

Oakham RFC 1st XSV v Belgrave RFC 1st XV Saturday 17th October 2018

On a calm and clear, but crisp, winter day the scene was set for an intriguing encounter with fourth placed Belgrave. The Oaks knew this game would be a stern test of their recent improvement in form.

Both teams started by moving the ball wide at every opportunity but were unable to make much ground against well organised defences. With ten minutes gone the ever-alert Callum Crellin seized on a loose ball and set off on a weaving run before being brought down just short of the line. The ball was quickly recycled and fly half Charlie Mays crossed for the opening score, the conversion surprisingly missed by Callum Crellin to give the Oaks the early lead. 5-0

Belgrave began to exert their superiority in the pack with a series of drives resulting in Oakham conceding a penalty at the breakdown. The penalty was kicked to touch and a great steal in the lineout prevented what looked to be a try scoring opportunity for the visitors. Oakham worked the ball back upfield and continued to break down the Belgrave attack with stubborn defence, interspersed with some well contracted attacks of their own.

The heavyweight Belgrave pack then worked themselves into a position within five metres of the Oakham line. Oakham were desperately defending their line, but the sustained pressure eventually told as the visitors finally broke through, to level the scores at 5-5 with an unconverted try, just before half time.

The score was a blow to Oakham, who had created several chances in the first half but failed to capitalise on some good play. The question amongst spectators was - could they improve on that in the second half? The Belgrave pack had other ideas and following some aimless kicking by Oakham managed to work the ball deep into oakham's twenty-two area. Following a series of scrums, which somehow Oakham managed to survive with their line intact, the oakham scrum was turned for Belgrave number eight to pick up and drive over for an unconverted try 5-10 with five minutes gone. As a result of the desperate defending Oakham lost a player to the sin bin which was to prove costly.

Within minutes of the restart some slick inter-passing, between Belgrave's numbers eight and nine, saw them carve open the Oakham defence for a well worked converted try, increasing their lead to 5-17.

Oakham went on the attack but a loose pass in midfield was seized on by Belgrave, hacking the ball on and chasing to outpace the Oakham defence and win the race for the line. The try was converted 5-24 only fifteen minutes into the second half. The visitors having scored 14 points during the sin bin period

The Oaks were guilty of some aimless kicking before deciding to keep the ball in hand, This tactic soon paid off working the visitors defence left then right before James Beanland

crossed the line . The conversion was added by Callum Crellin 12-24 with fifteen minutes remaining. Oakham spirits were lifted further as they scored again after a midfield break resulted in Will Armstrong crossing for another try again converted by Crellin to narrow the scores 19-24. Oakham were now in sight of the draw as they attacked again with man of the match Stee Vukinavana driving through tackles to within ten metres of the line. However, the referee saw an infringement and awarded a penalty to Belgrave. They kicked down field and, in their desperation, to get the ball Oakham again infringed. Belgrave calmly kicking to within five metres of the Oakham line. At the resultant lineout Belgrave won the ball and although halted at the line then kicked the ball in touch for the referee to blow the whistle. The final score of 19-24 leaving Oakham again ruing some missed chances and a chance of a draw but a great fightback nonetheless.

Oakham 2nd Xv v Aylesone Athletic Rfc Saturday 17th November 2018

The mighty twos fielded a mixture of youth and experience to take on an experienced Aylestone side in this Merit Table C clash. The game was a close fought affair, played in a great spirit with both sets of players enjoying themselves in a hard fought encounter.. Following an early try by the electric pace of John Morton, up and coming young star Brian Sampson, volunteering to play prop for the whole eighty minutes, and playing like a seventeen-year-old, managed to latch onto the end of a driving maul to score a great try- allegedly from over fifty metres out, or was that five?. The rest of us spectators of a certain age were left wondering how on earth he can play rugby at 70+ let alone score tries but that's what legends do! Oakham managed further tries by Sule and Dan "Dog" Watkins with most of the try conversions and penalties being unerringly missed by Jamie Ray, Aylestone Athletic running out narrow winners 22-28

