Superb Win for West

On the definitive dreich day, West of Scotland recorded a vital try bonus point
win over Murrayfield Wanderers. With West battling to hold on to a six points lead, Iestyn
Humphreys' try with just three minutes to go secured the win and the try bonus and denied
the side from the capital a losing bonus point.

It was a meeting of two old rivals, two of the few remaining football clubs in Scottish rugby.
The visitors kicked-off with West playing to the clubhouse end with the advantage of a slight
wind. The hosts dominated the early stages without threatening their opponents' line. It took
the boot of Alex Fisken and the new 50/22 law to set up West's first try. The new law awards
the line-out throw in to a side if it kicks the ball from its own half to touch in its opponents'
22. Fisken's kick found touch about eighteen metres out. From the line-out, the West
forwards drove the Wanderers' pack to their own line before skipper Scott Cochrane
collected and went over. Dru Nicholson converted to give West a 7-0 lead after eight
minutes.

It took Wanderers almost fifteen minutes to make
their first foray into the West 22. From a line-out,
scrum half Jamie Carruth had his clearance kick
blocked. The visitors' powerful forwards drove to the
line but West escaped when the ball was knocked on.
Instead of the sides being level, West increased their
lead to ten points five minutes later, Nicholson
slotting home a penalty. Within five minutes, West
were fifteen points clear. Another forward drive saw
them held up over the line. Play was brought back for
a West penalty and the confident Cochrane decided
to take a scrum. His confidence was justified. From
the scrum, the Burnbrae skipper powered to the line before setting up his supporting second
row partner Gareth Craig to score.

Little had been seen of Wanderers as an attacking force with credit due to both West backs
and forwards for their strength in defence. On the thirty minute mark, another 50/22 kick, this
time by Nicholson, saw West come close to finishing the match as a contest before half-time.
On this occasion, though, West were held up just short of the line. The ball was cleared to
safety from the resulting scrum. At half-time, West led by 15-0.

Despite being three scores ahead, West knew they would be in a battle in the second half
against a side that had taken a losing bonus point in their two defeats this season, against the
top two sides in the division, Hillhead-Jordanhill and Lasswade. The Wanderers large,
physical pack would also have a say in matters. It took only six minutes for the gap to be
narrowed to eight points. After West gave up possession, a long, floated pass found its way to
right wing Peter Walker. He avoided two weak tackles before going behind the posts to make
the conversion easy for Fionnlagh Call. 15-7 and all to play for.

Wanderers dominated for the next ten minutes or so before West picked up the pace again and got their third try of the afternoon. No 8 John Vasconcelos picked up from a five metres scrummage and scored in the corner. Wanderers moved up a gear again and got their second try on the hour mark. Open side Nathan Smith found lots of space on his left wing and went in almost unopposed. It was another simple conversion for Call. The gap was down to just six points and West were seeing little of the ball. It was all about defence. That defence was superb. Wanderers, despite their domination, rarely threatened the home side's line. They seldom got into the West 22. They conceded a penalty, then another. A third penalty saw a West line-out inside the Wanderers' 22. With the referee signalling penalty advantage, Nicholson feinted to cross kick to the left wing. Instead he chipped ahead, Fraser Leslie gathering before popping the ball up to Iestyn Humphreys almost on the line. Nicholson rounded off the scoring for the afternoon. Two minutes later the final whistle blew with a final score of West of Scotland 27 Murrayfield Wanderers 14.

Player and coaching staff will be delighted with the win against such strong opponents. Perthshire will host West next Saturday with the MIlngavie side travelling in confidence.