

## Clifton 59 Westcliff 14

After the previous weeks morale boosting victory over Redruth, Westcliff headed to Bristol for a first ever visit to Clifton, the divisions form side with recent victories over Henley Tonbridge and Old Albanians. Injury and unavailability deprived them of several of the previous weeks squad, but they were pleased to welcome back skipper Dartnell. Recalled to the squad were Marsh Webber James and Hussey as well as Hopkins for the first time this season and Parmenter for the first time in three seasons. Teenager Lewis Barrett received his first call up where he would debut from the bench.

The pitch was well grassed and firm and despite a significant chill in the air, conditions were good, being both dry and still. The game kicked off, but the visitors were caught cold and were immediately on the back foot. They were off the pace set by the home team and quickly fell behind to a converted try after just 2 minutes. Two more converted tries in the first 20 minutes gave the visitors a commanding 21-0 lead and as the game entered the second quarter Westcliff were still chasing shadows. In the next 10 minutes however Westcliff raised their game and hit back mounting a series of attacks and applying pressure of their own for the first time. During this time they scored through Sam Reynolds and Ewan Binneman which with both tries being converted by Bannister brought them back to within a score at 21-14. They continued to probe for the rest of the half but in the last play Clifton found their way round the outside and once more scored a converted try to lead 28-14 at the break.

There was a sense that there was still opportunity for the visitors at the start of the second half and the next 20 minutes was evenly and earnestly contested with neither side scoring. However, as the game entered the final 20 minutes Clifton reasserted their superiority and in an ugly period for the visitors, they leaked 5 tries as injuries caught up with Westcliff and their levels dropped. The final score 59-14 a comprehensive victory for the hosts, a disappointing and difficult afternoon for the visitors.

We were well beaten on the day and were only competitive for 40 minutes, the first and last 20 were not good enough and quality teams like Clifton will expose you as they did if you allow them to. It's a disappointment but days like these will happen from time to time, we had by necessity some square pegs in round holes and were found out. We picked up injuries throughout the game which further hindered us but as ever the effort and commitment from the lads was spot on. It's a game from which we have already moved on as we look forward instead to our game next week at our new home against Esher.

Hogarth, James, Webber, Marsh, Radzevicius, Bannister, Bolton, Weston, Marrant, Binneman, Scogings, Dartnell, Lynch, Reynolds, Vandermolten REP Parmenter, Johnson, Hussey, Hopkins, Barrett