

Fawley vs Alresford

8th April 2017

Match Report

After 8 months of rugby, and 15 games of hard work and desire, it all came down to this. 80 minutes to decide if it had all been worth it.

With the sun beating down and a palpable feeling of nerves for everyone who was there from Alresford, Fawley started the match.

Missing key players through in jury including Shaun M and Olly L , ARFC start well, pushing Fawley back and not letting them get into any stride. On 3 minutes a scrum on their 22 came to nothing but still ARFC kept pressing. A scare on 8 minutes when Fawley broke into our half but Greg was there to tidy up. A minute later another ARFC attack, Greg breaks, releases Batho who is foiled a metre short of their line. The next 5 minutes the game became a little stop start with both sides struggling to find any sort of rhythm. However in the 14th minute ARFC lose their own lineout deep in Fawley's 22 but charge down their attempted clearance and Alex (Guns) powers over for the first score of the match. Ted slots home the conversion and gives ARFC a 7-0 breathing gap. If we thought this would release the pressure it didn't as Fawley came back strongly at us and with ARFC missing tackles, were beginning to get pegged back and on 20 minutes Fawley kick their penalty from in front of the posts. 3-7.

Back came ARFC again, this time our forwards now beginning to dominate their pack and after a massive forward drive on 23 minutes saw ARFC forwards over the line and stretch the lead. 3-12

The game ebbed and flowed and still ARFC never felt totally in control of this match. On 34 minutes saw some great rugby through the hands from ARFC's backs but thwarted agonisingly short. The game was halted in the 36th minute to what looked like a bad injury to a Fawley player which again disrupted any pattern ARFC were trying to put together. The match restarted and more tackles being unusually missed allowed Fawley to score with the last action of the half.

HALF TIME: Fawley 8 – 12 ARFC

The second half saw the introduction of Pete Rogers, on to try and take back control of the line outs and it was his tackle in the 41st minute which resulted in a penalty to ARFC which Ted kicked to stretch the lead to 7 points. 8-15.

The 45th minute saw Fawley temporarily reduced to 14 and with the wind just about in ARFC's favour Ted kicked a penalty which furthered the lead. 8 -18. The next ten minutes saw both sides have chances. Greg and Billy kept pushing Fawley back and the likes of Tom Andrews and Ryan Cooper showing everyone that we hadn't forgotten the art of tackling. On 58 minutes ARFC had to soak up some enormous Fawley pressure under our posts and you could still sense nerves jangling and the feeling that this match was far from over.

Gradually ARFC's fitness in the heat began to show and in the 67th minute after a fantastic run and offload by Ryan saw Ian go over for the most celebrated try of the season! Ted kicks to make the score 8 – 25. ARFC now really began to believe that this was going to be our day, and with nerves receding ARFC's fantastic rugby came to the fore. In the 69th minute a great burst by Jake nearly put Batho in again. ARFC kept pressing, sensing history, and that the day was theirs and in the 78th minute great hands from Greg and Ryan put Ian over in the corner. 8 – 30.

2 minutes later the whistle blew and the celebrations started. ARFC had done it, promoted as champions and our season tells you every player who has worn the 1st XV jersey this season and our so dedicated coaches, deserve to be champions so much.

A massive well done to everyone associated with this magnificent club but especially to all the playing staff. I don't mind telling you there was a tear in this match reporter's eye at the end!

FINAL SCORE: FAWLEY 8 – 30 ARFC

MEN OF THE MATCH: TED AND GREG