

Westcliff 42 Hertford 10

Having stuttered to an opening day win against Dorking and then won, lost and won again the game at Sidcup the previous week Westcliff looked forward to the visit of Hertford. An established level 5 club and perennial top 4 outfit the visitors arrived on the back of a convincing win over Shelford the previous week. Injuries and unavailability denied Westcliff the services of Dartnell, Dellas and Oliver Jones. Returning to the line-up though was Vandermolen while Anderson-Brown and Spivey moved into the starting 15 from the bench which was filled by the return of Brown Weston and Marsh.

On a bright sunny afternoon, the visitors started from where presumably they left off the week before. They dominated possession and territory for the opening minutes attacking with vigour pace and width. Patience paid off for them when they created the space and numbers to score in the right-hand corner after 8 minutes to lead 0-5. The home team responded but nothing was coming easily, and their first attempts were repelled by way of a frustrating scrum penalty and then when they quickly returned ill discipline was punished with a richly deserved yellow card. So, 15 minutes in, a man down and behind on the scoreboard things were looking difficult.

And yet by the time numbers were restored they were 10-5 in front by virtue of an excellent try from Bannister converted by Jones who quickly thereafter added a penalty. More was to follow and sustained pressure on the Hertford line afforded Mckeith an opportunity close to the sticks to bamboozle the stretched defence and poodle in under the posts, again Jones converted. A welcome purple patch saw the hosts now 17-5 up. A lead built not only on enterprise but equally on dogged defence without the ball. Defend they had to again as the half drew to a close and successfully so they did. In reward a further visit to Hertford territory reaped another 3 points from the boot of Jones and a 20-5 half time lead.

The first 10 minutes of the second half secured the try scoring bonus point and effectively the game. A try from Charlie Brown converted this time by Mckeith was quickly followed by one from Billy Marrant as the hosts turned the screw. Jones restored to kicking duties after treatment slotted another penalty mid half to extend the lead to a commanding 35-5. More was to come and in the final quarter Sam Brown finished off a sweeping move which Jones once more converted. Westcliff continued to attack but no further scores came and right at the death Hertford turned over ball slipped the

shackles and drew the game to a conclusion with a last play try of their own. Westcliff were worthy and convincing 42-10 winners.

This was by far our best performance of the season and probably the recent past, I am delighted with the lads all 18 of them. Hertford are a very good side, they will probably reflect on what went wrong as you do on such days but make no mistake they turned up. This was not a case of how off they were it was all about how good we were. Nevertheless, what's done is done and Tunbridge wells will not allow us to dwell on the result when we visit on Saturday. As usual we will spend the days between now and then working on our game and reviewing our bumps and bruises which are many with the pitches still hard and the physicality intense. To that end more encouraging news from the 2nd team who won well against Chingford whilst giving debuts to teenagers Harvey Aspinall and Dan Rail who both showed great promise.

Bannister, Merrick, Stol, J Jones, Spivey, Mckeith, H Marrant, C Brown, B Marrant, Binneman, Scogings, Anderson-Brown, Vandermolen, Hatton, J Smith REP Weston, Marsh, S Brown