

Tring 24 Westcliff 17

Westcliff went to 4th placed Tring for what is amongst the most testing of away fixtures with not only the disappointment, but also the physical toll of the previous weeks encounter with Sutton, weighing heavily. With no less than seven enforced changes to the starting team, with three further positional changes and with every second row in the club injured or otherwise unavailable this game looked like a battle against the odds from the start.

Under the circumstances the sluggish start made by Westcliff with the slope in their favor and the wind at their backs was perhaps understandable but in the final analysis the failure to take full advantage of those elements were where the game was lost. Tring were committed and forceful from the outset setting out their stall in the opening minutes, while Westcliff took a while to get into their stride and never did quite reach the levels regularly achieved throughout the season to date. They did get on the scoreboard first through a 12th minute penalty from the boot of Jones and created a couple of promising opportunities, but they came to nothing as the final pass went to ground each time. Tring scored up the slope from deep when the initial tackle was blocked off and the covering ones fell off to easily and the hosts led 7-3 after the first quarter. Again, chances came and went for the visitors, but they were also being kept busy keeping a determined home side at bay. They did break through after 35 minutes when pressure forced turnover ball that Roskams was on hand to pounce upon and race to the line. Jones added the conversion but with further pressure bringing no more scores they took a narrow 7-10 lead into the break.

Playing into a stiff breeze and up the slope with just a 3-point lead for 40 minutes was always going to be a difficult task but Westcliff had at least showed signs of warming to it. From the kick off they drove upfield, but Tring soon broke out and scored in the left-hand corner from which they converted successfully. Behind again Westcliff began to assert and sustain pressure in a way they had not previously managed and were rewarded around the hour mark when Bannister scored, and Jones converted to retake the lead at 14-17. Unfortunately, in the final quarter Tring scored a converted try and added a late penalty to establish a seven-point lead. The visitors worked hard into the elements and threatened to break the shackles and contrive a score to bring the scores level but were ultimately unable to do so and they went down 24-17.

A disappointing result and the first time we have lost back to back games all season. We didn't have enough quality today, but the performance was honest and not too displeasing. We had a lot of changes and with every 2nd row in the club injured or absent we struggled at the lineout which denied us a platform there. Two in game injuries to Maloney and Billy Marrant set us back further but it was good to give a debut to Kwame Kwassi from the bench, one with which he can be pleased. Last week took a lot out of us as it, judging by their result, did to Sutton as well, and this game came too soon. However, everyone must deal with the highs and lows so we will put our feet up nurse sore limbs hope for injuries to be overcome and look to come back swinging after the break.

**Bannister, Brown, Spivey, Jones, Roskams, Whiting, H Marrant, Lane, B Marrant,
Binneman, Scogings, Maloney, Marsh, Hatton, Smith REP Deltas, Weston, Kwassi**