

26th Jan 2019

Barton Hill 1st XV – 10

Chipping Sodbury 1st XV – 33

Sodbury took to the field beneath a leaden sky, where the only colour was the splash of carmine upon the hosts' jerseys. The throng of Sodbury supporters was bolstered by the commanding figure of former Sodbury Captain Martin Hedges. He cheered along with the rest at each Sodbury success – which started with a bullocking run by Pete Butcher from the kick-off.

However, as early as the fourth minute, Barts had a shot at goal from a misdemeanour at a scrum 25m from the posts. Shortly afterwards, the visitors had their first try – or rather, Gavin Edgar had his first try – which started from a lineout on Barts' 10m line. Sodbury went through eight phases and managed to move their hosts left, right, then left again before Dan Bradley wowed the crowd with a cheeky chip over the defence. Man of the Match Dan Cole seemed to float as he retrieved the ball before smashing his way through 15 metres. He then delivered a sweet pass to Edgar, who doesn't miss these sort of chances.

Then, in a flurry of Sodbury confusion, Barts re-took the lead. The Sods were down a man due to a yellow card, then down a try as they failed to get to grips with Barts from a 5m scrum. They did win the restart, though, and Otto Avent set off on a 15 metre charge that earned a penalty; the resulting lineout went a bit sideways but a base camp was established.

The game was soon tied up at 10 a-piece when Jon Cook stroked over his first penalty of the afternoon. Barts came back hard and fast, but with a rather narrow attack - they knocked at the Sodbury door with the enthusiasm of the police raiding a crack den, but were repeatedly repelled thanks to a matchless display of organised defence.

Sodbury are blessed with Jason Petchey, who is a whirling Dervish with boundless energy, and amassed a staggering 21 tackles in the game. He is complemented by the likes of Butcher, Dave Turner, and silent assassin Dave Guest – who is steadily exciting the Sodbury faithful week on week. When the visitors did get a little ball, they went forward thanks to some brave carrying and ruthless clearouts by Lee Ralph and Matt Cook.

On half an hour Butcher controlled a scrum on his own 10m line before Cole hit the line hard and, with inspirational footwork, burst through. On his shoulder was fine-tuned rugby machine Jon Cook; his injection of pace lit up the dank afternoon. Edgar grasped the perfect pass as he entered Barts' 22: he still had some work to do as he bounced one defender then skipped past another for his second try.

Barts swept back into Sodbury's 22 in response to the try but they were their own worst enemy. When conceding a penalty at a 5m scrum, they foolishly advised the referee and were marched back 10 metres. Sodbury were then able to creep into the hosts' half and kept the pressure on, with Turner tackling wingers into touch and the most tenacious no.9 in the league sacking Barts' no.8 and winning a penalty. Jon duly stroked it between the posts for a 10 point advantage at half time.

Just one minute into the second half, Jon extended the lead when Barts panicked after dropping the kick-off and stopping Sodbury's progress illegally. With field position once more, and the visitors pressing home a scrummage advantage, Barts yielded another penalty which Jon effortlessly dispatched from 20 metres.

Yet again Sodbury were forced into feverish defence, only this time they had George Barnes on the field. Barnes tackles like a runaway boulder and his fresh legs kept the hosts at bay. The game went into a period of rain-lashed chess and was played out between the 22s. Each side enjoyed certain successes but nothing definitive. Nothing definitive until Sodbury had a scrum on Barts' 10m line, that is. Head whipped the ball out to Bradley, who spotted a gap, ghosted through it and drew the cover. Edgar came charging off the wing with a straight thrust, accepted the pass and blasted through the

remnants of a beleaguered defence to register his hat-trick under the posts. Jon's metronomic boot converted easily to take his personal haul to 18 points.

With the game won, the Sods cut loose in search of the bonus point. The final ten minutes was harum scarum stuff in a deluge – they didn't manage to score but the attitude and execution shown helped Sodbury put the two previous losses behind them.

