Lisburn Rugby

Lisburn Halt Holywood Surge

Lisburn 24 - Holywood 19

In the only game so far in Qualifying 2, a Smiley Monroe sponsored Lisburn overcame visitors Holywood in their first game back since gaining promotion last year. It was a cracking game of rugby, despite the rustiness shown at times by both teams in their first competitive outing of the season. Lisburn started urgently and attacked from the start, running the ball freely from side to side. The pressure finally paid when big second row Alan Hughes drove over from a ruck close to the Holywood line and Chris Knox knocked over the conversion to put Lisburn into a deserved 7-0 lead with just five minutes gone.

This was a reality check for the league newcomers and they soon settled down to take on the Lisburn pack up front. Their efforts were rewarded and Hollywood made a number of strong drives, retaining possession as they went through the phases. A good pack worked try resulted on twenty minutes and the conversion made it 7-7. Lisburn now knew they were in a battle.

Within minutes Knox brought the lead to Lisburn again with another well taken penalty but it was bitter sweet as Mark Gilkinson soon found himself in the bin on a technical infringement. On the half hour mark Holywood charged up the field and following a missed tackle in the Lisburn midfield they went in to score a fine try. In all this mayhem, Lisburn lost influential flanker Stewart Evans with a facial injury and the game had to be stopped for fifteen minutes as he was attended to. Using subs for the first time, Evans was replaced by Mark Healy while Holywood went on to convert the try and go into a 10-14 lead. However, it was short lived as just before halftime Lisburn regained the lead again as their pack, now restored to eight, mauled the ball over the line to score and the Knox conversion took them into an interval lead of 17-14.

Within two minutes of the re-start, Holywood took the lead again after they moved the ball from one touchline to the other. A missed tackle allowed them through the Lisburn defence and a quick dash to the line saw them open up a 17-19 gap. Lisburn now had to rethink their strategy but with Healy doing sterling work in leading the pack up front, they quickly settled down to bringing increasing pressure on the Hollywood defence. Midway through the half both teams lost a player, a Lisburn man to a red card and a Hollywood one to a yellow, following a scuffle. However, with ten minutes to go, it became obvious that the hard pre-season training was proving decisive in the battle up front and with the Lisburn forwards starting to dominate, hooker Peter Graham was put in from loose play to score the decisive try. Knox again converted and the score remained the same to the final whistle 24-19.

This entertaining game will have given both coaches much to ruminate on and for Lisburn they will now head to Enniskillen next Saturday for another heady battle. Holywood will rue their occasional chances but will have been encouraged by their first showing in their new league where tight games such as this one will be the order of the day.