

West impress against Lasswade

The top of the table clash between Lasswade and West of Scotland at Hawthornden on Saturday did not disappoint the spectators who braved the rain and the wind of a typical Scottish February afternoon. It was a match of full physical commitment from every player involved, a match of power and no little skill between two well-matched sides.

Missing from the West line-up through injury were scrum half Jamie Carruth and No 8 Tiaan Wright. Tom Shenton took the no 9 shirt with John Vasconcelos moving from hooker to the back row. Connor Moran-Smith returned at hooker. To a backdrop of the snow-covered Pentlands, West kicked off with the slight advantage of a light wind. The pitch was soft on top but was in much better condition than could have been expected after such appalling weather.

Lasswade have looked a fairly safe bet for promotion from the start of the season but it was their opponents who dominated the early stages of the game. Stand-off Dru Nicholson gained a 50/22 with a superb kick but West lost possession from the line-out. They had a scrum ten metres from the home line but the Lasswade hooker took one against the head. This was soon followed by a West lineout only ten metres from their opponents line but the ball was overthrown. The referee issued a yellow card to Lasswade's No 8 Dale Robertson. for killing the ball at a ruck. All this in the opening ten minutes!



West continued to press and finally got their reward through a Nicholson penalty midway through the half. It was the home side, though, who got the first try of the afternoon, centre Blair Smith scoring after his dummy opened up the West defence. Matt Smith converted. A second yellow soon followed for Lasswade, second row Ally Lamond preventing West taking a quick tap penalty. A few minutes later, West tight head Andrew Love received the same penalty for the same offence. Nicholson's brilliant cross kick to left wing Callum McCormack almost led to a West score but the winger was held up five metres out. At half-time, West were most unfortunate to be trailing 3-7. It had been an excellent opening forty minutes.



The wind had got up, much to the advantage of the hosts. Five minutes after the restart, the referee spoke to Lasswade's Lamond after he was forced to reverse a penalty. The lock may have been fortunate not to have received a second card. Both sides were absolutely solid in defence and neither ever really looked like crossing their opponents' line. The only

scores in the second half were two penalties by Smith to extend Lasswade's lead to 13-3. With the game nearing its end, West were awarded a penalty and elected to run the ball. The home side managed to regain possession and the match finished with West receiving no reward for a superb effort. In the encounter between the sides at Burnbrae earlier in the season, Lasswade ran up fifty points. Saturday's performance gave an indication of just how far West have progressed this season.