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Monmouth hang on for physical win



Zen Swagrzak's pass is superbly held onto by Scott Giles
Photos courtesy of Gareth Roberts

Rugby

National League 3 East A - Abertyswg 6 Monmouth 8

EXTENSIVE fog and heavy drizzle over the Lydart bode ill for weather conditions at Abertyswg, near the top of the Rhymney Valley, where Monmouth were due to play their most recent game in National League 3 East A on Saturday.

But surprise, surprise, apart from general dampness and a greasy surface all was well, apart from a shortpitch which played into the hands of line-kickers, or perhaps, in the case of Monmouth, one should say 'should have done'.
 From the off, it was clear Abertyswg

were determined to obtain redress for their significant defeat when they visited the Sports-ground in mid October.
 And what a good start it was for the home side: within three minutes they were 3-0 ahead from a penalty for off-side in the centre of the field.

A slow start by Monmouth was dragging them into a dog fight which of course forwards enjoy, but there seemed to be little interest in kicking for position and trying to pin the home team in their 22.

When attacking ball was possible, they swiftly put the ball along the line but cold wet hands resulted in errors, giving little reward

for energy expended. That is, until 25 minutes into the half, when the visiting backs drew their men in a classic and exciting move created initially by a fine break by new man Dai Richards and finished off by Matthew Tabb who outstripped the defence to score in the right corner.

The kick failed and the hand to hand battle continued with back rowers Scott Giles and Tom Hawkins showing the way. For a change, the line-out was clicking for Monmouth and as usual their pack led by tight head and captain Zen Swagrzak was keeping Abertyswg on the back foot except, that is, in loose play where

the referee's tolerance of questionable off-side and Monmouth's desire to run the ball around kept the game extremely even.

Giles strayed off-side 15 metres out which gave the home team an easy kick and the boost they needed with a 6-5 advantage just before half-time. Their fans were even more ecstatic, requiring intervention by the referee when a home player was penalised for a high tackle and, because of dissent, received a yellow card.

Monmouth started the second half well with Hawkins and Swagrzak prominent but several moves foundered

through handling errors and turnovers. Abertyswg forwards were also now more fired up and put together a series of rucks egged on by their voluble supporters which put Monmouth under extreme pressure. Fortunately Monmouth is adept at keeping their line intact at close quarters and twice the ball was held up over the line. And then they succumbed only to see the scorer called back for an accidental offside in his approach.

Attempts were made to run the ball out of play which if they had worked could have been special, but this was beyond even Amosa Nove with all his running strengths. Hooker Dean Bartlett gave it a go but found himself comprehensively tackled into touch.

Eventually common sense prevailed and good ground was achieved by a deep kick to touch. The forwards again made progress in mid-field but instead of taking the ball into contact when confronted, an

attempted pass too many went astray. Luck now veered towards the visitors when a yellow card and penalty were awarded for a player fly-hacking the ball at the referee which seemed harsh but Tabb took the three points on offer and the lead to 6-8.

The final 10 minutes was unbelievably tense as Abertyswg camped in the visitors' 22 but Monmouth stuck to their

task and apart from a careless re-start kick direct to touch, the tension was soon relieved, leaving the home team feeling hard done by, and Monmouth wondering if a different choice of tactics could have made for a more convincing and less physically demanding win.

It's another away trip next Saturday (27th January), this time to Blackwood Stars.



Top honour for club swimmer

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Wydean winner to tackle Rally Barbados

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Dai Richards on a mazy run



Matthew Tabb sprints clear for his try



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