

Guildford 20 Westcliff 29

With a third of the starting XV from their previous game unavailable or injured, Westcliff were pleased at least, to welcome back captain Jack Jones to the team. Also into the squad came Dellas, Maloney, Reynolds and Oliver Jones. The visiting side in fact took an 18-man match day squad consisting entirely of former youth and mini players and which included three pairs of brothers.

On a bright and balmy afternoon Westcliff started well initially and early pressure brought reward. Quick ball was spread wide and then fed back inside for Merrick whose insertion into the line carved open the home defence for a try that Jones converted. Despite the confident start Westcliff began to get on the wrong side of the penalty count allowing the hosts to build pressure and momentum. One offence too many in the wrong area of the field resulted in a merited yellow card for Marsh and shortly thereafter Guildford converted a penalty to reduce the arrears to 3-7. Although Westcliff were defending well when called to, they were a little erratic in possession and this lack of control invited further pressure. As the game entered the second quarter the hosts converted another penalty the award of which had been a little perplexing. They were further frustrated when in attack and playing advantage they collected the ball and were set to run in unopposed when the referee brought them back for the initial infringement. They did soon after convert a penalty to lead 6-10 but were soon required to defend manfully again, which they did with intensity. However, a ball that went to ground as the hosts attacked broke fortuitously for their scrum half who was able to evade the wrong-footed defence to skip through under the posts. Now trailing 13-10 as the half drew to a close they were also disadvantaged by a second yellow card after an innocuous but marginally high arm from Jack Jones brushed against a Guildford player. Correct? Maybe unfortunate and soft certainly.

Trailing 10-13 and a man down for the opening 8 minutes Westcliff had to start the second half significantly better than they had finished the first. Happily, that's exactly what they did, from the outset their tempo and intensity were greater and that brought early reward. Bannister had already seen a penalty slip wide when he exploited space and opportunity created by the hard carrying of Rob Smith to score close to the posts. Less than 10 minutes later he doubled the dose in similar circumstances and the visitors

had taken a grip on the game leading 13-24 and continuing to press. Further pressure brought further reward and Maloney was next to score powering over from short range as the referee played advantage to good effect this time. As the final quarter arrived Westcliff had a 16 point lead and were asking all the questions. Further opportunities were created although not quite taken but they retained control of the game attacking frequently and defending hard when required to. Guildford did score in the 7th minute of time added on which was some small consolation, but it was the games final act and Westcliff emerged deserved 20-29 winners.

This was a great result for us, any win on the road is a good won especially a bonus point one but with a much-changed team and after losing our way a little in the first half the way we controlled the second half was very pleasing. The lads showed not only their grit but also their quality, they have both in spades and are a credit to themselves each other and the club. Next week we host Brentwood who have been playing well and picking up good results of their own. Its sure to be a keenly contested game between two local sides and I am sure both clubs are looking forward to it.

Spivey, O Jones, Bannister, R Smith, Merrick, J Jones, H Marrant, Weston, B Marrant, Dellas, Dartnell, Edwards, Marsh, Hatton, J Smith REP Maloney, Reynolds, Ansell