

CS Stags 1863 25 Westcliff 36

Westcliff were able to welcome back Lane, Scogings and Rob Smith for their visit to West London to take on CS Stags. However, there remained a lengthy unavailable list due to existing and new injuries as well as the wedding of tight head Binneman and the recent arrival of a new born daughter for Jack Jones. The team bus endured a torturous trip to West London and the game kicked off some 20 minutes later than scheduled with the lads having had a truncated and not entirely adequate warm up.

The opportunity for any warm up at all was courtesy of the home side, which was very much appreciated. However, the hospitality did not extend to allowing us to play our way into the game as instead we found ourselves 5-0 down inside the first 60 seconds after a charge down close to our own line. The hosts had a bit more zip to their game in these opening minutes but gradually Westcliff found their feet and a familiar tempo. Sam Brown restored parity after 13 minutes and Westcliff began to offer threat more regularly as indeed from time to time did Stags. It was Westcliff though that scored next after a wave of patient and probing phases in the home teams 22 resulted in Rob Smith crossing under the sticks and with Mckeith adding the extra 2 points the visitors led 5-12. The game continued in the same vein for the final 10 minutes of the half but with no addition to the score with Mckeith pushing a last kick of the half penalty attempt wide.

The third quarter was tightly contested during which there was only an exchange of penalties, Bannister adding the three for Westcliff having replaced Mckeith on kicking duties. At 8-15 Westcliff appeared in control of a tight low scoring affair and in the final quarter they pulled clear. Converted trys from Billy Marrant and Sam Brown secured the bonus point and established a match winning 21-point lead. Into the last 10 minutes and the Stags benefited from another charge down try buy Westcliff quickly responded through Bannister who converted his own try, the home defence stretched and finally breached once more. It was a source of mild irritation rather than a matter of any great importance that in the final few minutes with the game won but down to 14 with a man in the bin Westcliff allowed the home side the consolation of two late trys to make the final score at 25-36.

It was a good result, a bonus point win away from home always is, we weren't at our best and started a little flat after the late arrival but the lads applied themselves and got the job done. With the battle of the top 2 going the way of Sutton the final few weeks of the season are going to be very interesting. Sutton have put themselves in the driving seat for the title and its hard to see them letting that slip from their grasp. Second though and the play off place are up for grabs and on paper we have a slightly easier run in, but as we all know rugby is not played on paper. An interesting couple of weeks ahead of us with interest maintained for sure right to the last. That starts next week when we host Chingford in the final home game of the season (maybe). Big lunch big game big prize. See you there.

Bannister, Brown, Reynolds, R Smith, Merrick, Mckeith, Spivey, Weston, Marrant, Lane, Scogings, Dartnell, Marsh, Hatton, J Smith REP Meakin, Maloney, H Marrant