extend their lead. It has to be said, that if not for the ankle-breaking footwork of Sam Knight and impressive debutant Jamie Evans, the game would not have remained in the balance for so long.

While Lucs stole the show in the closing periods of the game, it was Newport's Mackenzie who grabbed the headlines in a comedy moment. Instead of taking the 22 drop out conventionally, the fly-half decided to punt the ball up in the air, much to the humour of the Luctonians faithful. The home-team scored from the resultant scrum, followed by two further tries to enhance their lead and pass the 40 point mark.

A gut-busting performance from the 14 man legion, matched a strong Luctonians side. The Newport pack carried tirelessly throughout, but ultimately ran out of steam, with Lucs coming through as the deserved winners. Lots of positives for the legion, who move forward to next weeks home fixture against Syston.

Team: Gregory, Kendall (C), Wells, Williamson, Campbell, Holmes, Morgan, Hill, Crow, Mackenzie, Bourne, Riley, Evans, Knight

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