

SEASON 1009/10

Saturday 12th December - Blaydon 17 Esher 29

The league leaders duly completed their 13th victory but it took them until the 65th minute to gain the ascendancy in the face of some spirited resistance from the home side.

Trailing by 17-12, a spell of pressure brought them a 5 metre scrum, the pack marched forward and over the line for No8 Chris York to touch down, and the Blaydon challenge was halted in its tracks.

Sam Ulph added the conversion, Charles Bamberg put over a drop goal, and then with a Blaydon flanker in the sin-bin, replacement winger Sam Smith put the issue beyond doubt when he scooted in for a second try in the closing minutes.

Blaydon had deservedly led at the interval by 12-6 thanks to 4 excellent penalty successes from full-back Adam Armstrong. Ulph however had responded twice for the visitors and was on the mark again within 90 seconds of the restart.

The game then sprang into life in the 44th minute when Blaydon Director of Rugby, Tom Rock, who had passed a late fitness test to make his return after weeks of injury, made a decisive break from mid-field for prop forward Robbie Kalbraier to thunder over for the opening try.

Home fans were scenting an upset but Esher quickly hit back with a 4th penalty from Ulph and then piled on the pressure to grab the upper hand and finish very much in charge, denying the Crow Trees outfit a losing bonus point.

Star Man : Sam Ulph (Esher)

Scoring : Blaydon

Try : Kalbraier 40

Penalties : Armstrong 5, 17, 20, 40+4

Saturday 5th Decmber - Launceston 34 Blaydon 3

Blaydon had little to show for their long trip to Cornwall, particularly in the second half when they outplayed the home side for long periods but somehow contrived to lose possession whenever they got close to the try line. Disappointingly they then conceded two late tries that were entirely against the run of play, leading to an unrealistic scoreline.

Launceston did however have a distinct advantage in the forward battle with some tremendous driving mauls, and were also well served by a match winning performance from their captain and fly-half Tony Yapp who had a 100% kicking record and generally dictated the home tactics in what were horrendous conditions.

Hooker Darren Semmens burrowed over for a 7th minute try to give them an ideal start, and then centre Malcom Roberts cut through for a second score midway in the half. Yapp converted both efforts and had also added a penalty before Blaydon got their only points of the game, an Adam Armstrong penalty following a long period of pressure.

It was all Blaydon for much of the second period but after Yapp had struck again Launceston stretched their lead with a disputed try by lock forward Ban Hylton from what appeared to be a knock-on, and then rubbed salt into the wound by adding a bizarre score when the ball was hacked from one end of the field to the other by numerous feet to be eventually finished off by winger Kieron Lewipp.

John Brennan

Saturday 28th November - Blaydon 16 Cambridge 19

Blaydon's 4 match winning streak came to a dramatic halt when they were within two minutes of beating third placed Cambridge only to be hit by a Tom Powell try that left them with little time to respond.

They had taken an early lead with a penalty from Adam Armstrong but the visitors were soon in front when their lock Karl Rudski found a gap and shot through to send in Adam Barnard, Craig Evans converting.

Within 2 minutes Blaydon regained the advantage through prop forward Justin Clarke who intercepted on half-way for No8 Gavin Jones to touch down for a try improved by Armstrong, but just as quickly the game swung again. Blaydon's Kerry Wood was yellow-carded in the final minute of the half and Cambridge took full advantage at the line-out to score through Darren Fox, making it 10-14 at the break.

Armstrong then reduced the Blaydon deficit to a single point with a penalty soon after the restart and with everything to play for the home side piled on the pressure. Their only reward however was

another Armstrong effort and with a narrow 2 point lead going into the closing stages it was nip and tuck.

Cambridge it was who proved to be the most resilient of the sides, and latching onto a Blaydon clearance they ran it back, shipped it along the line, and there was No8 Powell in support to collect the final pass from Rudski and dive over in the corner to secure the game.

John Brennan

Saturday 14th November - Sedgley Park 11 Blaydon 12

A wholehearted performance in terrible conditions saw Blaydon through to a well deserved fourth successive league win, and their third away from home, but they were made to fight all the way.

On a pitch covered in surface water Blaydon were on the back foot from the start and then badly hampered by the loss of Tom Rock with a thigh injury after 20 minutes. Blindside flanker Scott Riddell however made the switch to scrum-half and played with such assurance that the storm was weathered and by the interval Blaydon had grabbed the lead which they were to hold to the end.

Centre Paddy Dias got things moving with good ball from a ruck and exchanged passes with Adam McKenzie before releasing Adam Dehaty to score in the corner, Andrew Baggett's conversion making it 0-7 with the final play of the half.

Park pulled back 3 points with a penalty from Steve Nutt, and following a long spell encamped in the Blaydon 22 the full-back struck again to reduce the deficit to a single point. With handling becoming increasingly difficult the game developed into a kicking battle between home fly-half Phil Jones and Blaydon's Dehaty, with the Crow Trees man easily taking the honours.

From one of his long distance efforts the line-out was won against the throw and Scott Riddell was driven over by the pack for a second and decisive Blaydon score.

Sedgley again came back strongly to force a series of five metre scrums but failed to break through until the dying seconds when the ball unluckily went loose from a Blaydon hand and Mike Roberts crossed for an unconverted try.

John Brennan

Saturday 7th November - Blaydon 22 Blackheath 6

Continuing on from where they left off last week Blaydon set a cracking pace, confidently throwing it around and finding gaps at will. Three tries and nineteen points to the good after 25 minutes it was non-stop one way traffic, but just when a whitewash seemed on the cards they went off the boil and achieved little else for the remainder of the game.

Centre Andrew Baggett cut through in mid-field to provide the impetus for the opener, the move continued by Elliott O'Brien and then Adam McKenzie who found Scott Riddell in support on his shoulder. The flanker shrugged off a challenge and a determined run saw him cross the line near the posts.

Scarcely had the dust settled when O'Brien was released again, this time by Tom Rock, and quickly handed on to full-back Adam Dehaty who stepped inside and held off Tyson Lewis the Blackheath winger to score an excellent try.

Baggett converted that effort and was on the mark again after Riddell had run in an almost identical score to his first from a Paddy Dias pass.

Having achieved absolutely nothing for 30 minutes, Blackheath, to everyone's astonishment, suddenly began to get back into it and by the interval had cut the deficit to 19-3 with a penalty from their full-back Tom White.

White struck again early in the second period and the game might have swung had Lewis been adjudged to have won the chase after hacking on over the Blaydon line.

It was not to be, Baggett landed another penalty in a rare Blaydon attack, and although Blackheath maintained a territorial advantage and battled away with a succession of rolling mauls it all fizzled out in the deteriorating conditions.

John Brennan

Saturday 31st October - Glory Days - Tynedale 22, Blaydon 28

What a difference a year makes. Despite having 90% of the play on their last visit to Tynedale Park Blaydon disappointingly went down by 3 points, but this time the boot was most definitely on the other foot.

Tynedale started the better, frequently looked impressive in their approach play and were to have the last word with a Peter Cole try deep into injury time. Whenever Blaydon ran at them however the defence 'parted like the Red Sea' and Tom Rock's men would have much enjoyed the journey home on the back of a thoroughly deserved win and a try scoring bonus point.

A Gavin Beasley penalty separated the sides in the opening 30 minutes before Adam Dehaty broke from defence to chip ahead and set up the move that No8 Mark Wilson finished off in the corner. By the interval however Tynedale full-back James Hoyle had restored the 3 point home advantage and it was still anyone's game.

Come the second half, and come the super Blaydon show. Elliot O'Brien drew them level with a drop goal, Alistair Murray the home No8 was yellow carded, and the floodgates opened.

Andrew Baggett took a return pass from Kerry Wood to scythe his way through, O'Brien converting, and then young Andrew (Archie) Archibald put his mark on the game.

The Tynedale defence was once more caught napping and Kevin McShane secured possession for Archie to set off on a weaving run, handing off all challenges to crash over for a memorable try.

The effort went unconverted but Baggett landed a penalty soon after and at 8-23 the game was in the bag and the Crow Trees faithful in high glee.

Tynedale eventually got their act together and hit back through prop Jonny Williams from close range, Andrew Hall converting, but even after Baggett had been given '10 minutes rest' Blaydon

went on to secure the important 4th try. Replacement lock Gavin Jones cruised into the home 22 to pop the ball up for Paddy Dias in support to round the last man and touch down.

Tynedale had the consolation of a losing bonus point courtesy of the late Cole effort but this was Blaydon's day, and very much one to savour.

John Brennan

Saturday 24th October - Blaydon 21 Newbury 17

With the sides separated in the league by just one point this was a must win game for Blaydon, but in the opening 40 minutes that result looked anything but certain.

Trailing by 11-17 they steadied the ship however, gradually grew in confidence, and inspired by the efforts of Simon Barber stormed on to the victory that put an end to a three match slump.

With three-quarter time approaching they were hammering away at the Newbury line but not finding a gap until the game swung when a poor clearance was gobbled up by Barber.

The winger saw space in the corner, chipped ahead and raced through unchallenged to touch down near the flag and the deficit was down to a single point.

Then with 6 minutes remaining Barber found touch deep in the Newbury 22 with a superb kick. Newbury cleared badly and at the next line-out Blaydon gathered in, Scott Riddell had a dart at the line before the recycled ball was whipped through the backs for Barber to finish it off in the other corner.

In the first half Blaydon had started much the better only to lose their way. James Fitzpatrick made the break that led to an Andrew Baggett penalty and then again put the Crow Trees outfit on the front foot that resulted in 2 short scrums. Pressure told and flanker Riddell stormed over to make it 8-0.

And then Newbury took over, particularly at the line-outs, and front rows Paul Fincken and Chris Rowlandson were driven over with Waylon Gasson converting both scores.

Gasson and Baggett exchanged penalties, the visitors held their advantage to the interval, but the second period was to be all Blaydon.

John Brennan

Saturday 17th October - Stourbridge 38 Blaydon 5

Blaydon were never at the races in what was a third consecutive comprehensive defeat. They held out until almost half-time but had no answer when Stourbridge winger Pennuck went in after they had knocked on in their own 22.

The second period proved to be a catalogue of errors for them and the home side took full advantage. Home full-back and man of the match Richards crossed for two tries in quick succession, and other scores were added by Sturdy and Frewin.

In the final minute of normal time Blaydon at last put a decent move together which Baggett finished off.

Stourbridge however rightly had the last word and deep into time added on Gerry secured their 6th try, which Richards converted, his 3rd of the half.

Saturday 10th October - Blaydon 11 London Scottish 29

Blaydon fielded the kick-off only to be penalised after 30 seconds, Frank Neale the visitors full-back landed the 3 points, and the tone was set for a one-sided game.

The Exiles, in their first ever visit to Crow Trees, were considerably quicker in thought and deed than the home backs, and when Blaydon did have possession they were rarely given any time to develop it.

A drop goal via an upright from Elliott O'Brien levelled the score after 5 minutes but the remainder of the half belonged entirely to the visitors. They were held up over the Blaydon line on the quarter hour but then from a short scrum, centre Gary Trueman burst over, Neale converting.

Trueman was also instrumental in creating a try for flying winger David Howells, and when Blaydon No8 Jason Smithson was yellow carded for not releasing, another lightening break was finished off by Ian McInroy, Neale again on target to make it 3-22.

An O'Brien penalty doubled the Blaydon account in the final minute of the half but after prop forward Robbie Kalbraier became a second visitor to the sin-bin the Exiles piled on the pressure. In an attempt to turn it around Blaydon elected to run from their own 22 only to see a wayward pass intercepted by Neale who gleefully ran through and then added the points himself.

Their work done, London Scottish took their foot off the throttle and in the closing 15 minutes Blaydon at last became an attacking force. Their first foray into the 22 ended in disaster when a simple pass went down with the line beckoning but they finally got it right when Smithson took a quick penalty, Scott Riddell progressed it over half-way, and after two more pairs of hands had been involved James Fitzpatrick crashed over in the corner.

John Brennan

Saturday 3rd October - Redruth 30 Blaydon 12

Blaydon more than held their own in what was a tighter game than the scoreline might suggest, the better use of their possession by Redruth being the only real difference between the sides.

The home team led 6-0 in the first half, courtesy of 2 penalties from fly half Mark Scrivener, but Blaydon had the better opportunities including a 'try' by centre Adam Dehaty that was disallowed for a forward pass.

Unfortunately for Blaydon they lost a player to the sin-bin just before the break, and in the 3 minutes of his absence following the restart, conceded a vital try. A high ball was mishandled in the windy conditions and Redruth winger Lewis Viddicombe took full advantage, with Scrivener adding the points to make it 13-0.

Blaydon however hit straight back to open their account when they kicked a penalty to the corner and prop forward Robbie Kalbraier touched down from the line-out. Redruth then brought on replacement scrum half Mark Richards who promptly swung the match in their favour with his distribution and leadership.

Viddicombe went in for his second try, followed by Chris Morriss the other winger, skipper and front rower Darren Jacks burrowed his way over for a fourth try and Scrivener added another conversion.

The score at that stage was an unrealistic 30-5 to the home side but Blaydon finished as they had started and completely dominated the closing stages. Possession was run from all parts and in a dazzling move that went through 10 phases, the try of the game went to centre James Fitzpatrick who finished it off by bursting through a tackle near the line, and fly-half Richard Windle landed the conversion.

John Brennan

Saturday 26th September - Blaydon 36 Cinderford 24

Blaydon made it 3 wins out of 4, with a bonus point from each game, but it was an up and down performance against bottom of the table Cinderford who both started and finished the stronger.

It took the visitors just 4 minutes to grab the lead when they wheeled a Blaydon scrum on the home line with the ball popping out to flanker Paul Nicholls who gratefully accepted the gift and dived over.

Right winger Alistair Bressington then put the finishing touch to a smart move to make it 0-10 after 15 minutes and Blaydon were in disarray but amazingly the game then swung in their favour and by 51 minutes it had become 31-10.

Scrum-half Tom Rock, who was involved in everything, set up the move that saw Paddy Dias touch down under the posts and also for a Scott Riddell run-in. Sean English secured a third, Richard Windle converted them all and it was 21-10 at the break.

The bonus try went to James Fitzpatrick but then Blaydon took their foot off the pedal and Cinderford came storming back. Skipper Paul Knight stormed over from a tap penalty, Nicholls again went in from close range and the Crow Trees men did well to steady the ship.

A Matt Dehaty try and 5 more points from Windle did the trick but it had been a remarkable effort from the visitors considering that at different times they had 3 forwards in the sin-bin.

John Brennan

Saturday 19th September - Manchester 12, Blaydon 145

After their two disastrous opening games Manchester brought in 4 new players in an attempt to stem the tide, but even the assistance of the little boy with his finger in the dyke would have had little effect as Blaydon added to their woes with frightening ease by running in 23 tries.

For Blaydon it was a record club score, beating a 124-0 drubbing of Orrell, and a second win of the season, but Manchester are clearly a club in serious trouble. They did manage to record their first points of the season with tries from Luke Haidinger and Matt Rockey, with a conversion by Jack Turton but the points against column now stands at 388 from just three games.

Amazingly the first 4 minutes prior to the opening score were a comedy of errors for Blaydon, including 4 knock-ons and a pass into touch with a clear overlap. When the try did arrive it was an absolute cracker from Director of Rugby, Tom Rock. Still playing out of position at scrum-half, he shot clear from half-way to bamboozle the shambolic home defence.

The flood gates opened, the tries rained in and by the interval it was 5-62 and had it been a boxing match the referee would not have allowed Manchester to come out for the second period.

Blaydon winger Kevin McShane who had an outstanding game, ran in 4 of the tries, Rock went on to complete a hat-trick as did centre James Fitzpatrick. Jason Smithson, Matt Dehaty, Paul Vinnicombe and Kenny Wood all picked up a brace, whilst Paddy Dias, Robbie Kalbraier and Justin Clarke also crossed the Manchester line, and fly-half Richard Windle was on target with 15 conversions.

Saturday 12th September - Blaydon 19 Wharfedale 23

With the opening 40 minutes completed Blaydon were well on their way to a second successive victory having built up a commanding 19-6 lead with three excellent tries. And then it all went wrong in time added on.

At a scrum near their line they had the put-in but the ball popped out unexpectedly for the visitors back-rower Daniel Solomi to secure and storm over. Worse was then to follow in the opening minutes of the second period when Alastair Allen, a Wharfedale lock-forward was yellow carded at a rerguard action on his own line. Blaydon sought to take instant advantage but a pass was intercepted and Luke Gray shot clear. The winger hacked on and gathered in to cross half-way and then continue the break with a diagonal run to score in the far corner.

What had been 19-6 was now 19-16 and Wharfedale tails were up. Blaydon fell badly away, their previously solid scrum and line-out were under pressure, and time upon time good possession was turned over. The Wharfedale backs who in the first half had been subdued and uncertain were now running everything and eventually the winning try was secured by replacement Latu Makaaf.

He made the initial break down the left, shipped it on to Mark Redworth and was then on hand to finish it off. Joe Ford landed the conversion, to add to his 2 first half penalties, and the game was won.

Earlier Blaydon had opened the scoring in the 4th minute when they broke from the tail of a line-out for skipper Matt Hall to be driven over, Richard Windle converting. Flanker Scott Riddell added a second on the quarter hour from the combined efforts of Tom Rock, Hall, and Naude Pretorius, and then Rock went over from close range, Windle again on target.

Star Man : Joe Ford (Wharfedale)

Saturday 5th September - Blaydon 29 Otley 11

Blaydon were rarely able to dominate in this closely contested opener but always looked the more likely to take their chances, and so it proved. After leading 12-8 at the break they soaked up a fair bit of pressure before surging upfield to run in two tries to add to two first half efforts thereby clinching a try bonus point to get their season off to a flier.

It was Otley that opened the scoring with a James Murray penalty but Blaydon soon hit back with a flowing move down the left that culminated in No 8 Jason Smithson storming over from a short scrum, Andrew Baggett adding the conversion.

The visitors regained the lead when Ryan Duckett found their No 8 Oliver Steadman with a long pass to touch down for an unconverted effort. Again the game swung however with Blaydon prop forward Robbie Kalbraier scoring from close range, with Baggett's conversion giving his side a 4 points advantage.

Blaydon missed a golden opportunity soon after the restart when new Director of Rugby Tom Rock had a try disallowed for not touching down correctly, and could have paid dearly when the visitors promptly took play to the other end where they moved it back and forth for the next 15 minutes.

Nothing came of their pressure and Blaydon showed them how to do it when Smithson broke upfield and Elliot O'Brien scooted in under the posts. Murray landed his second penalty for Otley when Justin Clarke, Blaydon's replacement prop, was yellow carded in his own 22. and the Crow Trees outfit could have struggled. In no time however O'Brien was in for another converted try and then put the icing on the cake with a late drop goal.

SEASON 2008/9

Saturday 2nd May - Stourbridge 46 Blaydon 7

Having secured their League Two status seven days earlier Blaydon were 'never at the races' in this final game of the season at Stourbridge and predictably were on the end of an 8 try thrashing.

The home side, just one league place above Blaydon, had it all their own way, particularly in the closing stages when they ran in 5 of their touchdowns unanswered.

Despite the one-way traffic Blaydon were only 12-0 down at the interval and had their only bright spell in the 10 minutes after the restart when they crossed the home line for the only time. A flowing movement took play from one 22 to the other where back-rower Stephen Trench popped up among the backs to finish it off and Charlie Raynor added the conversion points.

Otherwise they threatened little apart from some forceful running from winger James Clark, and a pleasing debut for scrum-half Duncan Pollock, son of former Scotland International Jim.

Stourbridge grabbed an early lead through their prop forward Simon Homer, and by the break, centre Ben Barclay had also crossed the visitors line from good turnover ball. Scott Morriss the other centre added number 3 to make it 17-7 at that stage and then the floodgates opened.

Full-back John Hall became all-time leading try scorer for the club when he ran in the first of his pair, and other scores were added by Bill Hughes, William Foden and a second for Morriss, with Alistair Bressington completing the scoring with 3 conversions.

John Brennan

Saturday 25th April - Blaydon 83, Waterloo 33

Blaydon ran in 13 tries, including a brace from departing skipper Dave Guthrie, against bottom of the table Waterloo to guarantee their place in League Two for another season.

Fittingly it was Guthrie who popped up on the wing to score the final effort in what was his last game at Crow Trees after 15 years as 1st XV captain, whilst Director of Rugby Nick Gandy who is also leaving at the end of the season, came on as a late replacement and got his name on the score sheet with a conversion.

It was one way traffic from the start with prop Robbie Kalbraier securing the opener from close range after 5 minutes. Left wing Andrew Fenby was back to his mercurial best, setting up scores with his running from all parts of the field, and made it 18 for the season with his own two efforts.

Ross Batty, playing out of position at flank forward, also weighed in with a double, other tries coming from Chris Clark and Andrew Baggett. In the dying seconds of the half however the visitors

finally broke through with a Neil Kerfoot try and Liam Reeve conversion, but the Blaydon onslaught continued within a minute of the resumption.

Baggett again and Brendan Daniel took it to 66-7 and with the game well and truly over both sides began running it in 'sevens' style. Matt Williams ran in a hat-trick for Waterloo, front row Martin O'Keefe stormed over from close range, and 3 more conversions from Reeve took them to a respectable 33 points.

At the other end however Simon Barber and Chris Wearmouth raced in for Blaydon, fly half Rory Clegg got his 8th conversion and there was still time for the skipper to grab the glory near the end.

John Brennan

Saturday 18th April - Cinderford 35, Blaydon 30

Despite a battling first half performance that gave them a healthy 30-19 lead, Blaydon went down to a ninth defeat from their last ten games. Two precious bonus were earned however that could yet prove vital in what has now become a three-way battle with Wharfedale and Westcombe Park to avoid the 4th relegation spot from League Two.

With eight regular squad members missing they were soon in arrears to a Jake Carter try, converted by Dan Trigg, but quickly pulled it round and went on to dominate the opening forty minutes.

They ran it wide for Brendan Daniel to crash over in the corner, Ross Batty linked up with the backs to finish off a flowing move, and then centre Paddy Dias shot through an inviting gap.

Cinderford responded with another score from winger Carter and then a Dave Knight effort when Blaydon missed tackle after tackle, but by the interval the visitors had secured an 11 points advantage. James Clark went over for the 4th and bonus point try right on the whistle with Rory Clegg landing the conversion to add to his earlier effort and a brace of penalties.

Disappointingly that was to be the end of the Blaydon scoring as for much of the second period they found themselves deprived of good ball.

They hung on for 20 minutes but the game swung when Cinderford brought on Freddie Burns as a replacement fly-half. His strategic kicking and all-round intelligent play immediately put the home side on the front foot and with an Adam Nicholls try and the conversion and 2 late penalties from Trigg the game gradually drifted away from Blaydon.

John Brennan

Saturday 11th April - Blaydon 24 Cambridge 54

Unlike the setback of 7 days earlier this defeat at the hands of a team still with aspirations to win promotion was not entirely unexpected, but Blaydon will still be disappointed by the manner of their first half capitulation.

With 13 straight wins behind them Cambridge oozed confidence from the start and flanker Dan Legge touched down the first of their 8 tries after just 3 minutes.

All seemed not lost however when Blaydon pushed them off their own scrum ball 10 minutes later and were awarded a penalty try when they had a drive on at the 4th short scrum in quick succession. Rory Clegg added the points to level the scores but that was to be the end of the home challenge for the rest of the half.

Pressure at the other end found the Blaydon pack just as vulnerable in retreat, another penalty try the outcome, and then the floodgates opened.

Adam Barnard, Legge and Jim Shanahan ran through at will, with full-back Ben Patstow on target with all the conversions, he was to have only one failure, and at the break it was a sorry looking scoreline of 7-35.

Flanker Peter Browne romped in for an early Blaydon try after the restart, but a second yellow card and some woeful tackling let in Dan Hunter and Chris Lombard twice to make it 14-54 and Blaydon were dead and buried with time running out.

Against all the odds however Andrew Baggott broke up-field to send in Brendan Daniel in the 80th minute, to be followed by stand-in scrum half Scott Riddell 4 minutes into injury time.

Somehow Blaydon had conjured up a 4 try bonus point - and how important might that turn out to be as the relegation battle unfolds.

John Brennan.

Saturday 4th April - Blaydon 28 Southend 43

On paper it looked a home banker - Blaydon, needing just a few more points to guarantee their place in League Two against a Southend side with nothing to play for having already been relegated after winning just 2 games all season.

The wind was a problem to both sides and at the interval the visitors surprisingly held a one point advantage. Blaydon immediately took control after the restart, scoring twice in 6 minutes to change a 16-17 scoreline to 28-17 and the pre-match forecast was at last on track.

And then it all went wrong. Passes went down, tackles were missed that allowed Southend to run in 4 tries un-opposed and by the end Blaydon heads were down and the team in disarray - a remarkable turnaround.

Blaydon had initially made the better start and opened the try fest when hooker Matt Hall was driven over. Fly-half Rory Clegg's conversion into the cross field wind was just as impressive as his earlier penalty, but Southend winger Andrew Frost was to be just as accurate.

By the interval Clegg had landed 2 more penalties but significantly the visitors had responded with 2 tries. Frost grabbed the first from an excellent floated pass and then the centres combined for Luke Sloan to touch down under the posts.

Andrew Fenby romped in from a tap penalty 2 minutes into the second half and was quickly followed by Brendan Daniel after good work by Clegg. Southend might have wilted in the face of these reversals but quite the opposite happened as they set up camp in the home 22 and began to capitalise on the errors.

Simon Hoult, Luke Irvine and Tyson Lewis in turn put them out of sight, denying Blaydon even a losing bonus point, and then in the final minute they ran in a 6th try that epitomised the plight of the home side. A speculative punt up field was allowed to bounce into the 22, the full-back failed to make it secure and Sloan strolled in unchallenged.

John Brennan

Saturday 28th March - Westcombe Park 12 Blaydon 10

Blaydon remain on the fringes of the battle to avoid relegation after this poor performance resulted in a narrow defeat at the hands of the team immediately below them in the table.

Playing into a gale force wind in the first half they could make little progress and it was no surprise when the home side took the lead with a 25th minute try. Their No8 Ben Lonnegan intercepting a Nick Gandy pass to race in from 20 metres, with fly-half James Whiting adding the conversion.

With 10 minutes of the half remaining Blaydon finally put together a series of forward drives which paid dividends when prop Robbie Kalbraier was driven over for his 8th try of the season. Charlie Raynor's superb conversion kick from wide out and into the teeth of the gale made it a level game at the interval with the wind advantage still to come.

Disappointingly for them Mother Nature intervened, the wind stopped and then turned, and Blaydon were up against it once more in the second half.

Having being trapped in their own 22 for a long spell they did break out to grab the lead with another tremendous effort from Raynor to make it 7-10, but Westcombe deservedly went on to take the honours.

With minutes remaining they ran a poor Blaydon clearance straight back from half-way for replacement hooker John Moyse to touch down for an unconverted score, but there was still time for one last effort from the visitors.

Sadly however Raynor was unable to pull off a third miracle and could only watch in horror as his penalty kick was picked up by the wind to sail harmlessly wide.

John Brennan

Saturday 21st March - Blaydon 27 Blackheath 13

With the arrival of Spring came a welcome return to form for a Blaydon side that had failed to record a win in their previous seven league outings, but for 20 minutes there had been every possibility that it might have been extended to eight.

Blaydon's Charlie Raynor had cancelled out a Matt Leek penalty for the visitors but when the Blackheath man struck again it led to a try direct from the restart. Their winger Sean Moan shot through a gap on half way and put out a floating pass to Matt Vaughan for the full-back to race clear. Leek added the conversion to make it a deserved 3-13 scoreline for the visitors, but amazingly that was to be their final points of the game.

Undeterred by the deficit, Blaydon simply grabbed the initiative, initially though the efforts of winger Ben Mercer, to run in 24 points unanswered and well and truly put an end to their miserable run, gaining a try bonus in the process.

Mercer had already made two searing breaks to get Blaydon on the front foot before squeezing over in the corner after good work by Adam Dehaty and Martin Shaw. Scarcely had the dust settled when Raynor cut loose down the right and Mercer was in again.

Neither try was converted but Blaydon were now level and with everything to play for in the second period.

Brendan Daniel was the catalyst for try number three, securing possession to beat 2 defenders with ease to release Chris Clark who stormed in from 50 metres,

Blaydon tails were up, and following a long spell of running it back and forth No8 Jason Smithson broke blind from a scrum to grab the bonus point, and Raynor was on target with both conversions.

The game was in the bag, and a disconsolate Blackheath side finished with 14 men after their No8 Gareth Jones was red carded for a dangerous tackle on James Isaacson.

John Brennan

Saturday 7th March - Launceston 23 Blaydon 19

A dramatic last minute try from prop forward Robbie Kalbraier secured a first ever point for Blaydon on Cornish ground, ironically after a ten hour coach journey, when for all previous trips an expensive charter flight had brought them no reward for their foresight.

The start was equally dramatic and also produced a try when Blaydon gathered in from the kick-off for fly half Nick Gandy to chip over the Launceston backs, and winger Brendan Daniel raced through for the touchdown. Charlie Raynor slotted over the conversion from wide out to make it 0-7 inside a minute, a lead they held to the half hour.

Launceston had gradually come more into it and deservedly edged in front with two tries in five minutes, firstly through centre Ryan Westren who scooted in when Blaydon missed a tackle and then with a similar effort from their full-back John Fabian. Adam Staniforth was off target with both conversion attempts and the home side led 10-7 at the break.

Blaydon regained the lead shortly after the restart from a series of forward drives that resulted in a 6th try of the season for front-row Kalbraier, but in a ding dong battle Staniforth landed a brace of penalties at the other end.

Now trailing 16-12, Blaydon suffered injuries to key players Gandy and No.8 Jason Smithson, and Launceston took full advantage of the disruption for Westren to run in his second try of the game to make it a match winning lead.

The visitors were not lacking in determination however and a spirited late effort secured the valuable losing bonus point in what was the the final play of the game in the 14th minute of time added on.

Needing to keep the ball alive they ran a penalty, and then another, moving it from their own half up to the Launceston line where Kalbraier gratefully flopped down for the try to which Raynor added the points.

Saturday 28th February - Blaydon 7, Cinderford 14

With this fourth consecutive defeat Blaydon continue to slide down the table and are now perilously close to the relegation zone. In what from start to finish was a scrappy affair between two poor sides, Blaydon had ample possession and opportunity to have got back to winning ways

Despite a succession of forceful individual breaks however they either knocked on or gifted it back to the opposition whenever the line was in sight.

In the opening 15 minutes they were nowhere to be seen as an attacking force, and were then hit by a serious looking neck injury to their No8 Matt Green. Blaydon were in retreat near their own line when a ruck went down and Green was thrown backwards. Play was held up for 25 minutes whilst he was attended to and then stretchered off to be taken to hospital.

Territorially the game was then transformed with Blaydon grabbing the initiative to produce raid after raid into the Cinderford 22. Adam Dehaty, Brendan Daniel plus forwards Ross Batty and Selwyn St. Bernard all stormed clear but to no avail.

A Tim Stevenson penalty gave the visitors a slim lead at the interval and the fly-half was then on target twice more to make it 0-9 as Blaydon conceded a string of penalties.

And then on 68 minutes Blaydon at last got it right when the visitors ran it from defence only to infringe. Andrew Fenby took a quick tap penalty, and in his customary manner beat 4 defenders and crossed for a try. Andrew Baggett with the conversion reduced the deficit to just 2 points and Blaydon looked to be in the ascendancy.

Sadly they made little further progress and Cinderford were to have the last word. Stevenson had an opportunity to stretch the advantage with a penalty attempt that fell short but in the final minute they were able to put the issue beyond doubt.

Their winger Andrew MacRea ran from broken play in his own half, Jake Carter took it on and when he was held up, replacement Adrian Duncan, a hooker playing in the back row, was on hand to touch down

The conversion was missed but Cinderford had done enough to leapfrog over Blaydon in the league and consign them to fifth from bottom.

John Brennan.

Saturday 21st February - Blaydon 27 Wharfedale 35

When Blaydon lost out narrowly at Wharfedale in October there was a distinct feeling of injustice in that time was denied them for a potential match winning penalty to be taken. In this return meeting at Crow Trees however the result was a lot more clear cut with the Yorkshiremen well deserving of their win.

For the most part they were quicker to the breakdown, quicker to counter and from anywhere on the field, and with the ball in hand always looked likely to score.

In the end it was four tries each and a relatively close scoreline with Blaydon within touching distance of a second bonus point, but once Wharfedale had got their noses in front in the 10th minute another home defeat was on the cards.

Jason Smithson had forced his way over to give Blaydon an early advantage after a Brendan Daniel chip had rebounded for Charles Raynor to take it on. Raynor was then instantly back in action at the other end to prevent a score and clear his line.

The visitors ran it straight back however for their centre Chris Malherbe to cross for the first of his hat-trick, and Mark Bedworth with the conversion to land the first of his 15 points.

Back came Blaydon for Adam Dehaty to run in behind the posts, although there had been a hint of a knock-on, with Andy Baggett adding the points to make it 12-7 and a close game seemed in prospect.

But it was not to be with Wharfedale dominating to such an extent that they were to add another 28 points either side of the interval with only a Baggett penalty in reply. Bedworth struck three penalties, Malherbe steamed in twice more, full-back Adam Whaites was on the end of a long queue waiting to run in a simple score, and it was becoming very one sided in favour of the visitors.

And then up stepped Andrew Fenby, who had made little impact thus far, to collect on half way and embark on one of his trade-mark runs. Twisting and turning, checking and stepping, he had what seemed the entire Wharfedale side in full retreat and with little hope of stopping him.

And it almost turned the game. Baggett added the conversion and suddenly everyone was at it, forwards and backs alike running at the visitors and finding gaps of which previously there had been little sight, all inspired by the Fenby magic.

Smithson drove over from a line-out to clinch a try bonus point but Baggett was unable at the same time to take it within seven points with the conversion from wide out, and in the end justice was done,

Wharfedale had the win that they richly deserved.

Saturday 31st January 2009 - Mounts Bay 12 Blaydon 0

Late withdrawals meant it was a depleted Blaydon side that made the long trip to Cornwall where they totally failed to cope with the conditions and rarely looked like scoring. Mounts Bay on the other hand revelled in the deep mud, sensibly kept it tight, and with two tries in the bag had the game wrapped up by half-time.

In their first real attack the Cornishmen moved it 40 metres with a series of powerful 'pick and drives' to set it up for lock forward Ben Hilton who crashed over near the posts, with Doug Sanft easily adding the conversion.

Robert Windle went close with a penalty attempt for Blaydon but the home side remained in the driving seat and deservedly increased their lead with a second try, again after good driving from the forwards. This time they reached the 22 before swinging it wide, and left winger Richard Bright touched down in the corner.

Facing a 12 point deficit Blaydon came out fighting with a number of forays into the 22. Move after move broke down however as they failed to retain possession, and lacking the services of leading try scorer Andrew Fenby because of a suspected broken toe, were never in danger of threatening the line.

Mounts Bay coped readily with everything that came their way, and by the end it was Blaydon who once more were hanging on. Not a successful day for the Crow Trees outfit, considerably out of pocket by having chartered a plane, not a point on the board, and its now four games since their last win in the league.

John Brennan

Blaydon 15 Birmingham & Solihull 31

Blaydon's unbeaten home record was in jeopardy from the 3rd minute onward with the writing well and truly on the wall by half-time, and despite a late flurry led by the mercurial Andrew Fenby they could have little complaint at the disappointing outcome.

One of only two professional outfits in the league, the Birmingham side had the upper hand in most departments, being particularly adept at closing down any Blaydon back with ball in hand, and the general consensus afterwards was that by a long way they were the strongest opposition seen at Crow Trees this season.

Their early try was a text book affair; high ball to the corner, good control at the 5 metre scrum, blindside break then back along the line, cut out pass and winger over in the other corner.

Mitch Culpin was the scorer, with fly-half Mark Woodrow off target with the conversion but then quickly successful with three penalty attempts. A missed tackle led to Cameron Mitchell storming down the centre to send in Robert Connolly, Woodrow again on target, and suddenly it was 0-21 and all going wrong for Blaydon.

A fourth Woodrow penalty early in the second half seemed to confirm that the visitors were cruising to victory but when their flanker Russell Earnshaw was sin-binned for an early tackle in front of his posts, possible grounds for a penalty try, the game at last swung a little to the home side.

The Blaydon forwards began to assert and after two short scrums the ball was whipped out to Fenby who went over in the corner. A revival was on and they were unlucky not to score when Martin Shaw cut through only to see his pass go to ground.

And then disaster in the form of an interception that saw Birmingham speed down to the other end for flanker Shaun Pammenter to storm in, Woodrow converting. It was game over at 5-31, but then Fenby took a hand to put a smile back on the faces of the unhappy home supporters.

With time running out the winger broke out of a tackle, crossed half-way, and was weaving his way through the 22 when stopped by an ankle tap, but prop Rob Kalbraier was in support to finish it off.

Birmingham restarted, but within the minute Fenby was away again from his own half to show a clean pair of heels to the opposition, and this time he made it all the way to register his thirteenth of the campaign.

A grandstand finish, and if Blaydon had kicked their two penalty and three conversion attempts it could have been a tighter scoreline, but overall there was little doubt that the spoils had gone to the better side.

Saturday 17th January - Nottingham 33, Blaydon 22

Blaydon were within six minutes of pulling off a shock EDF Trophy win at League One side Nottingham, only to be hit by two late hammer blows. They had held out against everything the home side could throw at them but their three point lead sadly disappeared when Ashley Eltingstone and David Jackson scored from close range.

It was Blaydon who had opened the scoring in the 12th minute when Simon Barber brought off a great tackle and then hacked on to win the chase and score in the corner, Charlie Raynor adding an excellent conversion.

The lead was to be short lived however as the bigger Nottingham forwards gradually took control for Jackson to take advantage of a Blaydon missed tackle, and then second row Nick Rouse was driven over.

By the 23rd minute it was starting to look bleak for Blaydon when Andy Savage the Notts full-back touched down for a third try, all converted by Craig Tonks. The visitors however showed great spirit, a Raynor penalty making it 19-10 at the break, and then the game was transformed.

Flanker Scott Riddell, a half time replacement, made an effective blindside break to touch down and then Andrew Fenby broke from his own 22 to score the try of the match. The winger had gone close in the first half, but this time pounced when Notts dropped the ball and raced 80 metres beating man after man for a sensational score to which Raynor added the points.

It was now Notts who looked down and out but when Blaydon had a forward yellow-carded the advantage finally proved too much and it was the senior side that scraped through to the next round

Saturday 10th January Blaydon v Stourbridge Match Postponed

Saturday 3rd January - Blaydon 13, Redruth 13

In the end a draw was probably the fairest result but for 70 of the 88 minutes played Blaydon gave every indication that they were about to inflict what would have been only a second defeat of the season on the league leaders. Unfortunately in 10 of the other 18 minutes, directly after the restart, they conceded 10 points to let Redruth back into it, and then in the 8 minutes of time added on found themselves under serious pressure in their own 22 and grateful for the final whistle. Joe Shaw had set them on their way with a penalty, which was a disappointing return from some pounding of the visitors line, Peter Phelan, Jason Smithson and Andrew Fenby all held up. Their efforts were finally rewarded however when Martin Shaw cut loose from half-way, and Brendan Daniel scooted in to score from Adam Dehaty's clever reverse pass. Mark Scrivener, the Redruth fly-half put over the penalty when Phelan was yellow carded for preventing release, but with 2 minutes of the half remaining persistence from Fenby brought further success for Blaydon. The winger broke from the base of a scrum and after two others had taken it on, turned up again to wriggle over in the corner to make it a deserved 13-3 lead. Blaydon were then disastrously caught cold after the break. A poor pass out of defence let in Nathan Pedley, the Redruth winger knocking-on with the line at his mercy, but from the resulting scrum No8 Mark Bright stormed over. A second try was then conceded when Blaydon lost possession when trying to maul it up-field, and Alan Thirlby crossed in the corner. Neither effort was converted and with the scores level Blaydon hit back in the strongest

possible way. For fully fifteen minutes they battered and probed their way back and forth in the Redruth 22 but disappointingly without ever finding a chink in the visitors magnificent defensive line.

SATURDAY 20th DECEMBER - Tynedale 8, Blaydon 5

Tynedale remain unbeaten in league games at home since September 2006, when Blaydon beat them 38-17, but came perilously close to losing that record to Blaydon on Saturday and the margin could have been even greater.

They mounted an attack in the opening minute and then spent the next 39 in retreat as Blaydon pounded their line with attack after attack. Adam Dehaty and Andrew Fenby were both stopped inches short, passes went down at the vital moment, Joe Shaw struck the woodwork with a drop goal attempt, and somehow Tynedale survived intact almost until half-time.

Blaydon were awarded a very kickable penalty but elected to set up a line-out near the corner from which No8 Jason Smithson was driven over. Those five points separated the sides at the break, but had the visitors been able to convert their pressure into scores they could have been out of sight.

Andrew Murray pulled back the deficit with a penalty two minutes into the second half and Tynedale began to make a better fist of it. On 55 minutes however they looked to have conceded a second try when Blaydon's Scott Riddell dived over, hitting a post in the process, but the score was disallowed.

The storm was weathered and Tynedale eventually put together an attack, and from a ruck following a chip ahead Jamie Murray dived over in the corner to make it 8-3 against the run of play.

And then with 2 minutes remaining Blaydon were awarded a penalty just 20 metres out and in front of the posts, an opportunity to at least take a share of the points. Disappointingly for them Andrew Baggett put his kick wide, a game was lost that should have been won and Santa Claus had come early for the home side.

SATURDAY 6th DECEMBER - Blaydon 21 Macclesfield 14

An ugly game in difficult conditions eventually produced the right result for Blaydon, but it took them well into the final quarter to assert themselves. Having pushed the visitors pack sharply backwards the revitalised home forwards took it on again for hooker Ross Batty to be driven over, and the outcome was settled.

Blaydon were safely through to the 4th round of the EDF Energy Cup but until that late score, the Three North side, which had held an 8 points lead just after the break, were looking quite likely to cause an upset.

It had been 3-3 in the first half with Macclesfield breaking the impasse with a penalty from their full-back Jonathan Lowdon after they had re-cycled the ball time and time again in shipping it up-field. Unable to play their normal running game on the sticky ground Blaydon were further hampered by losing Martin Shaw and then Stephen Trench to the sin-bin.

By the interval Richard Windle had put over a penalty but Macclesfield then hit them with a double whammy on the restart. A second Lowdon success was quickly followed by an excellent rolling maul that took play back to the home line where flanker Chris Jones drove over to make it 3-11, and Blaydon were in disarray.

Positional changes were made and replacements introduced to the pack, and after a second Windle penalty Blaydon at last got their act together. An Andrew Fenby break from defence with a kick and chase set up a short scrum from which Chris Clark darted over, and it was back to a level game.

With club captain Dave Guthrie, one of the replacements, galvanising the forwards, prop Robbie Kalbraier grabbed another try. On paper at least, Macclesfield were still in with a chance when Lowdon completed his hat-trick to bring it back to 16-14, but Blaydon were now in the ascendancy and Batty made certain of their victory.

SATURDAY 29th NOVEMBER - Southend 14, Blaydon 24.

Although much weakened by the absence of a number of regulars Blaydon pulled off their second away win of the season in wet conditions at Southend that made handling extremely difficult.

Southend, who by contrast were seeking their second home win, were put under pressure from the start but kept their line intact and broke out to open the scoring entirely against the run of play. They secured good line out ball midway in the Blaydon half and moved it slickly through the hands for Tyson Lewis to crash over for them and Jake Sharp added the conversion.

Richard Windle was soon to pull back 3 points with a penalty, but when Southend infringed again in front of their posts the decision was taken to opt for the scrum and it paid dividends when full-back Charlie Raynor joined the line to coast in for a try. Windle's conversion made it 7-10, a lead that Blaydon held to the interval.

The home side had their best spell in the opening 15 minutes of the second period but having failed to take advantage were hit by 2 more Blaydon tries. Fly-half Windle cleverly chipped over the Southend defence and when the full-back spilled the ball Ed Mercer was quickly in to get the touch. The dust was hardly settled from that effort when Jason Smithson drove over for a typical No8 try from a short scrum.

Windle was successful with both conversions to stretch the lead to 7-24 but at that point Blaydon took their foot off the throttle and paid the price when Isaac Crook, a replacement Southend prop, burrowed over for a try to which Sharp added the points.

Fortunately the lesson was well learned and by the end Blaydon were once more calling the shots, with hooker Matt Hall just denied a bonus point try.

SATURDAY 15th NOVEMBER - Blaydon 35, Westcombe Park 22

Whilst life on the road continues to be something of a roller-coaster ride for Blaydon their home form is 100% solid, this latest win making it 5 out of 5 for the season - but it was never easy against a lively Westcombe side.

The visitors made much the more impressive start yet found themselves in arrears at the break, fought back to take the lead and were threatening to run away with it when Blaydon, who were not at their sharpest, somehow regained their composure to land a couple of late blows.

Westcombe had grabbed an early lead when No 8 Tom Hayman took a quick tap and stormed over from close range, Sam Naden converting, and it was against the run of play when Andrew Fenby responded with a penalty.

The visitors were still on top when out of the blue Blaydon ran in 2 tries in 2 minutes in a purple patch midway through the half. Jason Smithson bulldozed his way into the visitors 22 to set up the drive that brought success for flanker William Welch and then direct from the restart Fenby was released to run through in typical style, the winger converting both efforts.

Westcombe deservedly hit back with a Doug Abbott try before the interval, drew level through Luke Baldwin, and the game seemed to be theirs for the taking. Richard Windle, Blaydon's replacement fly-half then put over a penalty to restore the home advantage, but not for long as Richard Lankshear was soon to touch down at the other end.

With time running out and the visitors constantly on the front foot, a loose ball was hacked on by Chris Wearmouth, Windle put out a floating pass to the wing and Fenby did the rest, his 10th thus far, and Blaydon were back in front.

More breathing space was gained on 79 minutes when Ben Mercer made an incisive break from good line-out possession and full-back Adam Dehaty was in support to secure a 4th and bonus point winning try.

Windle was successful with the conversion and then in injury time finally put the issue beyond doubt with a drop goal - but it had been a mighty close thing.

SATURDAY 8th NOVEMBER - Blackheath 25, Blaydon 14

Not for the first time this season Blaydon shot themselves in the foot by incurring a yellow card at a crucial point in the game. Leading by 7-5 midway through the second period they lost influential scrum-half Mickey Young to the sin-bin and then conceded 12 points in the next 10 minutes.

Earlier Andrew Fenby had provided the highlight of the first half when he picked up on half-way and ghosted past 3 tackles in his inimitable style to score under the posts with Andrew Baggett adding the conversion.

Blackheath hit back after the break with a try in the corner from their winger Alex Page and then came the deluge. Considerable pressure on the Blaydon line brought them a penalty try which was quickly followed by a good effort from Mark Odejobi which was improved by Matt Leek.

Back at full strength Blaydon reduced the deficit to just 3 points when Scott Riddell was driven over, Baggett again converting, but some good possession failed to produce further success and it was the home side that finished the stronger.

Their flanker Gareth Jones crossed for a 4th try and in the closing minutes put paid to Blaydon hopes of a losing bonus point when Leek was on target with a penalty.

SATURDAY 1st NOVEMBER - Blaydon 18, Launceston 16

Two tries in ten minutes from winger Brendan Daniel swung this exciting encounter in Blaydon's favour, but Launceston with a late rally could have gone home with a share of the spoils.

Just 2 points adrift after their replacement centre Jamie Semmens had capitalised on a swift counter attack, fly-half Adam Stanniforth had the chance to level matters with the last kick of the game but saw his conversion effort drift narrowly wide.

The visitors had been impressive for two thirds of the game and would have deserved a draw, yet for all their superiority had actually threatened very little until they were up against it near the end. Blaydon however, despite being on the back foot for long spells, defended magnificently and when the chances came along took them in style.

It was against the run of play when Blaydon opened the scoring with an Andrew Baggett penalty on 30 minutes, a lead they held until the final minute of the half when Stanniforth levelled for the Cornish All Blacks.

Stanniforth struck again in the 6th minute of the second period but Blaydon suddenly shrugged off their shackles, and inspired by some fine running from full-back Adam Dehaty rocked the visitors with two excellent tries.

Martin Shaw made the initial break for the first, with Ben Mercer taking it on at pace to send in Daniel on a diagonal run and Baggett landed the points. The ever dangerous Daniel then added his second after snapping up a loose ball and with no support had little option but to take on the entire Launceston defence brushing aside three half-hearted tackles in a tremendous solo effort.

A Baggett penalty made it 18-6 with 10 minutes remaining and the Cornishmen in disarray, but somehow they conjured up a come-back and second row Tim Collins was driven over to set up a dramatic finale.

SATURDAY 25th OCTOBER - Wharfedale 15, Blaydon 14

For the second week in succession Blaydon lost out away from home but had ample opportunities to have wrapped it up long before the end, and then in the final play of the game were controversially denied the chance to turn around a 1 point deficit.

Charles Raynor was about to take a kick-able penalty when the ball fell over in the wind whereupon the referee blew the final whistle, not allowing it to be re-instated.

Wharfedale, whose forwards were on the back foot throughout, had taken an early lead when their flanker Alistair Allen touched down after three catch and drives from a line-out.

They held it until the 23rd minute when Blaydon, with a man advantage, drove on through the forwards for Jason Smithson to cross near the posts with Andrew Baggett adding the points.

By the interval Blaydon were ahead by 5-14, prop forward James Isaacson applying the finishing touch to more driving play, Baggett again on target, and little had been seen of the home side. Their centre, Mark Bedworth, landed a penalty soon after the restart but then it was back to one way traffic at the other end.

Blaydon however somehow contrived to twice knock-on with the line at their mercy, and then dropped the ball when another try seemed certain.

Having failed to take their chances they then paid the price when Bedworth jinked over and added the conversion himself to give his side that precious 1 point advantage.

SATURDAY 18th OCTOBER - Cambridge 39, Blaydon 28

Blaydon came away from high-flying Cambridge with a 4 try bonus point, their 5th from 7 games, but were kicking themselves that it could have been so much better.

Of the tries they conceded, 2 were from interceptions on the Cambridge line which should have been prevented and 2 more were run in when Blaydon were a man short.

Cambridge with the wind at their backs had the better of the early exchanges and built up a lead with a Craig Evans penalty and a close range try from Stefan Liebenberg. Centre Jim Knight stretched the advantage further with his length of the field effort, converted by Evans, but right on the interval Andrew Baggett finally got the Blaydon scoreboard moving with a penalty to make it 15-3.

A long distance drop goal from Baggett soon after the restart kept Blaydon in touch but a lapse in concentration saw Jim Shanaman race clear from 90 metres for the home side with Evans again on

the mark. Worse was to follow, when with Dave Guthrie in the sin-bin Cambridge piled on the pressure scoring twice more through flanker Darren Fox and then Evans with a storming solo effort.

With time running out Blaydon at last began to swing the game and finished with a flurry of scoring. Winger Brendan Daniel crashed over wide out and was quickly followed by leading try scorer Andrew Fenby who put the finishing touch to a multi-handling movement, and finally in the last move of the game Daniel cleverly put the hobbling Martin Shaw over in the corner to clinch the bonus point.

SATURDAY 11TH OCTOBER; Blaydon 40 - Mounts Bay 7

Blaydon maintained their 100% home record with another comfortable, yet at times disjointed 5 point success, but for their Cornish opponents it meant a continuation of their own unenviable record of having lost every game thus far.

Mounts Bay conceded 2 penalties in the first 2 minutes, both converted by Blaydon full-back Charles Raynor, but then took control and the home side had to pull out all the stops to protect their line for the next 15 minutes.

Winger Andrew Fenby eventually broke the siege with a length of the field break and then went clear again from the scrum to leave Sean Tomes with a simple touch down. A second try was then added on the half hour when they moved it quickly from a line out for Martin Shaw to release Fenby with a beautifully weighted pass.

Blaydon were then at their best in the closing minutes of the half with Ben Mercer supplying his centre colleague Shaw and then popping up to take the return pass and cut through for an excellent score. By the interval the lead was up to 28 points with try No 4 from flank forward Scott Riddell after much handling, conversion from Raynor, and a cricket score looked likely.

Disappointingly however Blaydon went right off the boil and it took them until the 24th minute of the second period to get back on track with another Fenby effort after shrugging off 3 challenges en route to the line. Brendan Daniel, the other winger then picked a pass off his toes to storm over for a 6th try but the visitors were to have the last word.

With the Blaydon skipper in the sin-bin they hammered away at the line until the final minute when Sam Parsons powered over in the corner and Dan Hawks added the conversion to give them some slight consolation on the long trek home.

SATURDAY 4th OCTOBER - Birmingham & Solihull 32, Blaydon 12

With the strong wind behind them Blaydon made a bright start, building a useful lead by the interval but unfortunately for them the home side made even better use of the elements when it was their

turn to enjoy, and ran out comfortable winners in the end.

Blaydon had dominated for most of the opening quarter before eventually breaking through with a well taken try from Rob Kalbriær, the prop forward storming in from 15 metres after some excellent driving play from the pack.

The lead was then extended when winger Andrew Fenby broke from his own 22 to release hooker Matt Hall. He took it on for 30 metres in fine style before sending in Charlie Raynor for the try.

Andrew Baggett landed the conversion to make it a 12 point advantage but on the stroke of half-time Birmingham pulled back 3 points with a penalty from their fly-half Mark Woodrow following a handling in the ruck offence.

The turnaround then brought instant success for the home side with a close range try by lock forward Robert Connolly. Woodrow failed to add the points but from then on proceeded to dominate the rest of the game making particularly good use of the high ball

Blaydon were kept permanently on the back foot and conceded further tries to Simon Hunt, Reece Spee and Rob Petty with Woodrow on target with all 3 conversions plus a penalty.

SATURDAY 27th SEPTEMBER - BLAYDON 37, STOURBRIDGE 16

Blaydon bounced back from last week's reversal in Cornwall with a convincing 5 tries to 2 win over a Stourbridge side that probably had the better share of the possession and looked just as lively for the full 80 minutes.

The vital differences between the sides however was that whilst Blaydon took every chance that came along, Stourbridge managed to waste all of theirs until late on when they had a numerical advantage, and also that whilst the Blaydon scrummage was rock solid, the visitors were usually in retreat

From a quiet opening 15 minutes the game burst into life with a Blaydon purple patch in the next 15 during which they ran in 3 tries. Flanker Matt Green, making his home debut, crashed over for the first after a superb break by Ben Mercer and was quickly followed by an Andrew Fenby solo effort in which he completely bamboozled the defence with a series of jinks and side-steps.

Alistair Bressington the Stourbridge full-back pulled back 3 points with a penalty but Blaydon at this stage were irresistible and soon on the mark again, this time due to the efforts of Michael Young. The scrum-half booted a clearance upfield and gave chase to such good effect that a hasty line out was conceded on the 22 metre line. At the resulting scrum Blaydon wheeled the visitors pack and Green came round to mop up and head for the line where James Isaacson was in support to finish off. Andrew Baggett who had converted the Fenby effort was off target this time but then made it 20-3 with the last kick of the half.

The second period started with a bang when Brassington landed a Stourbridge penalty in less than a minute after the whistle and then within another minute prop forward James Kalbraier stormed over at the other end for Blaydon's fourth and bonus point winning try.

Along with two more conversions and a penalty from Baggett, replacement No8 Selwyn St Bernard completed the Blaydon scoring when diving over in fine style but with the game in the bag at 37-6, some of the gloss disappeared when lock forward Dave Whiteside was red carded for fighting and Stourbridge took full advantage with two late tries.

Bressington went over in the corner from a flowing move and then their centre Ben Barkley with a similar effort in the final minute gave them some deserved consolation.

SATURDAY 20th SEPTEMBER - REDRUTH 38, BLAYDON 12

A Blaydon side deprived of 7 regulars lost their 100% record at Redruth, suffering badly in the second period when they did themselves no favours by having two players yellow-carded.

For 40 minutes however they held the strong Cornish side and scored the opening try to hold the lead in the opening quarter. Man of the match Mark Scrivener, the Redruth fly-half, had put over a 5th minute penalty but Blaydon hit back immediately with some excellent pressure by the forwards leading to Ben Mercer twisting over the line and Andrew Baggett adding the points.

Scrivener then struck two more penalties and put over the conversion of a Rob Thirlby try to give his side a 16-7 lead at the interval, and was on target again soon after the restart.

Chris Clark the Blaydon scrum-half was then sin-binned, followed soon after by prop forward Darren Fearn, and the floodgates opened.

Redruth controlled the play for long periods with some good re-cycling and were rewarded with three more tries from Dominic Cook, Thirlby with a second and finally and ironically Nat Pedley, the player who had been involved in the controversial incident with Cameron Johnson at Crow Trees last season.

Scrivener took his personal tally to 18 points with two more conversions but it was Blaydon that had the last word with a consolation try from a swift handling movement from which No8 Jason Smithson popped up in the corner to finish off.

BLAYDON 24; TYNEDALE 5 - SATURDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER

After a comfortable win in the opener at Waterloo, Blaydon might have expected stiffer opposition from their neighbours who had also made a winning start, but surprisingly the threat never materialised. Tynedale did create some chances in the first half but from start to finish somehow

contrived to drop or knock-on the bulk of their possession and for long spells simply could do nothing right. Blaydon on the other hand, and in front of a bumper crowd, defended well, took their chances when they appeared, and with 4 tries to add to the 6 last week now sit proudly at the head of the table with maximum points.

The early stalemate was broken in the 10th minute when a Tynedale clearance was returned with interest, a knock-on went un-noticed and Martin Shaw with a neat side-step raced in for the opening score. Tynedale came back strongly and really should have levelled but in the first of a whole series of comical errors made a mess of an attack allowing Andy Fenby to hack on and chase upfield for try No 2, converted by Andrew Baggett.

At this point Blaydon skipper Dave Guthrie was sin-binned and Tynedale sought to take instant advantage and a flowing move was finished off in great style by their winger Peter Cole, only for it to be nullified by a totally unnecessary forward pass. The visitors finally got it right in the 5th minute of time added on when Jack Harrison successfully dribbled down the touchline, but there was still time for another Blaydon score through prop forward Robert Kalbraier after Chris Clark had charged down a Cole clearance.

With the score at 17-5 at the break it could still have been anyone's game, but just 24 seconds after the restart it was realistically all over when Ben Mercer scooted in for Blaydon's 4th and bonus point winning try, improved by Baggett. The remainder of the second half, which lasted 54 minutes, was notable only for a yellow card for Tynedale's Ross Samson and a sequence of serious looking injuries. The stretcher twice made an appearance on the field but thankfully was not required.

WATERLOO 8, BLAYDON 46 - SATURDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER

Blaydon's second season in National Division Two got off to a cracking start when they ran in 6 tries to convincingly beat Waterloo, controlling the game almost from start to finish. Some excellent off-loading kept Blaydon in possession for long periods, and wingers Andrew Fenby and Brendan Daniel were a constant threat.

It was Fenby in the 4th minute who got the scoreboard moving when he 'waltzed in' down the left, beating three would-be tacklers in the process. Six minutes later it was 0-14 after scrum-half Gavin Charlton had shot through a gap following good work by the forwards.

No.8 Jason Smithson broke from a scrum on half-way to set up try No 3 for Daniel, whose effort matched the earlier Fenby score, and then Fenby grabbed his second in time added-on after Patrick Dias had chipped ahead.

Waterloo had a spell of pressure after the restart and deservedly scored when hooker Peter Ince went over from close range, but John Lowden, who had landed a first half penalty, was off target with the conversion attempt and that was to be the end of their scoring.

Blaydon then regained the initiative and went from strength to strength, adding two more tries. Ed Mercer crossed in the corner to finish off a flowing move, and then almost inevitably it was Fenby

who applied the coup de grace. The winger set off on a mazy run beating man after man and when he was finally brought down just inches short, popped it up for Dias to touch it down. Andrew Baggett failed to convert, but in his debut game had been successful with all previous attempts, 5 conversions and 2 penalties.