

## 14 MAN PLUMPTON SEAL WIN WITH DROP GOAL

Plumpton Rugby Club's traveled to East Grinstead at the weekend to play their highflying development side.

On paper this looked a tough game for Plumpton, E.G Development side were mid table, but with 3 games in hand which could see them top of the league. Both sides were beset with injuries, Plumpton managing to field a squad of only 16, including 3 players who were fitness doubts before the game.

One of Plumpton's biggest strengths however are their resilience and despite less than perfect preparations were able to take the game to the younger but less experienced and lighter E.G Development side.

The game was played squarely on the half way line, both sides not giving an inch. Plumpton were able to break the deadlock first. With both sides competing at the front of the lineout, Mike Upton, jumping at the middle of the line was able to secure 100% ball for Plumpton all afternoon. It was this off the top ball that allowed crash ball centre James Burgess to smash forward, with his opposite man sealing off the ball and being penalised. Beale slotting the subsequent 3 points.

The game then started to resemble an international match, both sides wrestling for supremacy and field position, however both defensive lines not budging an inch. Frustration was never far from showing its face, as no team looked like scoring and attacking moves having to start on the back foot.

Plumpton front row of Cropper, Blake and Forest started to dominate the lighter E.G scrum, whilst Box and Wrayford in the 2<sup>nd</sup> row used their powerful frames to out-muscle the opposition, crafting powerful runs through the middle of the park. This formed the remainder of the 1<sup>st</sup> half, which remained tight as neither team looked to make a mistake.

The second half however was simply a revelation, perhaps one of the most exciting halves of rugby played by Plumpton in its history. As the game started much the same as the first half, small infringements crept into the game. A Plumpton flanker, reacting to a blind sided punch was sent off. Plumpton, now down to 14 men looked to be on the ropes with 35 minutes left in the game. However this was the catalyst that signaled some of the best rugby to be played by Plumpton in its 43 year history.

Beale brothers, Rhys and Captain Lewis were able to pin E.G back deep in their own half with some text book kicking, moving the E.G backline onto the back foot. Turnovers by Veteran 8 Dave Dunn then kept Plumpton in the 22. As the E.G 15 looked to defend the direct attack, Plumpton looked to change attack by going wide. With pacey wingers Jason Thomas and Tom Chase both crashing just short of the line in quick succession.

Eight minutes before time this game plan finally paid dividends, as an overlap wide on the right wing gave the Plumpton back line a one time opportunity to

regain the lead. As quick ball was presented to Captain Beale, he threw a bullet like wide miss ball catching brother Rhys who then found winger Justin Smith. With a winger and full back to beat, Smith stepped his man before putting on the after burners and crashing through the full back cover to slot down by the corner flag, shocking E.G and even the large crowd.

With the game still there for the taking for E.G at 8-3, Plumpton defended their lead by continuing to attack. More powerful running from bullish Box, allowed the Plumpton pack to drive ball deep into the E.G 5 yard line. With 4 minutes to go Captain Beale took responsibility on his shoulders, sitting deep in the pocket he calmly slotted a sublime drop goal from out wide to seal the win for Plumpton.

Men-of-the-match Plumpton's dynamic back row Mike Upton who played with pace and power for 81 minutes whilst securing 100% line-out ball for the Plums, matched only by Captain Marvelous Beale who won the fly half battle with ease, as well as slotting a match winning drop goal to seal the game.

Club Captain Lewis Beale commented, "The boys deserved the win, from 1-14 we played the sort of rugby I have spent many years wanting to be part of. I had this gut feeling we would pull out a win, not one of my team took a backward step and dominated there opposite man, especially in the second half. Seeing their pacey back line turned by our tactical kicking and effectively nullified was the highlight. This win wasn't a 'shock' to me, this team is brimming with class players"

Final score 11-3. Plumpton travel to local rival and great friends Newick this weekend, kick-off 2.15pm.