

## Westcliff 24 Redruth 19

The side had a more settled look in the run up to the visit of inform Redruth this week. Dellas failed a mid-week fitness test and Whiting was unavailable but otherwise the squad was unchanged. Henry Marrant and Ed Johnson were added to the replacements, with just a few positional changes in the starting XV made. The necessary late withdrawal of skipper Dartnell though, threw a spanner in the works meaning Billy Marrant started and Binstead was drafted onto the bench at the 11th hour. Vandermolten skippered the side on its final game at The Gables before relocating to the new clubhouse and facilities in time for the next home game in a fortnight. The afternoon was drab but not bitter, the pitch soft and yielding but not unduly so, and a full lunch provided a well refreshed balcony presence.

The previous weeks narrow defeat to Old Albanians had been a bitter pill and the home team started the game purposefully and with evident intent. From the kick-off they carried back hard and deep through Smith and Vandermolten, soon setting up camp in the visitors 22. As they cranked up the pressure, they got over the line only to be held up, but discipline and patience eventually provided the time and space for Bannister to evade the over stretched defence after 7 minutes. Jones failed to add the extras, but Westcliff continued to dictate the tempo and enjoy territorial advantage and possession. Twice more they were held up over the line before a further 20 minutes later Sam Reynolds touched down after yet another series of close-range drives. Again, the kick from the tee drifted wide but after half an hour Westcliff led 10-0. Only 5 further minutes had passed before Billy Marrant broke the tackle and successfully reached for the line, Jones on this occasion able to steer the ball between the uprights. They now enjoyed a healthy 17-0 lead with the final minutes of the half slipping away. Predictably Redruth responded and pressed hard but determined and effective defence forced errors and initially kept them at bay. Having done enough it seemed to recover and control the ball for the half's final phase the ball was turned over somehow at a ruck and one phase later having evaded two tackles Redruths winger was able to offload to an inside support runner when finally brought down. The conversion, the final action of the half, closed the scores to 7-17.

A 10-point lead was not to be sniffed at but there was palpable irritation at the soft try conceded and the next score would clearly be an important one. Westcliff had not started the second period well in either of the previous two weeks which had contributed to defeats, but their focus and application was good from the restart and within 5 minutes they had restored their 17-point advantage. A direct and penetrating run from Weston broke the defensive line enabling him to offload to Billy Marrant on a hard-supporting line who loped across the line under the posts. The next 20 minutes was keenly contested with both teams attacking and defending when the opportunity and need arose but neither team made the breakthrough. As the final 10 minutes approached Redruth did break the deadlock, an inside pass releasing their full back to score on the right. The try went unconverted and at 24-12 Westcliff remained 2 scores ahead. Westcliff responded by moving deep into Redruth territory forcing a penalty and kicking to the 5-metre line. From the resultant lineout and a short series of phases Bannister appeared to have got over for

a match clinching score but the referee penalised for crossing in the execution. Throwing caution to the wind as demanded by the situation the visitors run out of defence to halfway where they forced a further penalty which also resulted in Vandermolen leaving the pitch for the remaining minutes with a yellow card brandished in his direction. The Cornishmen kicked to the corner caught drove and peeled off to cross the line and apparently ground the ball. The conversion was true and suddenly with 4 minutes to go and with Westcliff short on numbers the outcome was very much in the balance. Those minutes were nervous but ultimately uneventful and were all played in the Redruth half before Westcliff were able to clear to touch with time up.

A great performance and a hard earned but very much deserved result. We controlled long periods of the game and its very satisfying that when we got squeezed a little bit at the death, we were able to close it out in a way that has previously escaped us at home this season. All the lads put in a real shift and played with great discipline and patience, our defence was excellent, and we took our opportunities well. It was a fitting way to bring down the curtain on 35 years of senior rugby at Aviation Way before our imminent move and with The Lions beating old friends and rivals Southend RFC on the adjacent pitch the day couldn't have got much better. Precious little time to dwell though as thoughts will turn to the trip to Bristol next weekend to take on high flying Clifton before taking up permanent residence in our new home for the visit of Esher in two weeks.

Bannister, Hogarth, B Reynolds, Smith, Radzevicius, Jones, Weston, B Marrant, Binneman, Scogings, Vandermolen, Lynch, Marsh, S Reynolds REP H Marrant, Croft, Binstead, Meakin, Johnson