

Reynolds delight as Rice makes try-scoring debut



Teenage flanker Dom Rice twists his way through a tackle and grounds the ball over the line to score a try on his Guernsey debut.

(7741294, 7741296 and 7741298)



SATURDAY'S try frenzy was not restricted to the Six Nations climax.

Guernsey outscored even the rampant Welsh to take another big step towards National Three safety and they did it with so much style and verve you wondered how the heck they had got themselves into a relegation battle in the first place.

Here on a crisp, dry day, Jordan Reynolds' men helped themselves to nine tries, eight of them converted, six by stand-off Glen Walters and two by Luke Sayer, who also helped himself to a hat-trick of scores.

No wonder Reynolds was smiling.

But his pleasure also had a lot to do with the camouflaging selection he again adopted to hide the introduction of bright young Academy prospect, Dom Rice.

We had been led to believe that first choice back-rowers Matt Thomas and Robin Le Cocq would pass muster after injury scares, but it turns out Reynolds knew all along he probably would introduce the youngster to 1st XV rugby and he preferred to do it without the opposition knowing.

The selection ruse worked too, Rice adding his name to the list of scorers in a confident display, even if he did look a boy among men facially and physically.

Reynolds was more than happy, though, with his newcomer.

'He did really well, although it was a massive eye-opener. I think he was puffing a little at half-time, but he made some great tackles.'

'We wanted to keep it [his selection] quiet as we didn't want to give them the opportunity to target him.'

The performance, as a whole, was top notch.

The visitors are known for their good backs play and for the first and last 20 minutes they provided a real test.

But, despite the boost of an early penalty to give them a 3-0 lead, they could not live with the movement, passing and ball handling of the home backs in which every man impressed, nobody more so than the orchestrator supreme, Malcolm Barnes, and the fullback, Matty Hema, whose barnstorming running and brilliant hands were a feature throughout.

RUGBY

by Rob Batiste

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Guernsey 61
CS Rugby 1863 6

'We have been working on our support play all week - that was our big focus and 80 per cent of our tries came from support play,' said the coach who saw relegation rivals Tring and Westcliff also lose and, as a result, his side open up a seven-point buffer on the team now filling the final relegation rung, Westcliff.

While CS Rugby would appear doomed, Guernsey keep going from strength to strength and with performances of this quality should have waved bye to their relegation concerns.

Their vibrant backs were showing their class from the first time they got the chance to run the ball.

The visitors had led 3-0 courtesy of Killeen's penalty from 30m out, but then Barnes exploded into action with a darting diagonal run towards the touchline and offload to winger Dave Davison.

He took a few strides before offloading back to Barnes who had, by now, Hema in tow and a pass to the fullback allowed him to score near the posts. Walters kicked the extras and Guernsey were up and running.

It was soon 14-3, although the referee threatened to get in the way of Barnes as he broke for the line before slipping a pass to Sayer for a simple score.

Walters added the conversion, but CS Rugby were quick to eat into the deficit, Layton Batiste being penalised for boring in at a scrum and Killeen knocked over the penalty from close range.

From then on, until they were reduced to 14 men for 10 minutes midway through the second half, Guernsey's back-line took charge, throwing the ball around with style in moves that often covered the width of the pitch.

But it was their forwards who created the next try. Guernsey parking themselves on the line for a couple of minutes before Davison spotted a spare foot inside the corner flag by the HP Centre and dived over.

By the break Rice and Cameron Craigne had also added their names to the try scorers and even though CS Rugby could look forward to the second 40 minutes with the breeze at their backs, they already looked a beaten side.

An early try blitz at the start of the second ensured that they were just that.

The half was just four minutes old when a superb offload from a falling Simi Sawene was collected by Sayer who then fed Hema for the final 10m surge to the line.

Then Davison added his second try after some thrilling passing across the backs, but the move had its origins in Sayer's initial run deep in his own half, Hema being present to support him and Layton Batiste at one point surging for the line.

Hema then showed wonderful

TEAMS

Guernsey: Craigne, Ceillam, L. Batiste, Hillier, Mernien, Smith, Rice, Barton; Barnes, Walters, Sayer, Campbell, Brown, Davison, Hema. Replacements: Sawene and J. Batiste.

CS Rugby 1863: Glasson, Forrester, Preece, Duffield, Davies, O' Halloran, Clarke, Stringer; Buggo, Cleary, Unsell, Sprang, Henshall, Killeen, Houston. Replacements: Williams, Radley, Lavea.

hands in setting up Sayer who drop-kicked the conversion for a 54-6 lead.

There was time for one more score.

Sayer did the finishing but the hard work was done by centre Ned Brown who broke from deep before offloading to the irrepressible Hema who laid it on a plate for Sayer, who again converted.