

Saturday 7th April 2018
London South West 3
Match Report by Nigel Morgan

Battersea Ironsides 21 – 24 PRFC



Portsmouth always knew that their first visit to Battersea Ironsides RFC was going to be tough, having only won the home fixture 17-14 in a very tight encounter pre-Christmas. Battersea had a fine defensive record in the league, second only to Old Cranleighans and Old Emanuel. Portsmouth made two changes to their side from the one which defeated Old Cranleighans. Lee Chandler replacing the honeymooning Gareth Richards at fly half and Finn Parry returning from suspension at loose head prop.

3rd V 4th started with Portsmouth looking very dangerous going through numerous phases of play, But Battersea were the first on the scoreboard, when Portsmouth were penalised on the half way line. A kick to the corner, a catch and drive finished with the Battersea centre crashing over under the posts. Conversion successful 7-0 after 4 minutes.

Portsmouth soon replied with a fine break from inside his own half by outside centre Jordan Hunter who put Luke Simmons under the posts. Conversion by Simon Morgan. 7-7 after 7 minutes.

Another good run by the powerful Jordan Hunter after 15 minutes set up an attacking 5 metre line out for Portsmouth. A good catch and drive ends with hooker Anthony Fooks scoring his 25th try of an outstanding season. Score 7-12.

Battersea have a good share of possession throughout the first half and set up a number of attacks, but are repelled by good defensive work by Portsmouth, with Will Brock and Dan Gates to the fore. Just before half time another catch and drive by the Portsmouth forwards ends with scrum half Danny Holbrook diving over from 2 metres. Conversion missed 7-17 at half time. An excellent first half from Portsmouth against a determined Battersea side. The spectators on the touchline thoroughly enjoyed the first half with Portsmouth always

looking dangerous when the ball got into the hands of their outside backs, with Jordan Hunter, Luke Simmons and Curtis Barnes always causing problems for the home defence. There could easily have been another 2/3 tries with a little more composure and better passing.

The second half was much of a stalemate with both defences dominating the play and both sides struggling to find the final killer pass, until a poor clearance kick from Portsmouth ended with a try for Battersea under the posts. The conversion is kicked to make the score 14-17 after 60 minutes. To rub salt into the wound the Portsmouth Captain, Darren Crabb is also yellow carded for being off side in the build up to the try.

Despite being down to 14 men Portsmouth immediately attack and another superb break by Man of the Match Jordan Hunter ends with Dan Gates crashing over in the corner. Simon Morgan conversion 14-24 after 68 minutes. Portsmouth played the last 10 minutes with 14 men as Jordan Hunter finishes his outstanding game with a yellow card for a seat belt tackle. The final score of the game came in the last minute when the Battersea left winger finished off a counter attack with a try under the posts. Conversion good, giving a final score of 21-24 to Portsmouth.

Thank you Battersea for your hospitality. We have enjoyed our two games against you and look forward to next season's encounters. Promotion for Portsmouth has now really gone, unless Old Cranleighans lose their last two matches, which is highly unlikely. However next week we play our last league game at home to league leaders Old Emanuel. In the first match of the season Portsmouth lost 37-34 away to them. We have not lost at home all season and I am sure the players who are selected for next week will want to protect that fine record. In the words of Kevin Ricketts from The Evening News 'Fortress Rugby Camp!!'

Nigel Morgan

Other Results

Gosport & Fareham 12 – 19 Portsmouth 2nd Xv

Portsmouth 3rd Xv 10 – 54 Alresford