

## Worthing 15 Westcliff 19

Yet another first for Westcliff who travelled to Worthing to take on the Raiders in Round 8 of their National league campaign. With a club wedding and other external distractions, playing resources had once more to be juggled. Unavailable for selection from the previous week were Lynch, Binneman, Vandermolen, Hughes and Triana. Recalled to the starting XV were Billy Marrant, Dellas, Marsh, Rob Smith, Buster Reynolds and Kwassi. Webster and Johnson stepped up onto the bench and were joined there by under 18 debutant Jack Hussey who joined teammate Ewan Richmond who himself retained his place in the squad after an encouraging debut the previous week. The squad set off on a high having watched England put the All Blacks to the sword and in a determined mood seeking a first win of the season.

It was windy, it was wet, and it was muddy. It was in short thoroughly unpleasant all afternoon and the conditions predictably dictated the nature of the game. Worthing had first use of the wind and the rain was at their back rather than in their faces. They enjoyed the bigger share of possession and territory in the opening period, but the visitors were dogged in defence keeping them at bay for the opening 15 minutes whilst attempting to get a foothold in the game. Pressure did though tell eventually, and the hosts finally got around the outside of the defence and crossed the line for a converted try. Although Westcliff began to assert themselves in attack as well as defence, they fell further behind through a penalty around the half hour mark. Westcliff responded by going back on the front foot and as the half drew to a close their perseverance and discipline were rewarded with a try under the posts from Rob Smith. It was not a thing of beauty, but the try put them within 3 points at the break at 10-7 down and with the favour of the elements to come.

Taking advantage of the conditions and playing to them from the outset, they levelled the scores within two minutes of the restart through the reliable boot of Bannister, as pressure forced penalties. Westcliff stuck to their task playing to corners and adopting a tight game and the penalties continued to flow. Bannister struck with the boot twice more and as the game entered the final quarter the visitors led 10-16 a position not unfamiliar in the campaigns opening weeks but one from which they had so far failed to secure victory. As the game entered the final ten minutes Worthing broke out and scored a try but the conversion drifted wide and the visitors maintained the slimmest of leads to defend. Again, Westcliff played smart if unspectacular rugby and Bannister was given a further opportunity off the tee. He extended his 100% conversion rate and Westcliff stretched the lead to 15-19. They were able to navigate the closing minutes of the game without significant alarm although those on the side-line could be forgiven for some frantic handwringing as the clubs first ever victory at National 2 rugby edged closer. The final whistle brought both relief and satisfaction at the result that was both hard earned and deserved.

It was a horrible day weather wise and it was a matter of winning ugly, but it was also the sweetest of victories being long overdue and much needed. Obviously, everyone was delighted as they should be, but it was particularly satisfying that the result was achieved by a 20-man match day squad all of whom played youth rugby at the club including in Hogarth, Hussey and Richmond three current under 18s. Not the first from the current group to break into the team nor in due course the last, they each made positive contributions Hogarth for the 80 and Hussey and Richmond from the bench in the second half. A very satisfying day of rugby all round and a perfect fillip for the club in advance of the visit of high-flying Henley Hawks next weekend by which time England may once more be world champions.

**Bannister, Kwassi, B Reynolds, R Smith, Hogarth, Croft, H Marrant, Meakin, B Marrant, Dellas,  
Scogings, Dartnell, Marsh, Webber, S Reynolds REP Richmond, Whiting, Hussey, Webster, Johnson.**