

Sutton & Epsom 22 Westcliff 19

Winning the previous weeks battle of the top two Essex clubs came at a price and injuries to Edwards, Vandermolen and Rob Smith ruled them out. Additionally, Marsh was away at a wedding, but Merrick at least remained available having successfully pleaded not guilty at a hearing for his red card against Brentwood. Into the squad came Scogings, Maloney, Weston and Sam Brown.

Westcliff found themselves playing against a strong wind in the first half and with a very bright sun in their eyes. Sutton started strongly eager to press home the advantage that the elements gave them. Westcliff were at this stage defensively determined and resilient, but the hosts nevertheless forced their way over for an unconverted try after 6 minutes. More pressure was put on the visitors line but increasingly Westcliff began to cause problems of their own and as the first quarter ended they applied sustained pressure on the Sutton line and Jones was on hand from close range to score a try he confidently converted. Westcliff led 5-7 and were now very much in the game and frequently on the front foot. They carved out opportunities but failed to take them hindered in some respect by an injury to Stol in midfield which would eventually see him withdrawn in the second half. There were no further scores in the half and Westcliff turned around with a 2-point lead and were due to enjoy the benefit of the conditions.

They started the second half strongly with early pressure resulting in 1 yard out try scoring specialist Billy Marrant going over under the posts. Jones converted but missed the next opportunity when Bannister scored again just moments later but a 5-19 lead in the circumstances looked at that point commanding and so it should have been.

Uncharacteristically though Westcliff took their foot off the pedal and around the hour mark with little sign or obvious warning they lost their way and the momentum shifted. The sun dipped the gale eased and in a spell of a little over 10 minutes the hosts scored three tries one of which was converted, and the game had been tipped on its head with Sutton now leading 22-19. Westcliff stopped shipping points but try though they might they failed to force the score that would rescue the game. They did create opportunities and field position but errors that typified their afternoon let them down and Sutton held on to deservedly win a game the visitors will quickly want to forget.

It was a difficult and disappointing afternoon for us a lot of things conspired against us in the lead up and on the pitch but in the first instance credit must go to Sutton who sensed and seized their opportunity. At 5-19 I felt we were one score from putting them away, but they weren't having any of it and gave us the run around for 10 minutes that won them the game with some aggressive and adventurous rugby. We wont dwell on it all teams have days like this there are no great lessons to take from it if anything it was a case of a game to far for a squad being stretched a little further than we would like. The rest week is welcome and needed.

Bannister, Brown, Stol, Reynolds, Merrick, Jones, Spivey, Lane, B Marrant, Dellas, Dartnell, Scogings, Maloney, Hatton, Smith REP Weston, Binstead, H Marrant