



Puddletown 14 Salisbury 2nds 5

by Geoff Puryer 26/09/09



The score-line suggests that this Dorset & Wilts Division 1 South fixture was a close contest with defences dominating, and by the end of the game that proved to be the case. The truth is though that the Villagers squandered enough chances to have put the result beyond doubt by half time, and then spent the second period protecting their slender lead against a Salisbury outfit determined to turn the game around.

From the kick off the home forwards had the visiting pack on the back foot and repeatedly won good ball both in the set pieces and in open play. A series of early runs particularly from the returning Dave Holah and from second row James Perrett set up good attacking positions but the Salisbury defence held firm, and it wasn't until the half hour that the breakthrough came.

Picking up the ball on half way flanker Joel Hornby rode several tackles to run to within 20 metres of the visitors' try line, the ball was recycled for prop Jim Talbot to make further ground, then quickly passed out through the centres for winger Jack Foot to score in the corner. Skipper Dan Udell added the two points with a fine kick from the touchline.

Puddletown's dominance continued for the rest of the half, but the pattern of missed opportunities continued and the home supporters had to wait until just before the break for a further score. This time it was a strong run from Udell which set up a ruck 5 metres short of the line, from which second row Paul Chidley, spotting the gap on the blind side, powered through to touch down. Again Udell added the conversion.

The second period was much more evenly contested and whilst the home side continued to attack, with prop Jon Wilson and replacement hooker Toby Boatwain making good breaks, the visitors found new belief in only being two scores behind and forced themselves more and more into the game.

Time then for the Villagers' defence to be tested and, led by some text-book tackling from fly-half Scott Price and flanker Martin Spicer, it held firm right up until the final minute when the visitors' pressure finally told and they scored a well worked consolation try.

Villagers' Coaching Co-ordinator Toby Musgrove summed up the performance: "Our forwards played really well today, totally bossing the visiting pack, and providing us with a strong attacking platform for the whole game. Defensively we did well too, but our decision making and handling in the backs could have been better. Nevertheless its still a good win against tough opposition, and a great boost to the confidence of our squad"

Puddletown 1st XV

1. Jon Wilson 2. Tim Yeatman 3. Jim Talbot 4. Paul Chidley 5. James Perrett 6. Joel Hornby 7. Martin Spicer 8. Dave Holah 9. Ed Sealey 10. Scott Price 11. Matt Isaac 12. Toby Musgrove 13. Dan Udell (capt) 14. Jack Foot 15. Mark Thomson
Replacements (all used): 16. Toby Boatswain 17. Gareth Smith 18. Roly Park 19. Ed Richardson 20. Nigel Smith

Scorers:

Tries: Jack Foot (1) Paul Chidley (1)
Conversions: Dan Udell (2)
Penalties: None

Dorset Piddle Brewery Man of the Match: Martin Spicer

Footnote:

Half way through the second half a further injury in the Salisbury front row meant that without any more replacements the game would have had to continue with uncontested scrums were it not for the agreement of both captains, both coaches, and referee Nigel Crompton that Puddletown's Ed Richardson would prop for the visitors for the rest of the game.

Whether or not this gave either side any advantage was not clear; opinion was divided, but most felt that the result was unlikely to have been influenced by it. Whatever else though, and against the background of recent events in the wider game, the episode demonstrated that good sportsmanship is alive and well in club rugby, even under the most competitive of conditions.

Well done to everybody concerned.