

West Remain Joint Top

West of Scotland remain joint top of National League Division 3 with Gordonians after a comfortable 61-0 victory over bottom side Royal High at Barnton on Saturday. The win was as comfortable as the scoreline suggests. Nine tries were scored, eight of them converted by Cammy Finlayson in a fine display of goal-kicking. The stand-off struck a post with his only unsuccessful kick of the afternoon.

In the absence of Nicky Sutcliffe, Darren Allan moved to outside centre with Rory Cuthbertson at full back. Partnering Allan was Brodie Buchanan, making his first start for the First XV. The Burnbrae men were ahead within thirty seconds on another wet afternoon, rain falling on an already soft playing surface. Captain Scott Cochrane took the Royal High kick-up, gaining ground to allow Cuthbertson to set up Allan to score. Finlayson converted. The West pack would dominate the home eight throughout. The marker was set down after only four minutes when, from a five metres scrum, West drove over the Royal High line and John Vasconcelos touched down. Finlayson's kick was off target by the narrowest of margins.

Midway through the half, a superb Cuthbertson kick set-up a 50/22 but not for the first time this season, the advantage was lost after West were penalised at the line-out. It was another frustrating afternoon for the coaching staff as possession was frequently lost at the



blast of the referee's whistle. They were very much on top, though, and two tries in the space of four minutes saw West secure their try bonus point before the half-hour. Cochrane carried after a heel against the head before Finlayson found Allan to score. This was quickly followed by a rare try from hooker Connor Moran-Smith. A loose clearance was picked up by West on half-way, Fraser Brand reached the Royal High 22, Moran-Smith in support to go over. Both tries were converted by Finlayson. West led 26-0 at the interval. The Royal High backs had had little of the ball but had looked dangerous on the few occasions they did have it. West, though, had been secure in defence.

The visitors were quickly back into their stride, extending their lead just two minutes after the restart. Finlayson's pop-up pass to Fraser Smeaton left the blindside with a clear run to the line. Another successful conversion followed. The home side continued to battle in defence and it took to the mid-point of the half before West scored again. The referee played a good advantage after a high tackle (why no card?) before Connor-Smith turned provider. His "Toonie flip" allowed Donald Morrison in for this first try of the afternoon. The openside was on the scoresheet again a few minutes later, appearing outside the backs to finish off a good handling move. Finlayson was successful with both conversions.

West would add another two goals to their tally before the end.

Excellent driving and support play by the forwards saw Smeaton score again. Cochrane got the final try of the match with a few minutes left. It was again down to good support play by forwards and backs before the



lock powered over. Finlayson took his personal tally for the afternoon to sixteen points by converting both scores.

It was certainly a match from which five points were expected as Royal High continue to struggle with playing numbers. Brodie Buchanan was a much deserved “Man of the Match” on his debut. There is no game next week as Scotland face Fiji at Murrayfield. The break will, hopefully, allow some of those absent through injury to recover. On 12 November, Allan Glen’s will visit Burnbrae in what will be a tough test for the hosts. Glen’s are in third place in the table, nine points behind the co-leaders. Kick-off is two o’clock.

West of Scotland: Rory Cuthbertson; Fraser Brand, Darren Allan, Brodie Buchanan, Rowland Osii; Cammy Finlayson, Jamie Carruth; Pete Rhodes, Connor Moran-Smith, Andrew Love; Scott Cochrane (C), Gareth Craig; Fraser Smeaton, Donald Morrison, Jon Vasconcelos.

Replacements: Stuart Murray, Jordan Mitchell, Connor Fleming, Callum Rutherford.