

West 22; Greenock Wanderers 8

With Greenock Wanderers rooted firmly to the bottom of the table, West were favourites to repeat their victory over the Greenock men at Fort Matilda in October. It turned out to be anything but a comfortable afternoon for the home side. A recent change in the Wanderers coaching staff saw a change in their style of play. No longer do they play a ten man game, it is a much more expansive style with some younger players introduced to the back line. But for some excellent West defence, a much-improved facet of their game, and ill-discipline in the Greenock ranks, the visitors could have returned to the Tail O' The Bank with something to show for their efforts.

Despite overhead conditions being fine, the greasy surface promised difficult handling conditions and so it proved in a game that was never a classic. Having conceded two



needless penalties and with them territory, it took West five minutes to get some possession and that after a Wanderers knock-on. They were first on the scoreboard when after a typical Scott Cochrane break, the ball went through the backs for centre Nicky Sutcliffe to score in the right corner. Dru Nicholson made light work of the difficult conversion. From the restart, Wanderers saw good possession in the West half. Excellent defensive work by Callum McCormack close to the home line following a grubber kick by Andrew McDougall kept the visitors out but West were penalised from the ensuing ruck.

Michael Frizzel closed the gap to four points after thirteen minutes.

The West pack began to dominate, providing their backs with plenty of ball but all they had to show for their efforts was a penalty converted by Nicholson. West themselves continued to concede territory through needless penalties. It eventually led to a Wanderers try in the thirty-third minute. The penalty was kicked to five metres from the West line. From the line-out, West touched down over their own line. The backs were quickly fed from the resulting scrum and Frizzell eventually went over in the corner. He missed the conversion. West now led by only 10-8.

That narrow lead was increased right on half-time. At a scrum five metres from the Wanderers line, the visitors' captain, Callum Robb, received a yellow card for persistent offending. From the reset scrum, No 8 Tiaan Wright picked up and scored. After awarding the try, referee Andy Summers issued a second yellow card, this time to Wanderers flanker Andrew Love for aiming a kick at an opponent. Nicholson's successful kick made it 15-8 to West at the break.



The second half was dominated by West but their opponents defended superbly. McCormack did get over the line but a forward pass was ruled. West should have scored but knocked on with the line at their mercy. Wanderers attacks were limited to attempted breaks from deep but the West defence had no difficulty in repelling them. With fifteen minutes left, Wright got his second and West's third try of the afternoon, going over after the forwards repeatedly drove from a five metres scrum. With ten minutes to go, Wanderers' Frizzell was sent off for stamping. Despite the man advantage, West could not break the resolute Wanderers defence to score the fourth try that would have given them the try bonus point. The match finished West of Scotland 22 Greenock Wanderers 18. Next Saturday, West travel to Edinburgh to face old foes Murrayfield Wanderers.