

Sunday 15th April 2018
Women's NC South East West 1

Match Report by Simon Newsham

Portsmouth Valkyries 10 – 5 London Welsh Ladies



The final match of the season for Portsmouth Ladies and the stakes were high. Just three points separated the sides at the top of the table, four points on offer for a win and whoever finished top goes into a play off for promotion.

Valkyries coaches Bali Salisbury, Mark Witcher and their team of assistants have worked tirelessly this season and were looking forward to the showdown with London Welsh.

The Valkyries knew they were in for a tough afternoon when they found themselves going backwards in the scrum for the first time this season. But despite the forward pressure Portsmouth had the bigger share of territory and looked the most dangerous going forward. Charlie Morgan delivered quick ball to her backs who passed neatly despite the foul conditions in the driving rain. The first score came on the half hour from the Valkyries with Makeda Lewis powering through the tackles after good work by centre Georgie Outhwaite to score a fine try. Centre Stopard-Baker was unfortunate in hitting the upright with her conversion attempt

London Welsh were coming at the home side with intent but the Valkyries stood firm and repulsed every attack with outstanding tackling, both wings Bronwyn Jacobs and Laura Williams getting to grips with their opposite numbers.

No8 Kerry McCormick was enjoying herself running with the ball and putting opponents down with countless tackles. It was McCormick herself who put the Valkyries further ahead just before half time with another unconverted try, the hosts led 10-0 at the break.

The second half was much the same with both sides going toe to toe in an attempt to create more try-scoring opportunities. Portsmouth enjoyed a spell in the Welsh 22 which resulted in a yellow card for the visitors and Portsmouth could count themselves unlucky not to be awarded a penalty try.

The tackles continued to mount up, the Portsmouth backs didn't let anything past and forwards Lucia Crotti, Pauline French, Amy Dare, Alice Kightley, Abbi Reid, Sydney Checkley, McCormick and vice-captain Sandy Newsham putting in a huge shift.

Eventually something had to give and Welsh scored after a prolonged spell of pressure which saw Newsham and French replaced due to injuries. With the score at 10-5 Welsh would pick up a losing bonus point so Portsmouth had a nervous final fifteen minutes but knew they had to score again, however it wasn't to be and despite both sides finishing on 60 points for the season, the exiles greater points difference saw them into a play off.

The Valkyries have lost just one game this season, back in September to London Welsh, it's testament to the coaches and the whole team to see how far they have come since that opening day defeat.

Simon Newsham