

It was a miserable looking day when the Lancashire Senior XV boarding the Team Bus following pre-match lunch at Sedgley Park and the mood was hardly improved with a slow crawl round the M60 with lots of Saturday shoppers heading for the Trafford Centre. That said the Bus pulled up at Sale FC in plenty of time allowing the coaching Team to re-iterate the mantra of keeping focussed and disciplined. The visitors took control of the early exchanges and some good set piece and clever back play at first stifled then stretched the Cheshire defences.

First score of the day was on the board before some had chance to take to their seats with the Lancashire pack driving Lock Bob Birtwell (Sedgley Park) over the line, Flyhalf Chris Johnson (Sale FC) landed the conversion with aplomb. Disaster struck when Hooker Alex Loney (Fylde) looked to carry in the midfield and he then seemed to slip and injure himself. The diagnosis afterwards showed a ruptured Achilles and we wish Alex a speedy and full recovery.

Despite losing two men to the Sin Bin over a 15 minute period Cheshire dogged it out and the Red Rose boys found it hard to breakdown the scrambling defence, however on 34 minutes a Lineout just over the Cheshire 10 metre line was caught and some lovely lines of running created the extra man from where Winger Anthony Bingham took the final pass in a flowing movement to score with Johnson adding the extra two from a fairly tight angle. With a minute remaining a Cheshire indiscretion at the breakdown allowed Johnson the easiest of penalties for a 17-0 HT lead. Lancashire would have felt they should have got more points their dominance deserved whilst Cheshire probably felt they were still in the game.

The first score of the second period would be the most pivotal and it was Lancashire again with Scott Rawlings (Sale FC) at his rampaging best that opened up the Cheshire line allow Bingham his 2<sup>nd</sup> try of the day on with just two minutes gone in the half. Cheshire began to gain some territory and more importantly possession which was rewarded with a well taken try from Centre Lewis Barker (Macclesfield). The moment that the match and Lancashire's continued participation in the Bill Beaumont Cup hinged on came on 76 minutes. Solid work by the Pack and some outstanding work in defence by Chris Briers (Fylde) in particular nearly worked in favour for replacement Prop Adam Lewis (Fylde) whose twinkle-toed break for the line was stopped short about eight metres out. The quickly recycled ball found Rawlings who powered his way over despite the attentions of two would be tacklers for the all important bonus point try. A nervy last 4 minutes was seen off and Lancashire made it another trip to HQ with a 29-5 victory.



**Twickers here we come! Scott Rawlings crosses the whitewash, much to the delight of every Lancastrian**

Great team performance but outstanding contributions from the Centres in Rawlings and Briers and great work from Skipper Evan Stewart and young No.8 Tom Ailes (Sale FC) in the Back Row.