

Coalville RFC 1st XV v Oakham RFC 1st XV 30th March 2019

With three games left to play and sitting firmly in the relegation zone, a visit to high flying Coalville was not going to be an easy task for the Oaks, but their sprinted comeback the week before had given their supporters a little optimism that they could pull something off.

In lovely spring sunshine conditions were ideal for a fast running game. From the kick off things looked promising for Oakham as they moved the ball between forwards and backs stretching the Coalville defence with a wave of attacks. It looked certain they had created the first score, but the ball was lost in contact as they crossed the line. This scenario was to continue throughout the game as, time and again, Oakham attacks were stopped in mid flow by Coalville's ability to turn the ball over in contact.

With eight minutes played the Oaks lost ball in midfield and Coalville's influential number eight broke through three tackles before handing the ball to their wing who scored in the corner 5-0. Oakham's defensive frailties were laid bare again as, almost from the kick off, Coalville added to their score, offloading several times in the tackle to cross for an unconverted try 10-0. The Oaks tried to respond but, with a mixture of dropped passes and infringements at the breakdown, could not get any continuity into their play. Their woes were then increased as the influential John Mitchell had to leave the field with a head injury. Coalville, with a plentiful supply of ball soon added to their score with a converted try 17-0 with less than twenty minutes played. With the Oaks struggling to keep up with Coalville's fast paced offloading game the hosts once again broke through Oakham's defence to increase their lead 22-0.

The Oaks were still trying everything to get back into the game but as soon as an Oakham attack broke down Coalville managed to turn ball over and then created chances almost at will to run in another two converted tries making the score 36-0 at half time. The Oaks had created scoring chances during the half but were unable to convert them into points, whereas Coalville seemed to be able to score every time they got possession. The question amongst the Oakham travelling supporters was - could Oakham stage another comeback for the second week running?

The question was answered within minutes of the kick off as Coalville kicked dep into Oakham's twenty-two. Oakham won the ensuing lineout but somehow the ball bounced free to an onrushing Coalville player to cross for another converted try 43-0. Oakham were still trying everything to get back into the game including desperately trying to run ball from their own line. However, yet again they were penalised at the breakdown before being caught napping as Coalville took a quick tap and ran to the line almost unopposed to further increase their lead to 48-0.

The continuing theme of losing the ball in contact and at the breakdown was repeated as, time and again, Oakham ran the ball but were overturned in the tackle area. Coalville were then able to swiftly counter attack and, with the Oaks having no answer to their fast offloading game, ran in another try 55-0. Coalville number eight, who had been at the heart of most of Coalville's good play, then added to his try tally as he picked up from a midfield scrum, scattering defenders in his wake, to race under the posts 62-0.

With twenty minutes to go it looked like Oakham would go down to a huge score, but their resilience shone through as at last they got some reward for their efforts with a well taken try by Dan

Sanderson, converted by Callum Crellin 62-7. Their joy was short lived as Coalville strolled in for another converted try 69-7 with ten minutes to go. Stee Vukinavanua then bulldozed his way over for another Oakham score converted by Crellin 69-14. With ten minutes to play could they manage to salvage a try bonus point from the game? It looked likely as the electric dan sanderson showed real pace to cross for another converted try 69-21. Sadly, for the Oaks they could not quite manage to get the bonus pit.

It had been a tough game for Oakham but, despite the score line, they had continued throughout to create of their own chances. Oakham know they must win both of their remaining games to have any chance of remaining in this league. Next Saturday they host bottom side Huntingdon in the first of those must win games.