

## RUGBY UNION

SPORTS NEWS IS UPDATED ONLINE  
www.blackpoolgazette.co.uk

## Promotion hope fades?

By **Simon Taylor**tango@blackpoolgazette.co.uk  
@The\_Gazette

Fylde's bid for a top-two finish was dealt a major blow as Chester took the spoils with a hard-fought – but deserved – 27-19 win at the Woodlands.

Fylde can have no complaints about the result as, after establishing a good lead in the first 15 minutes they struggled to secure enough possession of their own or disrupt Chester's possession.

It would be somewhat unfair to say Fylde played badly as that would not give Chester due credit for not allowing Fylde to play the game they wanted to play.

Fylde kicked off and Chester looked assured as they went through the phases, taking play up to halfway before they conceded a penalty.

Greg Smith kicked to within 15 yards of the Chester line and Fylde were on the attack but it ended with a knock-on.

However, in the fourth minute, Ben Gregory found Nick Ashcroft in the lineout and a more cohesive attack was launched.

The ball was spread left and right with Conor Wilkinson making a line break and Gregory lurking on the wing for the final pass.

He forced his way down the line, fending off two would-be tacklers before going over in the corner to give Fylde an early 5-0 lead.

Fylde were in the ascendancy in the first quarter and added to their lead in the 11th minute.

Good lineout work between Gregory and Olli Parkinson laid the platform for another assault on the Chester line, which ended with Tom Carleton gliding through for his 23rd try in 26 games.

Smith converted and things were looking rosy for Fylde as they led 12-0 with their game plan working smoothly.

Chester needed to get a foothold in the game and they showed they aren't second in the league without good reason as they started to impose their own game on Fylde.

Between the 17th and 26th minute they forced three penalties, finally gaining a lineout 15 yards out from the Fylde line.

The catch and drive was executed to perfection and they rumbled over the home line with Mike Craven claiming the score and James Robins converting.

Fylde wrestled the edge in possession back over the next 10 minutes with a run of three penalties including a yellow card to Chester's Andrew Oakden for a deliberate knock-on.

Rather than kick for goal Fylde twice chose the five-yard lineout option with the second looking like it would lead to a score.

The Chester hooker appeared to enter from the side and bring the maul down but

**23**  
Tries for Tom Carleton in 26 matches



Ben Gregory finishes a strong run with Fylde's first try

no yellow card was shown or penalty awarded as the referee must have decided that the drive had fragmented.

Fylde's disappointment was doubled up as Chester earned a penalty and laid siege to the Fylde line.

Desperate defence kept them out until another penalty saw Ben Vernon dispatched to the sinbin for 10 minutes before the catch and drive lineout tactic saw Alick Croft go over and Robins convert to put Chester 14-12 up at half-time.

Fylde were back under pressure from the restart as Chester maintained a grip on the ball for three minutes, driving 50 yards upfield before Fylde ran out of defend-

ers and David Ford was left unmarked wide out to stroll over and make it 19-12.

Fylde coach Warren Spragg looked to the bench to try and change the game's momentum as he introduced Alex Loney, Harlan Corrie and Matt Garrod.

The Fylde forwards battled hard but could not stop a third try in the 56th minute with Oakden the scorer this time for a 24-12 lead and a try bonus point.

Fylde finally made a meaningful break in the 64th minute with Henry Hadfield and Ralph Dowds taking play deep into Chester territory.

They then forced a scrum penalty and a lineout 20 yards

out with clean ball allowing Chris Briers to force his way over.

Smith converted and Fylde had clawed their way back into the game, trailing 24-19 with 12 minutes left.

To their credit Chester did not let the score rattle them and set out to wrestle possession back and starve Fylde of both the ball and territory.

The last 10 minutes saw Fylde pretty much camped in their own half and the last three penalties all went Chester's way.

A high tackle on 75 minutes gave Robins a shot at goal and he made no mistake, stretching the lead to 27-19.

Fylde now needed to score

twice, but as the minutes ticked by, their goal became at least one more try which would have meant a try bonus point and a losing bonus point.

Chester's grip on possession was unrelenting and they saw the game out in Fylde's half, leaving them with nothing to show for their efforts. Fylde: Carleton, Hadfield, Briers, Wilkinson, Grimes, Smith, Crampton, Conner, O'Ryan, Vernon, Parkinson, Ashcroft, Lewis, Gregory, Rodd. Replacements: Ford, Loney, Garrod, Corrie, Dowds

Chester: King, Vare, Foden, Van Sertima, Oakden, Robins, Morris, Ford, Craven, Joseph, White, Charmley, Reed, Croft, Campbell. Replacements: Parry, Hughes, Cottrell, Baxter, Hattersley.

## A Taylor-made success as history is written

By **Phil James**tango@blackpoolgazette.co.uk  
@The\_Gazette

Motorsport history was made at the weekend when the 2019 Legend Fires North West Stages Rally, in partnership with Simpson's Skoda, became the first closed road motorsport event to be held in North West England.

Friday night's ceremonial start in Garstang town centre drew huge crowds to witness competitors flagged away by

Garstang mayor, Leah Hynes.

A carnival-type atmosphere was created as cars lined the streets with the crowds entertained by the Samba Espirito drum band.

Spectators returned in their thousands for Saturday's special stages with those at Nicky Nook and Staynall proving particularly popular.

Hambleton duo Simon Bowen and Richard Robinson set the early pace in their Subaru Impreza WRC, leading after three stages, but sadly for them, clutch failure put an

early halt to their rally.

Come the finish, after more than 50 miles of timed to the second competition, only five seconds separated the top three cars with victory going to Carlisle's Peter Taylor and his Newcastle-based co-driver, Andrew Roughead, in a Ford Fiesta WRC.

Blackpool South Shore Motor Club's John Stone, whose Legend Fires company are the long-term main sponsor, was 11th in his Ford Fiesta WRC.

A fuller report will be published later this week.



John Stone and Jack Morton were 11th in their Ford Fiesta WRC

Picture: WWW.PRO-RALLY.CO.UK