



Puddletown 7 Oakmeadians 2nds 12 by Geoff Puryer 06/03/10

The selection problems that have dogged the Villagers all season long were apparent yet again as they entertained mid-table Oakmeadians 2nds in their latest Dorset & Wilts Division 1 South fixture, with captain Dan Udell forced to make seven changes from the team that played Swanage and Wareham at Greenfields last week.

But the fighting spirit in the Puddletown camp remains resolute, and despite only one league win to their credit and relegation now a very real possibility, Udell's latest permutation of available players, gave what was arguably the team's best performance of the season, very nearly claiming an elusive second victory.

If Oakmeadians were expecting to enjoy a repeat of their 56-5 win back in November, then they were to be disappointed, with the home side taking a firm grip on the game from the start. Toby Boatswain at hooker and Harlan Hill at number eight were both returned to a Villagers' pack which dominated the visiting forwards in both the set plays and in the loose, giving scrum half Dave Davies plenty of options to set up attacking phases, and it was the busy number nine, drafted in as a last minute replacement, who opened the scoring with thirty minutes gone when he sold the visiting defence a splendid dummy before darting through the resulting gap to touch down.

Udell added the extra points, but just five minutes later Oaks finally broke the home side's stranglehold, with their speedy backs crafting a well worked try out wide. The conversion attempt failed and Puddletown, still ahead, quickly regained the initiative only to squander a couple of clear-cut chances to add more points before the half-time whistle.

The same pattern emerged after the restart with the home pack continuing to dictate play, but Oaks were not out of it by any means. Midway through the half an injury to the ever-present Jim Talbot saw Hill move into the front row and Ed Malpas come on in his place, and it was while the pack were readjusting to these changes that the visitors struck with their number eight picking up the ball at the back of a scrum, and catching the home defence napping with a blind side run to the line.

A successful conversion put them five points ahead but then they had to dig deep as the Villagers launched a final onslaught in an attempt to draw level. Flanker Martin Spicer, Boatswain, and the powerful Hill all repeatedly breached the defensive line, and strong breaks from prop Jon Wilson and fly-half Toby Musgrove both went agonisingly close, but the relieved visitors somehow held firm for what was the narrowest of wins.

Puddletown 1st XV:

1. Jon Wilson 2. Toby Boatswain 3. Jim Talbot 4. Gwynne Griffiths 5. Dave Phillips
6. Harry Foot 7. Martin Spicer 8. Harlan Hill 9. Dave Davies 10. Toby Musgrove
11. Nigel Smith 12. Ray Stephens 13. Barry Dovell 14. Matt Isaac 15. Dan Udell (capt)

Replacements: 16. Ed Malpas (for Jim Talbot - 55 mins)

Scorers:

Tries:	Dave Davies (1)
Conversions:	Dan Udell (1)
Penalties:	None

Dorset Piddle Brewery Man of the Match: Harlan Hill

Next Match:

Saturday 20th March - kick off: 2:30 pm

Dorset & Wilts Division South - Puddletown v Weymouth