

A Bad Day at The Office

Gordonians 69 West of Scotland 0

This was always going to be a huge task for West of Scotland as they travelled to Aberdeen to face Gordonians at Countesswells. The home side, winners every time they have taken to the field this season, were at full-strength. West began with six recognised first team regulars as coach Andy Douglas juggled his resources again. Hamish Clark moved from loosehead to hooker, the pair dead versatile Dylan Matthews moved from the back row to lock, being joined by Connor Fleming. Tino Mudoti was at blindside flanker. Reiss Drain would make his first team debut from the bench. Gordonians had not played for a month due to postponements and Six Nations fixtures. A time for battered bodies to recover.

The game as a contest was over within fifteen minutes. Matthias Schosser, a very impressive, very powerful ball-carrying tighthead prop, put his side ahead after only two



minutes. A feature of Gordonians play throughout the eighty minutes was their ability to switch play from touchline to touchline with pace and with confidence. From a tap penalty five metres from the West line, the ball went left to create the overlap. Schosser had an easy task to score. Almost immediately, left wing David Taylor doubled his side's lead swooping on a loose ball when the ball had gone to ground after a phased attack. The clock was still in single figures when full back Sean Mills came into the line to take a pop-up pass and go under the posts. Ross Birnie was successful for the first time from the tee. The try bonus point was sealed by the fourteenth minute,

openside Finlay Lennox peeling off after a catch and drive from a line-out close to the West line. Birnie extended the Gordonians' lead to twenty-four points. In round ball terms, the home 'keeper hadn't touched the ball.

West finally began to show as an attacking force at the mid-point of the half. Good phases of play came to an end with a knock-on ten metres short of the home line. It would become a regular feature of the afternoon, a promising West attack ended by a dropped ball or poor decision making. The Burnbrae woes were exacerbated when those six recognised first team regulars became five. Stand-off Jamie Carruth was forced to retire with an ankle injury, being replaced by Cammy Finlayson. Not for the first time this season, physio Jenny Goodwin would work as hard as any of the players. She well-deserved that second substantial helping of chilli at the post-match and not look embarrassed at being the only person present to ask for more.

Gordonians would add a further three tries before the interval. A chip ahead bounced perfectly for Birnie to collect and score, adding the conversion himself. Tom Williams was next to add his name to the score sheet, the hooker picking up at a ruck on the West line to touch down. The final try of the half summed up West's afternoon. Good link-up play between backs and forwards saw them create space in the home half. The ball was dropped before being collected by a home player and transferred to the pacy Birnie who sprinted home from the West ten metres line. At half-time, the sides shared forty-one points.

The second half continued much as the first had ended. Another ruck on the West line, another pick-up and score. Scrum half Finlay Troup was the scorer, Birnie converting. The match at this point took an unexpected turn. West dominated for the next twenty-five minutes. This included a remarkable passage of play in the Gordonians' 22 when the home side were penalised on no fewer than seven occasions. After the sixth offence, lock Struan Robertson received the inevitable yellow card. Despite the man advantage and good quality possession, the visitors could not break the home line. The Gordonians' defence was a sound as their attack was potent.



With just over ten minutes to go, West withdrew Clark and Donald Morrison. John Vasconcelos moved from No 8 to hooker, Mudoti moving across. Callum Godber and debutant Drain came on to fill the wing forward positions. Martin Wallace replaced Jack McCallum on the right wing. It was an interesting contrast in styles. Martin and Jack's legs go at roughly the same speed when at full power. Jack's legs just cover twice the amount of ground.

Gordonians, now playing with a strong wind in their favour, stepped it up again in the closing minutes, aided by a yellow card awarded to Vasconcelos for tackling from an offside position. The home forwards carried well, moving left to create an overlap for Taylor to record his second try of the game. Lock Daniel Eakin collected a cross kick before powering over. Matters were rounded off when Troup's break set up stand-off Calum Busby to score. Busby converted all three of these tries. The referee's whistle for no side was sweet music to the ears of the West players and the travelling support.

West's cause was not helped by the unforced errors in their play and their disappointing first up tackles on a number of occasions. Make no mistake, though. This is an excellent Gordonians team. A very mobile pack, each with the skills required of the modern forward. An outstanding back division with pace and inventiveness. By far the outstanding side in the division.

West have three fixtures left, the first of which is at home to Perthshire next Saturday, 1 April. Kick-off at Burnbrae is three o'clock.