

Late Rally Rewards West

West of Scotland 32 Howe of Fife 38.

With just over a minute left in the game, it looked as though West of Scotland would have nothing to show for their (second half) efforts against Howe of Fife. After three successive penalties in the Howe 22, West skipper Scott Cochrane finally elected to take the scrum against opponents now down to thirteen men. Ian Stevenson had received a yellow card for a high tackle, soon followed by Brad O'Hanlon for backchat to the referee. From the scrum, quick ball saw an overlap created for replacement Jack McCallum to secure the try bonus. The conversion was missed but was missed quickly, meaning time to restart the game. From the kick-off, West were penalised. With the referee having called "last play", Howe elected to kick for goal. Ryan Powles' kick was pulled left of the posts but did not go dead. To cries of "run it back", West did just that. It seemed every pair of West hands handled the ball before Adam Young forced his way over to gain the losing bonus point.

Howe had taken an early lead through Brad O'Hanlon's try and Powles conversion. The No 8 had finished off some excellent support play that would be a feature of the visitors' game



throughout. West were quick to respond through Martin Wallace, the wing collecting Owen Hourston's accurate cross-kick. Lewis Howick added the extras. At the mid-point of the half the scores were level but it was at this point Howe moved up a gear and in the next thirteen minutes scored three times. Finlay Foulkes scored in the corner after the ball was moved along the backline. West had lost hooker Conor Moran-Smith to

injury with Hamish Clark moving to hooker and Adeeb Talghari coming on at tight-head. The replacement soon departed, having received a yellow card, a "team yellow" after persistent infringements. Howe elected to take the scrum from five metres. The pack drove over with O'Hanlon recording his second try of the afternoon. Two minutes later, more excellent back play saw Jack Todd secure Howe's try bonus. These two tries were converted by Powles. On the half-time whistle, Howick's penalty goal made it West of Scotland 10 Howe of Fife 26. The magnitude of their lead did not flatter the men from Cupar. They had much the sharper back division, West missed too many first up tackles.



Pete Rhodes' early try after a line-out close to the Howe line and Howick's successful conversion gave the Burnbrae men a glimmer of hope on the restart. That quickly faded after hooker Fraser Allan broke more weak West tackling to score, leaving Powles a simple conversion. West, though, had stepped up their performance and a series of penalties came their way. Eventually, replacement Ed Dingle was the recipient of a yellow card on behalf of his side. Howick should have narrowed the gap but after the best move of the game by the West backs, the full back lost possession after crossing the line. His blushes were spared by Nicky Sutcliffe. From a five metres scrum, the centre broke through to score. Powles try with a quarter of an hour left secured the deserved win for Howe, the winger skipping through a non-existent West defence. West, though, did not give up. And that set up that remarkable ending with what could prove to be two very important bonus points won.

Next Saturday, West travel to Kirkwall to face an Orkney side that have played eight, won eight. It will be tough.

West of Scotland: Lewis Howick; Martin Wallace, Nicky Sutcliffe, Rory Cuthbertson, Callum McCormack; Owen Hourston, Callum Rutherford; Pete Rhodes, Conor Moran-Smith, Hamish Clark; Adam Dunford, Connor Fleming; Donald Morrison, Max Bowie, Scott Cochrane.

Replacements: Adeeb Talghari, Adam Young, Ross Dobbin, Jack McCallum.