

Renegades Rugby



Match Report

23 March

Home

March Bears

Won 25:0



Team

Starting Line-up

1) Stuart 'Booey' Cracknell 2) Ren Pesci 3) Richard 'Flipchart' Cowley

4) Tom Wykes 5) Chris 'Psycho' Edwards

6) Chris Leith 7) Dan 'Ginger Dan' Leith 8) Stuart 'Fabio' Faben

9) Rolando Pesci 10) Daray Horn

11) Peter Waples 12) Jack Cowley 13) Andrew 'Baz' MacKay 14) Tom Cowley

15) John 'JB' Bateson

Replacements

16) Rik Relph

Report

It was the most bitter and unpromising a day imaginable as kick-off time loomed. Wingers and full backs sniffed the ice-toothed breeze ruefully, envious of the warmer climes of scrum, ruck and maul. The wind snarled malevolently, the snow sniped horizontally and the March Bears warmed up menacingly at the southern end of the pitch. However, one of the laws of amateur rugby is that the actual performance of a side is invariably in inverse proportion to how intimidating their pre-match preparation is, and the Renegades shivering was due to the cold rather than trepidation at their opponents' display. And by that same standard, the comical interludes that passed for the 'gades warm-up should have warned the Bears that they were in for a tough afternoon. And so it ensued. Given that even playing the match was a questionable proposition at nine on Saturday morning it was remarkable that they'd even turned up.

Not only had they turned up, but a referee had appeared and a handful of spectators had plainly been frog-marched to the ground. No sense in disappointing them then, and the Renegades turned in a vintage performance against a side that had bested them in the corresponding fixture earlier in the year. The game started with the visitors looking ominous, as they made the most of their relative

youth to cut some prodigious swathes through the home side's defence. With some hard-running centres and plenty of possession it appeared that the Bears were determined to prove an exception to the 'warm-up' law.

Having weathered this early onslaught, however, the Renegades forced the play into their opponent's territory. Leiths, Dan and Chris, were enjoying themselves running into people, and Rolando was in his element, the frequency of his distinctive cry of 'win a ruck!' (I think there's a word missing there – Ed) testament to just how much ball the home side was getting. Chris Edwards, as he did all game and does every game, consistently got the ball over the gain line and Boeey, his bionic knee encased in enough cotton wool to stuff a pillow, was remembering why it is he likes to play rugby.

With such a platform from which to launch attacks, the Renegades backs were soon threatening the Bears' line, and a number of speculative kicks from 'Baz' Mackay added to the pressure on the visitors. Darey made an audacious break, replete with enough dummies to outfit a sizeable crèche, and Cowleys Tom and Jack made repeated inroads into the Bears threequarter line, but for all this endeavour the Renegades had little to show beyond moral ascendancy. Baz ensured that something was salvaged by slotting a penalty after 20 minutes, but the Bears were by no means succumbing, and frequently managed to drive the play back into the Renegades half, as the game see-sawed between the respective 22 metre lines. It took some no-nonsense stuff from Fabio on one of the frequent Renegade raids into the opposition 22 to get the ball over the line; he picked up from the base of the scrum and muscled his way through, over and around a brace of tacklers to score adjacent to the posts. The conversion was made and the 'gades went to lemons 10 nil up.

The game was by no means in the bag, though, and the Renegades took the pitch in the second term aware that their resolve would need to be firm if they were to keep the lead. A slight wind advantage seemed to help them, and they turned it to their advantage, managing to play most of the term in the Bears' half. Any foray by the visitors beyond half way was returned with interest by the home side; there was some almost textbook rugby of the ruck and maul kind, with the ball being re-cycled through a number of phases and a procession of forwards ready to run at the opposition from close to the ruck. The tight five was more than holding firm, earning a couple of penalties when the scrum went beyond the 180 degree point, and it was one of these occasions that allowed Baz to extend the lead to 13 points with a penalty goal. But still the game wasn't secure; it seemed that every time the 'gades got into a prime attacking position it would be undone by some misfortune in the line-out or an injudicious pass or kick.

It took some quick thinking from Baz to put the result beyond the Bears' reach; having been awarded a penalty temptingly close to the posts, he eschewed the sinecure of easy points and went large. The Bears being slow to re-group, Baz took the tap, drew a couple of tacklers and slipped the ball to Mr Waples, who did little more than catch it and fall over to register the 'gades second try, close to the sideline. Although no conversion added to the scoreline, at 18 nil with less than 10 minutes remaining, the game was by now out of reach for the visitors.

To their credit, however, they competed until the end, and the latter stages of the game were a hard fought slog through some increasingly heavy mud. It was enjoyable stuff, though, and the Renegades forwards went for it with renewed relish, charging into rucks with a vigour that belied their years (some of 'em anyway), the weather and the very late stage of the game. Eventually the

pressure told, and Mr Faben reprised his cameo of the first half with another solo try that capitalised on some great lead-up work from the rest of the team. A relatively simple conversion increased the score to 25 nil, and there it stayed.

It was a fine effort on as fair and foul a day as most of us have experienced on a rugby pitch; the refereeing was exemplary, the opposition made us work for every point, and even the odd uncharitable and, frankly, unsavoury remark from one of their number with reference to a Renegade player's venerable years and character could be forgiven in the light of a game otherwise largely played in good spirit.

Scores

Tries: Stuart Fabio Faben (2), Peter 'Modesty' Waples

Conversions: Andrew 'Baz' MacKay (2)

Penalties: Andrew 'Baz' Mackey (2)



Chris Leith – for being everywhere



Andrew 'Baz' MacKay – for tights and kicking when passes were called for

Report by Peter 'Pulitzer Prize' Waples