

All Too Easy for West

West of Scotland 80 Greenock Wanderers 15.

Despite still missing a number of regulars, skipper Scott Cochrane the latest to join the injury list, West of Scotland had an easy afternoon against Greenock Wanderers at Burnbrae on Saturday. West ran in no fewer than twelve tries against a very disappointing Tail o' the Bank side.

As has been the case all season, it was a changed West XV. Jamie Carruth returned to the stand-off berth with veteran Alex Fiskien at full back. Rory Cuthbertson moved back to inside centre. In the pack, the versatile Dylan Matthews replaced Cochrane at lock, Fraser Smeaton taking over from Matthews at blindside flanker. Andrew Love captained the side.

Wanderers and Royal High have both won only one game this season, each winning at home against the other. Anything other than a comfortable home victory for West would have been a surprise but it was the visitors who started brightly. After a Wanderers 50/22, West were penalised at the line out. Wanderers moved the ball right and it took a good cover tackle by Smeaton to prevent a Wanderers try. The visitors continued to belie their league position in the opening minutes but it was West who opened the scoring in the seventh minute, Gareth Craig going over after a catch and drive move from a line out five metres from the Wanderers' line.



It was a fairly balanced match in the opening quarter but the Greenock side's backs posed little threat to the West defence. The home side moved further ahead at the mid-point of the half through Cuthbertson after his centre partner Nicky Sutcliffe was held up just short. The scorer began a good afternoon from the tee to increase West's lead to twelve points. Twelve soon became nineteen when No 8 Jon Vasconcelos picked up from a scrum close to the line, went blind and scored in the corner. Cuthbertson slotted a superb conversion from the right touch line. Ten minutes from the interval, openside Donny Morrison secured West's try bonus point, finishing off an excellent handling move featuring backs and forwards in fine support play. On the stroke of half-time, Wanderers did get on the scoreboard with a penalty goal from Stuart Adams. It was a clear sign of the Greenock side's lack of confidence that they elected to go for goal rather than look for the seven points a converted try would bring. West led 26-3 at the interval.

It took West but twenty seconds to increase their lead on the restart. Wanderers failed to secure the ball from West's kick-off. Morrison, outstanding throughout, gathered possession and moved play left. Sutcliffe had an easy task to finish off. Cuthbertson made the try full value. It was Cuthbertson who would get the next score after Vasconcelos' break and perfectly timed pass. The scorer again converted. Next on the try scorers' list was replacement lock Tino Mudoti from a tap penalty. With Fraser Brand standing only thirty yards away, unmarked on the right touch line and screaming for the ball, Mudoti somewhat selfishly elected to travel the five metres of open space and score under the posts. One can understand the winger's frustration. His try total for the season remains agonisingly just one behind his total of trips round Kirkwall Harbour. He may not have a better chance to achieve parity. Cuthbertson converted.



The never ending procession to the visitors' line continued. Left wing Rowland Osii got his first score of the afternoon, finishing off a good team try after Smeaton's powerful charge to the Wanderers' 22. Cuthbertson and Carruth supported Mark Robertson's break for the stand off to cross before Osii's fine individual try, the winger outpacing the cover defence. Cuthbertson converted all three. With just over ten minutes left, West led by 68-3. It was at this point they switched off for five minutes. After a good Wanderers' forward drive from a tap penalty, Callum Robb scored with Adams converting. Robb then charged down an attempted West clearance kick, Douglas McIntyre following up to score. Wanderers had given themselves an outside chance of a try bonus but it was West who would get the final two scores of the day, sparked back into life by the mutterings of "Oh, dearie me," from the coaching staff. Osii completed a fine hat-trick, cutting in from his wing to go under the posts, replacement Cammy Finlayson slotting the extras, before Craig got his second try, picking up a weak clearance kick to go over unopposed.

It was certainly not a perfect display by West but they did record eighty points. They sit second in the table behind Gordonians, the Aberdeen side looking safe for promotion. Next Saturday West will face a much stiffer task than that posed by Greenock Wanderers, travelling to Bishopbriggs to face fifth-placed Allan Glen's. Kick-off is three o'clock.

West of Scotland: Alex Fiskien; Fraser Brand, Nicky Sutcliffe, Rory Cuthbertson, Rowland Osii; Jamie Carruth, Callum Rutherford; Hamish Clark, Connor Moran-Smith, Andrew Love; Dylan Matthews, Gareth Craig; Fraser Smeaton, Donald Morrison, John Vasconcelos.

Replacements: Stuart Murray, Tino Mudoti, Mark Robertson, Cammy Finlayson.