

## Tonbridge Juddians 42 Westcliff 5

Westcliff travelled to Kent to meet the league leaders and firm favourites Tonbridge Juddians. The opposition were, at least for once, a known quantity, the sides having met regularly in previous seasons in the London Division. It was though the first time of meeting since the hosts promotion to National 2 a few years ago during which time they have established themselves as amongst the divisions top performing clubs. Westcliff had to draw once more on their extended squad as several players were injured or unavailable from the previous weeks encounter against Henley. Out were Binneman, Vandermolen, Whiting, James, Hussey, Marsh and Richmond. Into the squad came Webber, Hughes, Marrant, Webster, Binstead, new boy Radzevicius and debuting from the bench Tom Aldridge. Conditions were poor the ground soft and sticky, light drizzle fell intermittently in the November gloom.

The hosts strived to assert themselves from the outset, but the visitors resisted manfully and began to build momentum of their own. An early penalty attempt was missed but they were beginning to control territory and possession. Having camped in the opposition 22 for a sustained period, increasingly desperate defence produced a string of penalties and eventually a yellow card. Mid half Westcliff were rewarded for their efforts and Billy Marrant scored from short range giving them a 0-5 lead. They returned quickly and again attempted to turn the screw, eventually this too forced a yellow card for the home team but full advantage on this occasion was not taken and the hosts kept their line intact until the half time break.

Westcliff were content to have a lead over their illustrious hosts but were conscious they had perhaps allowed further scoring opportunities slip through their grasp. The opening 5 minutes of the second period saw each side have a player sent to the bin and the hosts take a lead they never looked like relinquishing. They did so through their forwards who drove over from short range and when they were gifted a second try shortly after from an overthrown 5 metre lineout, they had changed the complexion of the game in double quick time. Both tries were converted, and the apparent momentum shift continued. Four further converted tries followed in a second half which was pretty much one-way traffic, the visitors wilting as the hosts introduced quality from their bench. The final score of 42-5 was disappointing and frustrating but based on the second half if not the first was merited.

There were positives to take from the game, encouraging areas where the performance from a much-changed team showed both promise and potential. Ultimately, we were though second best and we will be taking a long look at both the good and the bad as part of our preparation for the next two games both of which will be at home against Old Albanian and Redruth.

Croft, Radzevicius, Hogarth, B Reynolds, Hughes, Banister, Bolton, Meakin, B Marrant, Dellas, Scogings, Dartnell, Lynch, Webber, S Reynolds REP H Marrant, Triana, Webster, Binstead, Aldridge