

West deprived by a goal post

Hillhead-Jordanhill 12pts; West of Scotland 10pts

West of Scotland were deprived of a deserved draw at Hughenden on Saturday by the width of a goal post. Dru Nicholson's attempted conversion of Scott Cochrane's try from the right touch line striking the upright.

The two clubs had agreed to bring the kick-off forward by thirty minutes to hopefully avoid the forecast storm. In retrospect, this was an excellent decision. West won the toss, the home side kicking-off into the strong wind.



West suffered an early blow with the loss, through injury, of tight-head Andrew Love after only ten minutes. He was replaced by Dylan Dawson. Despite this, the Burnbrae side come close to taking the lead a couple of minutes later. Hills-Jills were offside on halfway. Nicholson kicked to thirty metres out on the right. The home side took possession from the line out but the West forwards regained the ball to set up their backs. Martin Wallace did manage to touch the ball down but had put a foot in touch on his way to the line.

After a quarter of an hour, Nicholson had his first attempt at goal from about thirty metres, to the right of the posts. In difficult conditions, the ball went narrowly wide. Two minutes later, West's injury woes continued when Wallace chased back to collect a kick ahead by the home side. Before he regained his feet, he was tackled by Hills-Jills fly-half, Rory Harte, sustaining a blow to the head. "If in doubt, sit them out." Wallace left the field accompanied by his opponent who had received a yellow card.

West finally took the lead just before the half hour mark, the forwards driving over from a line-out about six metres out, hooker Dan Yorke getting the score. Nicholson was unsuccessful with his attempted conversion.

Ten minutes later, West doubled their lead. Nicholson kicked to five metres from a penalty. The Burnbrae forwards again took the ball from the throw and drove over their opponents' line. Scott Cochrane was the man to take the credit on this occasion. Nicholson's kick agonisingly struck the post.

The turning point of the match came on the restart. West knocked on from the kick-off. Hills-Jills' forwards set up a number of phases before Adam Eakin touched the ball down to bring his side back into the game. Finlay Keegan made it full reward with his kick. That conversion would prove to be the difference between the sides, the only successful kick at goal all game. The referee blew immediately for halftime with West having a narrow three points lead.

West faced the wind in the second half but were under no real pressure in its early stages. After ten minutes, though, Hills-Jills were awarded a penalty five metres from the West line. They elected to take the scrum from which the ball broke loose. Keegan attempted to hack the ball forward but it appeared to strike his shin. This seemed to wrong foot his opponents and he was first to the ball to touch down for a rather fortuitous score. He missed the attempted conversion.

On the hour mark, the Burnbrae side were forced into their third enforced substitution of the afternoon. Sean Burns had to retire with what looked like cramp. Roman McLaren joined the game. Five minutes later, Burns returned, replacing the injured Peter Rhodes. With West having lost both props and their replacement front row already committed it would mean uncontested scrums.



With ten minutes to go, a West penalty saw Nicholson kick to the home 22. The Hughenden forwards took the ball on the West throw and, using the wind, kicked to twenty-five metres from the West line. Burns' brave effort ended with him retiring again. From then to the end of the match, both defences held firm. The referee's whistle for No Side saw Hillhead-Jordanhill victors by twelve points to ten. West did pick up a losing bonus point.

Next Saturday, league leaders Berwick will be the visitors to Burnbrae. Kick-off is 3pm. Please do come along to Burnbrae and give West your support.