

Second Half West Again

West of Scotland 21 Cartha Queen's Park 19

For the second successive game, West of Scotland secured a vital win after a poor first half performance was followed by a second half comeback. Last time out, against Allan Glen's, the Burnbrae side were five points at the interval. On this occasion, West went into the break trailing Cartha Queen's Park by nineteen points and having lost skipper Scott Cochrane to a knee injury that could rule him out for rest of the season.

There were a number of changes to the West line-up, some of them positional. Hamish Clark moved from tight-head prop to loose-head to accommodate the returning Andrew Love. Robert Sykes was at no 8 with Pete Rhodes moving to openside. Gareth Hopkins replaced the injured Nicky Sutcliffe at outside centre.

West kicked off in blustery conditions that did not auger well for a rugby spectacle. The opening exchanges were, indeed, scrappy. The visitors had most of the possession, trying to run the ball but invariably turning over possession without threatening the West line. West adopted a more pragmatic approach with a kicking game. A typical Cochrane break was their only real positive piece of play.

Cartha moved ahead after eight minutes. From a line-out five metres from the West line, the forwards drove before the ball was sent left to Jacob Adamson who forced his way over in the corner. Graeme Docherty slotted a fine conversion. Before the mid-point of the half, Docherty had doubled his side's lead. The try was almost identical to the first. This time, the ball was moved right after the forward drive from the line-out. Docherty had no problem in crossing the line nor in adding his second conversion.



Trailing by fourteen points, West had a battle on their hands but Cartha continued to dominate. Most of the play was taking place in the West half with only a Jack McCallum kick and chase to the Cartha 22 relieving the pressure. It was no real surprise when the visitors extended their lead after half an hour. It was another poor score from a defensive point of view. After West knocked on just outside their own 22, fifteen metres from the touchline, Cartha's no 8 Graham Williamson picked up at the back of the scrum before feeding Dante Alessandri. The scrum half went through a wide gap in the home defence to score in the right corner.

Docherty's attempt from the tee drifted just wide of the right post.

This score seemed to act as a wake-up call for the Burnbrae men. They had their first serious attack on the Cartha line but knocked on just short. They then received the hammer blow of

the loss of Cochrane. No matter, the tide seemed to have turned with West now forcing their opponents to defend close to their own line. They again knocked on a few metres out. West did not open their account before the whistle blew for half-time but that closing period did show they were not out of the match. They would also start the second period with a man advantage, Cartha being reduced to fourteen men after a yellow card for a high tackle.

It was imperative West scored first, and early, on the restart. They did just that after five minutes. From a tap penalty five metres out, the forwards drove to and over the Cartha line with Adam Dunford touching down. Lewis Howick converted and it was very much “game on”. The gap was soon down to five points with an identical score, hooker Connor Moran-Smith finishing off the drive. Howick again added the extras. Cartha had what would prove to be a rare foray into the West 22 but they were easily held by good home defence. A score looked much more likely at the other end.

As the clock ticked down, West still trailed by five points. That final pass would just not go to hand, the last-ditch tackle was made by the Dumbreck men. The pendulum then appeared to swing the way of Cartha as West lost Callum McCormack to a yellow card with eight minutes left. The winger had been adjudged to have deliberately knocked on. West just lifted themselves again. More excellent driving from the forwards from the line-out saw Dunford go over for his second score of the afternoon. The scores were level. It was a far from easy conversion opportunity for Howick, fifteen metres from the right touchline, the wrong side for a right-footed kicker and with the wind blowing. He slotted it with ease. West now led by two points with five minutes to go.



Cartha never threatened in the time remaining. West were on the front foot and held out with little difficulty to record a remarkable victory. The reaction of the players at the end said it all. All thoughts of relegation are gone. They can enjoy the rest of the season, starting next Saturday with a trip to Edinburgh to face Boroughmuir at Meggatland.

West of Scotland: Lewis Howick; Jack McCallum, Gareth Hopkins, Darren Allan, Callum McCormack; Rory Cuthbertson, Callum Rutherford; Hamish Clark, Connor Moran-Smith, Andrew Love; Scott Cochrane, Adam Dunford; Adam Young, Pete Rhodes, Robert Sykes.

Replacements: Donald Morrison, Calum Beckers, Cameron Loudon, Fraser Brand.