

Howe Too Strong for Depleted West.

Howe of Fife 43 West of Scotland 12.

West of Scotland travelled to Cupar to face Howe of Fife on Saturday with a much depleted side, particularly in the back division. Scrum half Jamie Carruth and left wing Callum McCormack, both in fine form all season, sustained injuries at Whitecraigs and may be missing for some time. Into the Burnbrae side to make his debut at stand off was Charlie Greaves. Greaves is one of the most promising of the talent coming through the Burnbrae development system.

West got off to the worst possible start, conceding a second minute try. Centre Cameron Patrick was first to react to Andrew Harley's grubber kick to touch down. Ross Aitken converted. After only nine minutes, Greaves' debut ended, being forced off with a shoulder injury. Another of the West youngsters for whom there are high hopes, Lewis Howick, replaced him.



The hosts moved further ahead with two very similar tries in the twelfth and fifteen minutes. Space was created on the right, the Howe back division looking very sharp, and right wing Finlay Foulkes scored in the corner on both occasions. Aitken converted the first of these tries. Before the midpoint of the half, West were forced into another change with centre Grady Slater leaving the field. Rowland Osii came on to play on the left wing with Mark Robertson moving to inside centre. They did, though, manage to reduce the deficit, Nicky Sutcliffe on hand to score after skipper Scott Cochrane was held up just short after a typically powerful run.

West surely had to get the next score but instead it was Howe who would extend their lead on the half hour mark with an extremely soft try. West had a line-out five metres from their own line but a loose tap back let tight head Kaylan Dewar have an easy task to pick up the ball and fall over the goalline. Aitken was again successful with the kick. Howe had secured their try bonus point. West did reduce the gap to two scores a few minutes later through that man Cochrane. He powered over from a ruck to score. Rory Cuthbertson's conversion made the half-time score Howe of Fife 26 West of Scotland 14.

It had been a highly entertaining first half with that late West score giving them a chance to get something from the game. It had been closer than the score suggested with two evenly matched packs but the home side had probably the best back division West has faced this

season. Young lock, Adam Dunford, making only his second start at this level, had been outstanding for the visitors.

Play was very even in the third quarter of the match. Both defences held firm until Howe replacement Jake Douglas got his reward for excellent support work to record his side's fifth try of the game. It was a superb backline move that finished off West, left wing Greg Fearson adding his name to the scoresheet by completing the best move of the match. With five minutes left, West lost skipper Cochrane through injury and their worst afternoon of the season was complete when Howe hooker Fraser Allan collected a chip ahead to score. Aitken rounded off the scoring for the day.



A disappointing day in the Kingdom for West, their third defeat of the season but the first by more than a score. The injuries continue to mount, only Rory Cuthbertson and Nicky Sutcliffe in the back division have escaped. Next Saturday, West play host to Greenock Wanderers. Kicks-off now move back to three o'clock.

West of Scotland: Rory Cuthbertson; Fraser Brand, Nicky Sutcliffe, Grady Slater, Mark Robertson; Charlie Greaves, Brodie Buchanan; Hamish Clark, Connor Moran-Smith, Andrew Love; Scott Cochrane, Adam Dunford; Dylan Matthews, Donald Morrison, John Vasconcelos.

Replacements: Stuart Murray, Tino Mudoti, Lewis Howick; Rowland Osii.