

Westcliff 15 Bury St Edmunds 36

The abrasive nature of Level 4 rugby was again apparent in the build up to the years final game against mid table visitors Bury St Edmunds. Heavy knocks in the previous weeks fixture at Barnes deprived the hosts of Billy Marrant Rob Smith Jack Hogarth and skipper Ian Dartnell. Into the squad as direct replacements came Binneman, Campey Parmenter and Ben Jones with recalls as well for Hopkins and Barrett. Despite heavy and persistent rain throughout the week and overnight the pitch was soft underfoot but in good condition. A stiff breeze blew directly across the pitch.

Westcliffs first significant attack was brought back by the referee who had inadvertently obstructed the defence. From the resultant scrum Bury forced a penalty and kicked deep, after an initial catch and driving maul was halted the visitors fed their swift backs whose probing's were met with committed defence. A trailing arm to the shoulder drew a high tackle penalty which was successfully converted to commence the scoring after seven minutes. Six minutes later they extended their lead when a well-executed but speculative chip was fumbled by the cover defence and Burys full back hot in pursuit benefited to touch the loose ball down. Westcliff responded immediately taking territory applying pressure and from a series of close quarter drives Binneman carried the ball across the line to open their account. Bannister missed the conversion but at 5-10 they were on the board and the contest particularly up front gathered pace and intensity. Bury scored next, a well worked try off the top of a line out from which the fullback joined the attack at pace and on a running line that created the space for the winger to score and round to the posts. Again, Westcliff responded forcing their way deep into Bury territory and soon closed the scores to 12-17 through a try from second row Scogings which Bannister converted. Westcliff continued to press but the final ten minutes saw no further scores for either side.

The next score would clearly be important but for 25 minutes none arrived. During that time Westcliff missed a penalty attempt and turned down another opportunity. Six potential points that would have nosed them ahead, but which went begging. Changes from the bench for the visitors introduced a new energy and threat and after 65 minutes a long miss pass fed a back row forward who collected the ball at full pace and burst his way to the line. Fifteen minutes to go and Bury had extended the lead to ten points. As the game entered its final phase Westcliff forced their way upfield drew a penalty and this time Bannister converted it handsomely. They were back within a score with five minutes to play and collective breaths were held. Unfortunately, they were not able to force the issue further and their grip on a losing bonus point slipped in those final minutes, conceding tries in the 78th and 80th minute. A final score of 15-36 flattering Bury in an encounter keenly fought and closely contested until the final moments.

Bury had that little bit of quality at key moments that decided the outcome, but it was disappointing to get nothing from the game, the lads deserved more for their efforts but as we already know deserving and getting are not the same thing. It got away from us in those final couple of minutes but there is no point dwelling on it. January is a big month for us and the week off after sixteen National 2 league games on the bounce is more than welcome. When the lads get together again after Christmas it is hoped they will have benefited from the rest and we can head into the new year with confidence and renewed vigour.

Banister, Croft, Campey, B Reynolds, Parmenter, B Jones, Bolton, Dellas, Lynch, Binneman, Scogings, Vandermolten, Johnson, S Reynolds, Webber REP Weston, Hopkins, Marsh, Barrett, Marrant

