

## **Oakham RFC 1<sup>st</sup> v Huntingdon RFC 1<sup>st</sup> XV Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

Knowing the bottom two teams would be relegated and sitting firmly in the relegation zone Oakham welcomed bottom club Huntingdon to the showground for a game the Oaks just had to win, to retain any hope of avoiding relegation.

Oakham kicked-off into a slight breeze and went straight onto the attack and were stopped just short, before being turned over in the tackle, and the attack petered out. Huntingdon were then penalised for offside and Callum Crellin kicked the ball to the corner. From the lineout play was moved right and left by Oakham but they were unable to penetrate Huntingdon's stubborn defence. Callum Crellin then broke the deadlock, spotting a gap at the ruck and shooting through it to score, then adding the conversion himself. 7-0 after eight minutes.

Within minutes the Oaks increased their lead as Huntingdon attacked and tried to kick ahead. The kick was seized on by Jonno Milnes who broke through the ruck before kicking ahead for Callum Crellin to win the race to the line and score his second try which this time he was unable to convert 12-0. Almost from the kick off Oakham attacked down the right and Will Armstrong glided through the defence before off-loading to his support and a short bout of inter-passing then saw wing Ollie Moore run in the try, converted by Callum Crellin 19-0 after 20 minutes play.

Huntingdon continued to ask questions of the Oakham defence and were ably assisted by frequent Oakham infringements which eventually resulted in a sin bin offence, reducing them to fourteen men. Huntingdon kicked the subsequent penalty 19-3. Oakham soon found themselves under pressure again as Huntingdon knocked on from a lineout close to Oakham's line. Oakham won the scrum but, a loose pass then landed behind fly half Sam Janes, as Huntingdon pounced on the ball to score an unconverted try 19-10. Oakham were again reduced to fourteen men as Ben Turnbull was sin-binned for a high tackle. Huntingdon were beginning to get on top and, aided by Oakham's continued indiscipline, saw their chance to reduce Oakham's early lead. So, it proved as, from a penalty kick to the corner, Huntingdon won the lineout and drove over for a converted try 19-17 and still ten minutes of the half left.

Oakham were stung into action and hit back as a clever kick-through by Callum Crellin saw the ball fumbled by the Huntingdon defenders allowing Tom Easson to scoop the bouncing ball up and dive over for a well-taken try, The conversion was missed 24-17 but Oakham had now secured the try bonus point just before half-time.

Oakham knew they must cut out the infringements in the second half. Playing with fourteen men for twenty minutes in the first half is a tough way to win games. Showing good tactics Oakham started the second half by using the wind to pin their opponents back near their own line. Oakham then moved the ball between forwards and backs before Callum Crellin

slipped Ryan Corner in for a well worked try increasing their lead to 29-17. The Oaks continued to pressure Huntingdon's defence and they eventually conceded a penalty, converted by Callum Crellin converted further increasing the lead to 32-17. However, just as Oakham were beginning to turn the screw, they again fell foul of the referee and were reduced to fourteen men with Callum Crellin visiting the sin bin. Huntingdon took advantage and added to their score with a driving maul resulting in a try which was well-converted from the touchline 32-24. Undaunted, Oakham's fourteen men fought back as a fine run from Ben Turnbull saw him tackled just short of the line. From the ruck the Oakham forwards drove two or three times at the line before feeding the ball to the backs enabling Tom Moxon to cross the line, converting his own try 39-24.

Oakham looked to have done enough for the victory, but Huntingdon still plugged away as they camped on the Oakham line. However, Oakham's defence held firm before captain Will Armstrong intercepted a Huntingdon pass and was suddenly faced with a ninety-metre lung busting run, despite desperately looking around for someone to pass to Will found himself with no takers, running the whole distance himself before scoring under the posts, converted by Callum Crellin as the final whistle went to seal a vital win 46-24.

Oakham now know that only a win in the away game at Long Buckby next week will be good enough to keep them from being relegated. Not an easy task but, despite handling errors and sin bins contributing to the lack of cohesion and continuity, the Oaks know that on their day they can achieve that victory.