



Match Report

17 November

Home

Saffron Walden 3

Lost 13:16



Team

Starting Line-up

1) Stuart 'Booey' Cracknell 2) Jack Cowley 3) Rik Relph

4) Jonathan Burch 5) Tom Wykes

6) Dan Leith 7) Chris 'Glove' Milne 8) Nick Skipworth

9) Stuart 'Fabio' Faben 10) Darey Horn

11) Josh Coughlan 12) Andrew 'Baz' McKay 13) Tom Cowley 14) Reg

15) Jeff 'Medic' Mercer

Replacements

16) Dan Jarred 17) Dave 'Ken Kate' Cook 18) Chris Leith 19) Richard Cowley

20) Chris 'Psycho' Edwards 21) Peter Waples 22) Dave Steward

Report

What began as a grim November day had, by lunchtime, morphed into something much more salubrious, and as kick-off approached the ground was bathed in golden late-autumn sunshine. The improvement in the weather wasn't quite the occasion for a pathetic fallacy as far as the Renegades were concerned, and although it was a fairly honourable defeat there were many who opined it was snatched from the jaws of victory.

The usual colourful, if scant, complement of spectators turned out on a pleasant afternoon; Messrs Beckford and Beddow had popped up from Middle Earth for a squizz at the match, while the Pescis, injured alike, also graced the sideline; Rolando having passed up the chance to watch England go down to the Wallabies at Twickenham in favour of offering moral support to his team-mates. Admirable sacrifice, or did he have a premonition of the result in London? Either way we must salute his loyalty to club over country.

The Renegades started brightly, immediately taking the ball up to the opposition and consistently making ground. Very early in the piece, the Renegades were awarded a penalty and 'Baz' MacKay slotted it from pretty much in front with relative ease; he does these in his sleep. From the re-start another Renegades sortie into opposition territory ensued. Jack Cowley was relishing the chance to run at the Walden forwards, breaking tackles and very quickly setting the visitors a stiff examination, only to be thwarted once again after ten minutes by the recurrent ankle injury that's blighted his season thus far. Mr Cowley's demise seemed to spark a revival in the Walden side, as, aided by a couple of penalties, they were able to force play back up into the Renegades quarter and exert some pressure on the home side's pack.

At this point the game appeared to take on a pattern ominous for the Renegades; the Saffron Walden eight seemed to be able to shove their opponents back with disturbing ease, both in scrums and in the rucks and mauls, and with this in mind the visitors plainly resolved that if they kept it tight and played to their advantages a score would surely ensue. So it proved, and with inexorable, if lugubrious, inevitability the visitors lunged ponderously forward until one of their number slumped over the line for the first try of the match.

The Renegades were too frequently transgressing at the break down, and the resultant forfeited possession was more than incidental to the first Walden try. The referee was justifiably insistent that the ball and the tackled player be released with dispatch, and while both sides fell foul of this adjudication, it was the Renegades who were slower to adapt. Soon after the re-start they found themselves with their backs to the wall yet again, and another Walden try, very similar in execution to the first, resulted. Mercifully the visitors' kicker was off target and the teams took lemons with the score at 10 – 6 to Saffron Walden, Baz having slotted another penalty late in the half to narrow the gap.

The second half became something of an arm wrestle, and certainly the Renegades acquitted themselves far more effectively after the break. The Walden pack seemed to wilt, and the brief ascendancy they'd enjoyed midway through the first half dissipated, to the point where the Renegades eight were now more than able to hold their own. The forwards began to operate far more effectively, and there were numerous telling forays into the Walden half, Captain Milne leading by example and Chris 'Psycho' Edwards doing what he always does and taking the ball well over the gain line regularly. But time and again a loose pass or some careless infringements in the ruck and maul would hand the initiative back to Saffron Walden and promising moves would come to nothing.

It was at least in one sense a singular half of rugby: almost all the play took place between the two quarter lines, such that neither side was ever really able to gain any territorial position from which to launch the telling attack that would clinch the match. Saffron Walden had slightly the better of this tug of war, exploiting the Renegades' penchant for infringing at the breakdown to add two more penalties to their score. Even after a full half of endeavour had yielded either side very little, Saffron Walden retained their lead, and with but a few minutes to go the match seemed beyond the home side.

But the Renegades beast had one final spasm left in it before it was ready to expire, and it was this burst of desperation that produced the best try of the match. A scrum a little way into the Walden half produced clean ball, and Baz, realising that there was no profit in caution at this late stage,

whipped a long cut-out pass to Mr Waples, waiting hopefully on the wing. It was the kind of pass that did all the work for him, and it was simply a matter of running onto a ball that immediately put him into space, and then shipping it swiftly to Dan Leith, who, reading the play superbly, had looped behind the backline in order to receive just such a pass. Dan backed his judgement and eschewed the option of passing to Tom Cowley on his right, instead opting to go for the line himself, brushing off one tackler and evading another before touching down close enough to the posts to make Baz's conversion attempt a no-brainer.

Alas it was a light too late; with little more than a minute on the clock time was against the 'gades, and the match finished at 16 – 13 to Saffron Walden. The result notwithstanding, it was an enjoyable game played in the best spirit. Food for thought, though for the home side; two close losses to sides near the top of the table is surely grounds for optimism.

Saffron Walden were, as always, as sociable off the pitch as they were formidable on it. The Cottenham Club was graced by many Saffron Walden players even after all the Renegades had departed. They thought about taking our Indian hostage, but chose not to because they are gentlemen.

We look forward to seeing them again.

Scores

Try: Daniel 'Ginger' Leith

Penalty: Andrew 'Baz' MacKay (2)

Conversion: Andrew 'Baz' MacKay



Josh Coughlan for great tackling and determination



There were no doughnuts on the field. We had no luck.

Report by Peter 'Wallaby' Waples