

Westcliff 9 Bury St Edmunds 17

Westcliff were again much changed for the visit of Bury St Edmunds. Recalled to the squad were Lynch, Binneman, Dane, Smith, O'Brien, Comber, Harvey, Dellas, and Rob Smith as well as from the bench for the first time this season Maloney and debutant Nicholls.

Conditions were appalling, cold wet and very windy, but the hosts started on the front foot with the wind at their back and camped in the Bury half. The visitors were forced into a change in their midfield and were hard pushed to resist the early pressure, two penalties conceded in the first ten minutes were converted into six points by the boot of Bannister. Westcliff continued to push and pressured the visitors line patiently but failed to convert the opportunities into tries. Bannister did add a further three points around the half hour mark, but the visitors forced their way deep into Westcliff territory as the half drew to a close. The hosts conceded a series of penalties and ultimately a yellow card for number eight Smith which was immediately followed by a try driven over from short range as Bury made their numerical advantage count. The successful conversion was the last action of the half which closed with Westcliff holding a narrow two-point lead at 9-7.

Bury now enjoyed the benefit of the wind which seemed to blow even harder but were unable to turn it into points in the opening 20 minutes. However, the breakthrough did arrive for them just after the hour mark. Desperate defence once more overstepped the mark in the referees view and a second yellow card for the hosts once more reduced them to fourteen. Again the visitors pounded the line and although repelled the referee adjudged illegally so and awarded a penalty try. Westcliff were now behind for the first time in the game at 9-14. They went back on the offensive despite their short numbers and laid siege to the Bury line for several minutes and the outcome remained in the balance until the very last however the breakthrough never came and with the games final act a penalty from visiting full back Reed denied them a losing bonus point.

We were significantly more competitive and less porous in defence which is encouraging but frustratingly the game was there to be won and it slipped away. The result hinged on the two yellow cards both of which were immediately followed by scores for Bury. That and the failure to take some hard-earned opportunities in each half were the difference.

Nevertheless, it was a performance to build on as the first half of the season plays out in the next couple of weeks.

Bannister, Harvey, R Smith, Whiting, Hogarth, Sexton, Marrant, Brown, Lynch, Binneman, Anderson-Brown, Scogings, Dane, Johnson, J Smith REP Comber, O'Brien, Maloney, Nicholls, Dellas