

Westcliff 17 Leicester Lions 50

Westcliff returned to league action at The Gables, but injuries and unavailability enforced changes to half the match day squad. Out through a combination of broken bones heads bodies and family or professional commitments were Binneman, Johnson, Webber, Coetzee, Smith, Campey Koomson, Morrart and Duplessis. Into the squad came Weston, Webster, Reynolds, Hogarth, plus for the first time this season, Parmenter, O'Brien, Meakin and debutants Dufficy and Pedro.

The hosts started the game in the best possible way and turned over ball deep in their own half as early as the first minute. Running the ball through hands from their own 22 they marauded downfield with the ball kept alive by a series of offloads the last of which released Sexton in sufficient space to canter over the line, the conversion a formality for Bannister. However, from the restart Leicester went short right to catch the home side napping. They recovered their own kick off and as Westcliff scrambled to regain shape forced the pace and soon created sufficient time, space, and the necessary support to cross on the far left. The conversion was missed and after not quite 5 minutes Westcliff led 7-5. The rest of the half was keenly contested with neither side giving quarter easily but gradually the visitors gained ascendancy and were more clinical. In doing so they were able to score two further converted tries and at the very end of the half converted a penalty to lead 7-22 at the break.

Westcliff started the second half as effectively as they had the first and within five minutes of the restart number 8 Jim Smith barrelled over from short range to reduce the arrears. The next 15 minutes were thrust, and counter thrust, with the visitors looking the more likely, but still, Westcliff back within 10 points produced moments of threat. Nevertheless, the visitor's persistence paid off around the hour mark when the left winger crossed for the bonus point converted try after a Westcliff lineout misfired and they turned possession over. That was immediately followed by a yellow card for the Westcliff scrum half and in his absence, Leicester turned the screw and took the game out of sight with two further tries to lead 12-43. As the game entered its final stages Westcliff made determined progress up field backed up with patient short range phase play. This culminated in a second try for Smith, and if the game was gone, there was suddenly a sniff of a try scoring bonus point. Both sets of players were tiring and the game had become increasingly open. Leicester scored a final try, also converted, to make the score 17-50. Westcliff drove up field as the clock wound down and after more sustained pressure wriggled over the try line. Unfortunately, the referee judged it a double movement and the resultant penalty was cleared to touch, and the game brought to a close.

A tough afternoon for the lads the final score a little harsh but the visitors worthy and convincing winners. Its frustrating no to pick up the bonus point our efforts merited there were though some definite positives, not least encouraging debuts for Tom Dufficy and from the bench Regardo Pedro. It's clear that the medical staff will once again be busy throughout the week, the long lay off and the attritional demands of the level contributing to a high level of injuries. When the dust settles on that, we will see where we stand for the visit to Barnes next week.

Bannister, Hogarth, Parmenter, Cummins, Ford, Sexton, Weston, Lynch, Lane, Webster, Scogings, Reynolds, Dufficy, Smith REP O'Brien, Miller, Dane, Meakin, Pedro