

## **Oakham 1<sup>st</sup> Xv v Olney 1<sup>st</sup> XV Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

The Oaks travelled to high flying Olney on Saturday with several players unavailable but remaining confident they could give a good account of themselves. On a beautiful Autumn day, the conditions were perfect for running rugby. Prior to the game Olney celebrated their Past Players lunch with 135 guests adding to a vociferous crowd who were confident Olney would extend their winning run in the league.

Both sides opened brightly before Olney exploited a missed tackle in the Oakham three quarters defensive line to allow them to cross in the corner and run around to the posts for a converted try 7-0 after five minutes. This was to be a recurring theme throughout the afternoon.

Oakhams set piece was working well and denying Olney good possession before prop Ryan Corner was sent to the sin bin following an altercation. Olney took full advantage shortly after as they extended their lead with a pushover try, missing the conversion 12-0. At this stage Oakham were still in the game but hopes of a resurgence were dashed as, straight from the kick off, Olney's young lock caught the ball in his own twenty-two broke through two tackles and showed a remarkable turn of pace to run seventy metres for a try under the posts. 19-0 with twenty-one minutes on the clock.

Oakham then had a period of pressure as they camped in the Olney twenty-two but were unable to breach the resolute Olney defence and turn possession into points. Olney regained possession and kicked upfield. It was now their turn to turn the screw and the difference between the two sides was highlighted as from the scrum they quickly moved the ball wide then cut back inside to extend the lead to 26-0 just before half time.

Oakham had not played badly but missed first up tackling had cost them dear. The lineout was going well with lock Will Thraves stealing opposition ball as well as winning his own possession. The scrum was also working well but it was evident Olney has a distinct speed advantage in the backs and looked dangerous whenever the ball went wide.

The introduction just before half time of Stee Vukinavanua brought some bight into the Oakham midfield tackling.

During the first ten minutes of the second half the Oakham plan of preventing ball reaching the wings appeared to be working with Stee Vukinavanua making some hard -hitting tackles on their midfield putting them on the back foot for the first time in the game. However with ten minutes played Olney , somewhat against the run of play, again worked their wing into space and his pace did the rest as he disappeared under the posts 33-0.

Oakham were not disheartened and gained reward for their efforts on the twenty-minute mark with a well worked try scored by Sam Janes, the conversion was missed 33-5

Oakham continued to press as they sought to add to their points tally, but Olney were quick in the tackle to snuff out Oakhams attacks. As soon as the hosts regained possession they were away again cutting through, after another missed tackle, to score a converted try 40-5 after thirty minutes played

Oakham tried to hit back, with Stee Vukinavanua showing his power and strength, taking the attack to the Olney defence but could not completely break through the cover. Olney again turned over possession, kicked upfield and pinned Oakham back into their twenty-two once more. This was followed by another simple try as the hosts were awarded another penalty, kicked to touch and with a well worked move around the front of the lineout scored in the corner. The conversion was missed 45-5

Oakham suffered one more blow in the final minutes as another missed tackle in the centre saw Olney run in a final try to close the game at 52-5.

The game had not felt like a 52-point defeat with Oakham, having had opportunities and unable to make the final breakthrough, whereas their opponents were ruthless in exploiting any Oakham weakness.

With some tough fixtures coming up, The Oaks know they will have to improve their first-up tackling and defensive alignment if they are to prosper in this league against the top teams.