

## **More disappointment for West.**

### **Hillhead-Jordanhill 34 West of Scotland 20.**

West of Scotland's first choice front row of Pete Rhodes, Connor Moran-Smith and Andrew Love were all present at Hughenden on Saturday. Sadly, all were there in the role of spectator. Veteran Hamish Clark moved inside to hooker, propped by Stuart Murray and Adeeb Talghari. Regular centre pairing of Rory Cuthbertson and Nicky Sutcliffe were both missing. Left wing Callum McCormack moved to outside centre, partnered by Owen Hourston. Hourston's place at stand off was taken by Dru Nicholson making his first start in nearly a year. It was one of the youngest, least experienced XV's ever fielded by West of Scotland. Eleven of the eighteen were under the age of twenty-one, twelve were born in this century. Not one of them let the side down.

West got off to the worst possible start. Hills-Jills tight-head, Liam Tighe, supported a break into the West 22 before releasing left wing James Griffith to go round and score under the posts. The try was converted by Stuart Lewis. The stand-off would impress in all facets of the game over the eighty minutes. By the tenth minute, the hosts had doubled their lead. Griffith looked to finish off an excellent line by the home backs but was held up just short of the West line. Blindside Calum Griffiths was where a good back row should be to pick up and go over in the corner. Lewis slotted an excellent conversion. Just before the mid-point of the half, Lewis' simple penalty after West had deliberately knocked on in their own 22 extended the Hughenden men's lead to seventeen points.

To avoid the game going completely away from them, it was imperative West got the next score. They did so with an excellent try. Jack McCallum's pace took him into the Hills-Jills' half before he chipped over his opponent's head and gathered. McCormack's try-scoring instinct saw him on the shoulder to take the pass and score. Nicholson converted. The latter had the chance a few minutes later to further reduce the gap but his penalty effort drifted just wide. It was the home side who would get the final score of the half. It was one West would consider themselves unfortunate to concede. It looked as though Hills-Jills had knocked on in the West 22. With no whistle forthcoming, openside Matt Henderson gathered the loose ball and sprinted over.

Hillhead-Jordanhill led by twenty-two points to seven at the interval. They certainly deserved to be ahead but the margin was somewhat harsh on the Burnbrae side.

Two Nicholson penalties within ten minutes of the restart brought the gap down to nine points. Again, though, West allowed their opponents to get away from them. Sean Black was first to a loose ball in the West 22, Henderson on hand to take possession from his right winger and record his second score of the afternoon. Lewis was again successful from the tee. The try secured Hills-Jills' try bonus point. The match points were more or less guaranteed after fifty-five minutes. This was an excellent try, the best of the game. It seemed every home player handled the ball before Black scored in the right corner.

West gave themselves a glimmer of hope with a fine try just past the hour mark. Nicholson's chip over a flat-footed home defence was collected by McCormack who sprinted clear to touch down for his second try. Nicholson's conversion narrowed the gap to fourteen points. Another converted try would give West a losing bonus point but, in all truth, the home side held out quite comfortably. This despite losing Griffiths for ten of the last thirteen minutes for a high tackle.

In the end, it was a performance not dissimilar to those in the defeats to Preston Lodge and Boroughmuir. Signs of promise, some excellent rugby and commitment from all. The errors, though, again proved costly. Errors in defence and attack. Soft points are being conceded. Games cannot be won if the opposition are given points of a start.

Next Saturday, 30 September, West host Hamilton Bulls at three o'clock. Your support will be welcomed.

West of Scotland: Lewis Howick; Jack McCallum, Callum McCormack, Owen Hourston, Martin Wallace; Dru Nicholson, Callum Rutherford; Stuart Murray, Hamish Clark, Adeeb Talghari; Scott Cochrane, Adam Dunford; Callum Godber, Donald Morrison; Max Bowie.

Replacements: Charlie Townsend, Connor Fleming, Brodie Buchanan.