## BATHRUGBY

NEWCASTLE FALCONS SATURDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2006 KICK-0FF 12.30PM



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NEWCASTLE FALCONS

## **BATH RUGBY**

## V NEWCASTLE FALCONS



FINAL SCORE

TODAY'S OFFICIALS: Referee | Sean Davey | buch Judges | Peter Huckle and David Kurk

FINAL SCORE

NEWCASTLE|FALCONS

## VIEW FROM THE NORTH

NEWCASTLE FALCONS

WORDS | MARK SMITH



**66** An up-and-down three weeks was completed with Friday's hugely encouraging win at Sale, but it is consistency that John Fletcher's men crave **99** 

ewcastle Falcons go in to today's encounter hot on the heels of last Friday's 26-18 victory at Guinness Premiership champions, Sale Sharks.

New international signings Joe McDonnell and Loki Crichton both made their starting debuts for the club, and both All Black prop McDonnell and Samoa fly-half Crichton made their presence felt right from the off.

Former Shark James Hoyle and No 8 Mike McCarthy were the tryscorers on the night, and in another boost to their squad the Falcons have had their numbers swelled this week by the arrival of South African No 8 Russell Winter and Kiwi lock Mark Sorenson.

The latter arrived too late to be in consideration for today's game, but will no doubt be keen to add further impetus to a Newcastle season which has been up-and-down for the Guinness Premiership's northern-most club.

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It had been a summer of change

Andrew. A smooth transition was ensured with the promotion of John Fletcher from academy manager, the former Tynedale, Northampton, Newcastle and England A centre.

The local man's first competitive game in charge was against his old Saints team at Franklin's Gardens and, staying true to the club's values of open expansive rugby, a free-flowing encounter duly followed, albeit in a narrow 25-23 defeat.

Worcester Warriors were next, and if their opening match had been a thriller, it could certainly not match the late excitement on show at Kingston Park. A scintillating debut try from Dutch wing Tim Visser with the last play of the game secured the points for the hosts, before a mauling at Saracens, as a young Falcons eight felt the full force of the more experienced Sarries pack.

Five days later at home to London Irish it was the boot of Barry Everitt that cut off the oxygen were enough for a 26-21 victory, before the EDF Energy Cup provided a welcome break with a magnificent home win over Magners League leaders Llanelli Scarlets after a defeat in the same tournament away to Sale.

An away loss at London Wasps was followed by a 50-point win at home to Padova in the European Challenge Cup, while a powerful Brive side put 41 points on the board in France to burst the Newcastle bubble.

The inconsistency blighting the Newcastle season has been demonstrated in stark focus this month by a hugely encouraging home win over league leaders Bristol, but just when the winning formula looked to have been found injury struck again to fly-half Jonny Wilkinson and struggling Harlequins promptly came to Kingston Park and strangled the Falcons' attack.

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