

Westcliff 18 Old Redcliffians 23

Injury and unavailability necessitated six changes to the previous weeks squad. Out were Rob and Jim Smith, James, Bannister, Buster Reynolds and Webster. In came Mckeith, Jones, Binstead, Anderson-Brown, Kwassi and for the first time Dan Hughes. Redcliffians arrived on the back of a home win against Old Albanian whilst Westcliff were still smarting from failing to close out the game the previous week at Sutton.

Westcliff started positively and early pressure and patience was rewarded after 5 minutes when the visiting defence was stretched, and a tackle close to the line was slipped and Sam Reynolds crashed over. The conversion drifted wide, but the hosts held an early 5-0 lead. Five minutes later though they suffered their first setback when Weston twisted and ankle in the tackle and was forced from the field with an injury likely to side-line him for a while. The visitors upped the tempo as Westcliff adjusted and five minutes later their centre exploited a gap and an ineffective midfield tackle to score under the posts, the conversion putting the visitors in front for the first time 5-7. Now they had gained the ascendancy and a further try followed six minutes later from a driving maul off a lineout when the hooker peeled away and crashed over. Westcliff steadied and as the half hour approached reduced the arrears to 8-12 through a Jones penalty. Redcliffians replied in kind some minutes later to restore their lead to 7 points at 8-15 but the hosts continued to take the game to the visitors and a try as the half drew to a close by skipper Marsh and converted by Jones tied the scores up at the break 15-15.

Westcliff started the second half as they had the first on the front foot and for periods laid siege to the opponents line but failed to convert opportunities into points. Around 55 minutes, after sustained pressure, they elected to take the 3 points on offer from the most recent of a succession of penalties which put them in front at 18-15 but felt like an inadequate return for the period of dominance. The more so five minutes later when Redcliffians moved upfield and scored an unconverted try to retake the lead 18-20. After 65 minutes they added a penalty to stretch the lead to 5 points at 18-23 the game still close and there to be won by both sides. The final 15 minutes were tense as Westcliff absorbed pressure and gradually built momentum in the closing moments. They forced their way upfield and laid siege to the line but determined and frequently desperate defence kept them short of it. The penalties given up were insufficient to change the result by themselves and resorting to a high risk and reward grubber behind the defence they failed by the slimmest of margins to snatch the victory and the referee drew the game to a conclusion at 18-23.

Another bonus point but another disappointment and another game where we didn't quite do enough. Another game though where we demonstrated we are and can be competitive another game from which we will learn. We have picked up a few knocks and we will need to see where that leaves us when the dust settles but having brushed ourselves off, we will return to the training pitch and focus on our visit to Bournemouth next week.

Croft, H Marrant, Jones, Whiting, Triana, Mckeith, Bolton, Weston, B Marrant, Binneman, Scogings, Vandermolten, Lynch, Marsh, Reynolds REP Meakin, Binstead, Anderson-Brown, Kwassi, Hughes