

Shelford 12 Westcliff 54

A combination of injury and unavailability enforced 5 changes to the match day squad for the trip to struggling Shelford. Out for one reason or another went Maloney, Marsh, Merrick, Stol and Sam Brown. In came Hatton, Ansell, Meakin Harvey and Anderson-Brown. Although grey and bitterly cold the game was played on the hosts 3G pitch guaranteeing a mud free fast paced game.

The game started with the hosts pressing hard and driving deep into Westcliff territory, up to the line but in the face of committed defence not quite, over it. The visitors forced errors and turnovers threatening regularly to break out from deep. The status quo was maintained for the opening quarter but eventually Westcliff forced a series of penalties and also a yellow card. Sustained pressure paid off with hooker Billy Marrant barging over from short range on 20 minutes. Mckeith added the conversion to establish a 0-7 lead which was doubled by a repeat dose of short-range driving and accurate place kicking from both Marrant and Mckeith as the half hour mark approached. Although Shelford remained adventurous and fiercely competitive, they were unable to breach the Westcliff line and as the half closed the visitors marched upfield laid siege to the line and eventually released Reynolds in acres of space to score in the right corner. The conversion was unsuccessful, and the half ended with Westcliff 0-19 up.

Westcliff asserted their superiority in the opening 20 minutes of the second half and scored two more trys through Jim Smith and Reynolds again. With a bonus point secured and the game appearing to be won they continued in the same vein to score further trys by Bannister and Henry Marrant to establish a 0-47 lead with a little over 10 minutes to go. Shelford kept playing and were rewarded with two trys in the closing minutes one of which was converted but Westcliff responded by scoring in the final play through debutant Reece Harvey. Mckeiths conversion brought to a conclusion a comprehensive but hard-earned victory 12-54.

A physical and fast paced game Shelford have been having a tough time, but they are clearly working hard and are playing for each other and their club. We wish them well for the rest of this season and what I imagine will be a much better next one. For our part it was a job well done we continue to cope with a long list of injuries whilst maintaining a challenge at the top of the table. There is still a long way to go but we have the ability and depth to remain in the mix until the end. We couldn't be happier at maintaining our excellent progress and development over recent seasons whilst remaining at heart and in practice a committed community amateur sports club.

Mckeith, Bannister, Ansell, R Smith, Reynolds, Whiting, H Marrant, Weston, B Marrant, Brown, Scogings, Dartnell, Binsted, Hatton J Smith REP Meakin, Anderson-Brown, Harvey