

Lisburn Rugby

Comeback to beat all comebacks

Academy 30 - Lisburn 32

At Roughfort last Saturday the Connect Telecom Lisburn 1st XV produced the comeback to beat all comebacks when they recovered from a 30 points to 6 score line fifteen minutes into the second half to come out eventual winners by 30-32. Having disappointingly succumbed to UUC the previous week, Lisburn knew that they would have to pull something out of the bag against their old rivals Academy, who were sitting 4th in the league table. However, they did not get off to a good start with the loss of winger Nick Kennedy in the warm up session and then a missed tackle five minutes into the game allowed the Academy backs to race the ball across the pitch and their right wing was in at the corner. The touchline conversion gave the home side a 7-0 lead.

For the next ten minutes each side probed each other's defences seeking weaknesses but Matthew Arneil and Jake Bebbington, at outhalf and inside centre respectively, were standing firm. It was Academy who again widened the gap with another well-taken try, 12-0 but fullback Josh Reid then succeeded with two fine penalties which brought the interval score up to 12-6.

The second period was just three minutes old when Lisburn again suffered heartache when Academy, living off a lengthy penalty advantage, scored a third try to make it 17-6, and things only got worse when the home team kicked two penalties for allegedly high tackles. This was followed by an unlucky incident when a high kick ahead was not taken and instead was allowed to bounce. Unfortunately it bounced into the arms of the following support players and suddenly Academy were thirty points to three up, a bonus point in the bag and still 25 minutes left to play.

It was only then that Lisburn realised that they would have to do something to escape a hiding. The scrums had been going well for the visitors in the game up to that point and now they started to turn the screw. First of all prop Phil Jefferson scored a try after a number of pick and goes on the Academy line. Josh Reid added the conversion to make it 30-13. Whether it was Academy thinking they already had the game won, Lisburn nevertheless found a new lease of life and began wave after wave of attacks and from one of these the ball was moved right to create an overlap which centre Scott Colligan took advantage of to score a try in the corner. Reid converted with a great kick and suddenly the score line of 30-20 did not seem insurmountable.

The impetus was now with Lisburn and they kept attacking and once again a gap opened up for winger Craig Walsh who went through to score. While the conversion failed the score was now 30-25 with fifteen minutes remaining. Academy at last saw the danger but were unable to reverse the trend of the game. Lisburn were still giving them a very hard time in the scrums where the front row of Jefferson, Press and Dickson were outstanding and with Davis, Henning and Barron lording their own ball in the line outs they kept Academy at bay for the next ten minutes. Going into the last five minutes Captain, Matt Edgar and flanker Chris Cummings were creating havoc in the Academy attacks and urging the pack on for that final score. With two minutes to go they got possession near the home line and flanker Cummings, following an excellent defensive display all game, went over for the vital score. It was now 30 points each and Lisburn also had a vital bonus point after scoring four tries. The final result would depend on the conversion and once again

full back Josh Reid obliged with not the easiest of kicks. There was time for a restart but Lisburn gained possession from a set scrum and scrum half Dinis Mansa booted the ball over the touchline to end the game.

There were scenes of jubilation from the Lisburn players and supporters at the final whistle as this win again puts them ahead in the pecking order over UUC and Donaghadee. It will also encourage them as they prepare to take on the remaining six league games. They have a break next Saturday before hosting Limavady on 11th February.