

Westcliff 46 Chingford 12

For the final scheduled home league game of the season Westcliff welcomed Chingford to The Gables. The home sides visit to Lea Valley at Christmas had been a fruitless one having failed to adapt to the heavily waterlogged and muddied pitch, they left empty handed and deservedly so. A better performance and outcome in much improved conditions were hoped for as the season hurtled towards an as yet uncertain conclusion. Having won well the previous week the squad was largely unchanged, but Ian Dartnell Sam Brown and Matt Meakin were replaced in the squad by Ewan Binneman Jack Jones and Charlie Brown.

The opening exchanges were committed and fierce as the teams each probed the others defences. Westcliff began to gain the upper hand and pressure forced a penalty converted by Jones on 8 minutes. Five minutes later Ross Merrick finished off first phase ball from a set scrum and Jones added the extra 2 points. Westcliff continued to carry the greater threat and further pressure resulted in a try for Bill Marrant which this time went unconverted. Merrick was on hand to cross once more after slick hands exploited the space created by some forceful and patient drives after 30 minutes and the hosts were in firm control at 20-0 up. Before the break Chris Marsh secured a try scoring bonus point crossing under the posts providing Jones with a routine conversion. The hosts led 27-0 as they headed in for their half time oranges.

The resumption in play was untidy for the hosts whose discipline faltered. From the restart they forced a penalty, but it was immediately reversed for an act of petulance and Chingford were on the front foot. Shortly afterwards Billy Marrant received a yellow card which unsettled their set piece and the visitors took advantage to score two quick fire tries one of which was converted. The shift in momentum put Westcliff off their stride for the first time but they steadied the ship and slowly began to reassert themselves. Sustained pressure on the visitors line through a series of close quarter drives allowed Spivey to snipe off the back of one to push the lead back out to 32-12. More of the same followed with this time Maloney galloping through under the posts to extend it further to 39-12. The scoring was rounded off at the death when Jack Jones broke the line and dashed home to score the games final try which he himself converted.

A good win and a fitting way to draw the curtain on our league campaign at home for this season. We dropped the ball for a while in the third quarter but otherwise maintained control and played at times some good rugby. Intriguingly results elsewhere mean we go into the final game of the season at Dorking next week with all outcomes possible. We can and will finish in 1st 2nd or 3rd, we will be champions, play -off contenders or unlucky losers which of those will come to pass I couldn't say but its going to be an interesting afternoon next Saturday. However, things turn out it has been another great season one to remember and celebrate and one in which the players can be rightly proud.

Bannister, Spivey, Reynolds, Jones, Merrick, Mckeith, H Marrant, Weston, B Marrant, Binneman, Scogings, Lane, Marsh, Hatton, J Smith REP Brown, Maloney, R Smith