

HEREFORD 18 pts v NEWPORT 12 pts

This was the first league Saturday of the new season with Newport in the re-vamped national level 5 league now called National Level 3 (Midlands). One of the major changes this season, the league numbers were up from last year of 12 teams, to 14 sides.

Newly promoted from the play offs last season, Hereford were going to be Newport's first opponents in a tough away fixture to kick off the season.

Newport's new look side, strengthened by the temporary return of Tomasi Tanumi in the centre, started strongly with both sides weighing up one another's strengths and weaknesses. It was however, Hereford who opened the scoring on 7 minutes with a converted penalty after a Newport offside infringement.

Hereford further increased their lead from a break down the middle and some fine rucking from their forwards. Quick ball allowed Hereford's left winger to touch down a converted try to take the score 10 points to nil.

Not to be out done, Newport started to put together some attacking moves of their own and twice could have scored wide out only for the final pass to be spilled. The Newport set scummage was working well at this time but the line out was unpredictable against Hereford's tall and well organized forwards. On 17 minutes into the game, a special piece of back play and superb passing, cut the Hereford back line defence to pieces. This brought a score for Newport full back, Toby Mann, also making a welcome return after 6 months working away, to score an unconverted try in the corner. The scores now stood at Hereford 10 points, Newport 5 points.

On 23 minutes from an offside in the ruck area, Neil Poole, Newport's hooker and also returning player after a break of 3 seasons, was yellow carded, resulting in 10 minutes in the 'sin bin'.

The game was now very evenly matched with neither side on top. The scoreline remained the same up to the half time whistle with Newport playing well despite being a player short for 10 minutes.

Hereford started the stronger in the second half and increased their lead on 49 minutes with a penalty. The score now Hereford 13 points, Newport 5 points.

On 58 minutes, Newport hit back hard and started to produce some better ball from their busy forwards. Quick second phase from a Ben Warrilow free kick, saw Tanumi again break the Hereford defence to put Matt Curgenvin away to score a try under the posts which was also converted by Tanumi to bring the scores to within a point at Hereford 13 points, Newport 12 points.

Hereford now started to take charge of the game in the forwards and on 63 minutes scored an unconverted try wide out to widen the gap again to Hereford 18 points, Newport 12 points.

This was to remain the score up to the final whistle despite some desperate play by Newport to drag the score back.

Despite a very disappointing result, the new players to the Newport squad all did their best, with Adam Greaves, Dan Duggan, Adam Stevens and outside half Rob Clymer, all with outstanding personal performances. Neil Weston at No6 was also a player who has made a positional change for the new season and took on the new role within the team with a relish.

Next weeks home game against Hinckley will, I am sure, produce a display where all the qualities of this new, younger Newport side, be shown to our superbly supported spectators.