

Match Report
Alresford vs Isle of Wight
14th April 2018

On a gorgeous sunny morning we boarded the coach from Alresford at 10.30am to watch the Firsts last game of the season and Cain and Scott's last match as Head Coaches.

We arrived on the Island in good time, and after fun on the ferry the guys got down to the serious business of finishing the season with a win.

Dead on 3pm, IOW kicked off. Straight from the kick off, possession was all ours. With our forwards pushing IOW back and Ted with his brilliant kicking boots back on, ARFC dominated the opening 7 minutes.

8 minutes in, ARFC win the line out and Muzzer piles forward, only to be held up just short. However, a minute later, from an ARFC scrum Jake picks up and powers over. Ted converted. **IOW 0 - 7 ARFC.**

From the restart a fantastic offload from Muzzer, releases Tom Andrews to puncture yet another hole in IOW's defence to keep the pressure fully on the hosts.

13th minute and Jake again powers through to within inches of their line but the final decision making process wasn't quite there and IOW were off the hook.

A minute later, as IOW began to regroup, Ethan made a superb tackle to prevent the hosts from opening their account, but 2 minutes later and with ARFC temporarily switching off, IOW broke to touch down. **IOW 5 – 7 ARFC.**

From the restart, this time Ryan took control to try and regain supremacy, running superbly 20 yards until brought down.

Although we seemed the better side, we have an Achilles heel of allowing teams a chance to strike back and IOW could and should have done from an easyish penalty kick.

For the next 10 minutes ARFC had to show impressive defence, and with it every decision going to the hosts, and the ball always seemingly bouncing kinder for them. Their pressure told and a nice kick over the top, and an even nicer bounce allowed IOW raced through to take the lead. **IOW 10 – 7 ARFC**

Immediately from the restart, after strong constructive talks between players and coaches, ARFC started to look so much more positive, if not fluent.

In the 35th minute, from an attacking lineout, ARFC forwards smash their scrum and Hancock touched down. **IOW 10 - 12 ARFC**

With Billy crashing through anyone in his way and the boys' tails up another ARFC try seemed imminent and on 38 minutes, a superb off load by Hancock saw ARFC go over again. Ted converted. **IOW 10 - 19 ARFC**

IOW finished the first half strongly, and with just a hint of controversy were awarded a penalty try when one of our players was judged to have obstructed an IOW player breaking, although Kato clearly had got back in time to thwart the danger. However this brought the first half to a close.

HALF TIME: IOW 17 - 19 ARFC

3 minutes into the second period Billy and James combine to release Kato who touched down. Again slotting the conversion. **IOW 17 - 26 ARFC**

The game was going end to end, and those who follow ARFC know two scores ahead is never comfortable for us.

Then in the 51st minute a superb passage of play from the boys, starting with the impressive Billy again making deep inroads, eventually the ball found Ryan whose clever timing put Kato through to extend our lead. Ted converted. **IOW 17 - 33 ARFC**

Credit to IOW, there was no hint of giving up and back they came at us and more defensive work was needed. However, you began to feel we had this game now and in the 57th minute Rob T releases Jake to sprint 30 yards to score. Converted. **IOW 17 - 40 ARFC.**

Still IOW would not surrender and for the next 10 minutes we were scrapping to keep them at bay, until the pressure told and IOW scored. **IOW 22 - 40 ARFC.**

With IOW pushing so far forward, gaps were appearing behind them, and in the 71st ARFC broke to score settle any nerves. **IOW 22 - 45 ARFC.**

With 3 minutes left, James Airey, so soon after a fantastic try saving tackle broke through the tiring host's defence to settle the game once and for all.

FINAL SCORE: IOW 22 - 52 ARFC.

The magnificent team was:

Ryan Cooper, Ethan Green, James Airey, Todd, Kato, AJ, Ted, Rob W, Shem, Tom A, Billy, Muzzer(capt), Chris Peake, Jake, Chris Hancock, Tom Brooks, Jack Meakins, Rob T(plus 2 - so sorry will update with names!)

Man of the Match: Billy Lovegrove