

Jimmy Would Have Approved

West of Scotland 52 Cartha Queen's Park 12

The new season began in the saddest of ways at Burnbrae. A minute silence to mark the passing of Jimmy Dinsmore, former player and president of the club in the mid-eighties. It is safe to assume Jimmy would have approved of the eighty minutes that followed.

Overhead conditions were ideal as West and their National League Cup opponents, Cartha Queen's Park lined up on a perfect, late summer afternoon. On the downside, the volume of rain that has fallen in the last few weeks meant a heavy surface and a greasy ball.

West got off to the perfect start with a try after only two minutes. From a Cartha scrum forty metres out, the West pack took one against the head. Scrum half Callum Rutherford broke left and fed Callum McCormack. The centre drew his man, timing his pass perfectly to send Fraser Brand under the posts. Lewis Howick converted. The lead was quickly out to twelve points after a catch and drive from a linout close to the visitors' line allowed skipper for the day Connor Moran-Smith to touch down.



West were playing some excellent rugby, forwards and backs linking well. Ten minutes were on the clock before Cartha made their first foray into the West 22. That ended with a knock-on. Before the mid-point of the half, Nicky Sutcliffe's try and Howick's conversion saw the Burnbrae side nineteen points clear. It was a soft score, the centre going through a huge gap in the Cartha defence from a ruck in their 22. It was a point a minute after twenty-four. It was the best score of the game with excellent support play creating the space for No 8 Donnie Morrison, outstanding throughout, to crash over.

After the referee had spoken to the Cartha captain for a number of high tackles by his side, West lost winger Brand to an ankle injury. The player has been most unfortunate with injury in the last couple of seasons. He had looked sharp in his latest comeback. Just before the interval, Cartha loose-head prop Cameron Rennie departed with a head knock. It had been an excellent first half from West, the forwards providing plenty of good ball for a dangerous back line.

Two minutes after the restart, Cartha were down to fourteen men with what seemed to be the inevitable yellow card for the latest high tackle. Hooker Zander Kelman would enjoy the ten minutes breather. Any hopes the visitors had of a comeback were extinguished before Kelman's return. Openside flanker Emin Thaqi had looked dangerous with ball in hand from the first whistle. His break took him into his opponent's 22. From the ruck, Howick came into the line to score with ease. The full back added the extras. The try came with a cost. Veteran prop Pete Rhodes did what all good props do when there is a loose ball, he secured possession. In doing so, he took an accidental kick to the head. His afternoon was over.

On the hour mark, Howick recorded his second try of the afternoon, finding space on the left after his three-quarters had created the overlap. He again was sure from the tee. West played the last seven minutes a man short after Callum Godber became the second player to receive a yellow card for a high tackle. Almost immediately, Cartha finally crossed the West line, replacement Scott McCormick going over from a tap penalty. West's response was to score two tries in two minutes. Sutcliffe charged down a clearance kick, collected and went under the posts. Howick converted. The full back created his side's final try of the game, running from deep into the Cartha half before finding McCormack in support to score. Howick's conversion took his personal tally to twenty-two points. There was just time for Cartha's Frazer Corrance to take his side into double figures, the try being converted by Leo Reid.



A hugely positive start to the season for West of Scotland. It will be a much sterner challenge next weekend when they travel to Kirkwall to face Orkney in the first game in the league campaign.