

Disappointing End to The Season for West

Strathmore 45, West 31

With injury and Covid taking their toll, it was a reshuffled West of Scotland side that travelled to Strathmore for the final match in what has been a season of great promise. Conditions were perfect both overhead and underfoot for a game that the hosts needed to win to ensure they escaped the battle for relegation.

It was the home side that got off to the perfect start with a try through James Lockhart after five minutes. A gap in the West defence was exploited with the centre on hand to take the



pop-up pass to score under the posts. Stand off Blair Butchart was successful with the conversion. West were quick to reply. After a fine 50/22 kick to five metres by Dru Nicholson, the forwards drove left from the lineout. Left wing Callum McCormack, who would have another fine match in an excellent season, finished off the move in the corner.

The Burnbrae men immediately gifted their opponents their second score. The ball was dropped from the restart and collected by Strathmore hooker Lee Alexander who ran in unchallenged.

The game settled down with both sides looking to attack but the defences holding firm. On two occasions, Butchart had the opportunity to kick to touch close to the West line from a penalty but both times he kicked too long. Two tries in the space of three minutes just before the half hour mark saw West go ahead. A superb long pass from full back Rory Cuthbertson set up right wing Darren Allan. Nicky Sutcliffe was in support and the centre touched down. Donald Morrison then finished off fine work by both backs and forwards. Stand off Nicholson converted both tries. It looked as if the visitors would go into the interval with a seven points lead but right on halftime, Butchart was allowed to step through the West defence from a lineout to score. He converted the try. Halftime saw the sides level at 19-19.

Within eight minutes of the restart, Strathmore had secured their victory and their try bonus point. Blindside Finlay Williamson broke some weak West tackles to touch down, the try converted by Butchart, followed two minutes later by lock Andrew Coupar who scored following what looked like a knock-on. No 8 Fergus Mitchell joined his colleagues from the



pack in crossing the line when West lost their lineout ball on their own 22. Butchart was successful with the kick. From being seven points ahead, West found themselves trailing by nineteen points in the space of nine minutes of play.

Pete Rhodes' try and Nicholson's conversion on the hour mark did give West some hope as well as the try bonus point. The loosehead finished off a drive by the pack from a tap penalty. Replacement Dale Bell removed any hope West had with his try with seven minutes left, Butchart again slotting the goal. Before the end, skipper Scott Cochrane did record West's fifth try but it was all too late. They did pound the home line in search of the losing bonus point but to no avail.

A disappointing end to a season that started badly but quickly picked up with some excellent performances both home and away. The future looks very bright for the Burnbrae men with many promising youngsters now in the first fifteen or on the fringes.