

Blacks Come Back to Beat HARC

Written by Pat Clifton

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The Austin Blacks avoided an upset in their league opener Saturday against the Houston Athletic Rugby Club, scoring a late try for a 26-22 win in Houston.

HARC took a 22-21 lead in the 62nd minute and held it until the 74th, when Austin captain and lock James Lowery scored a pick-and-go try off of a movement started with a lineout near the attacking 22.

With soggy and muddy conditions, and scrumhalf Zach Triplett leaving the game in the opening minute with a hamstring injury, the Blacks struggled to unleash their backline most of the game, and HARC scored two intercept tries. But Austin adjusted its game plan in the second half.

“We were producing multiple phases, we were getting the ball consistently over the gainline but we were falling down with our execution,” said Austin coach Lachlan Ferguson of the first half.

“In the second half we reverted back to playing more of a field position game and then looked to tighten it up with the wet conditions. We started to pick and drive a lot and ruck the ball forward that way. That sucked the HARC numbers in and that gave us the opportunity when we did shift it wide with some overlaps.”

While the game was a bit closer than Ferguson perhaps wanted, he was happy both with the outcome and the competitiveness of the contest.

“I was really pleased with the way my guys dug in after going behind and pushed HARC to come back and take the win,” he said.

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“The two tries against the run of play set us back on our heels a bit, but the HARC boys deserved to be leading with about 15 minutes to go because they never quit. I was really pleased for our guys to have a really tough hit out. I think HARC are going to surprise a lot of teams in Texas this year. I think they’re a well coached side and they definitely have stepped it up a level since last year.”

The Blacks scored four tries on the day, from openside flanker Sam Areias, Lowery, outside center Dave Goss and reserve center Curtis Chaffin, to secure a bonus point in the win. That will see them tied with crosstown rivals, the Austin Huns, who are also 1-0.

Up next for the Blacks is Fort Worth in Austin. HARC will also be in the state capitol next week, playing the Huns.