

UNLUCKY THIRTEEN FOR “HILLS”

Hillhead Jordanhill RFC 15pts West of Scotland FC 17pts

In a game where both sides showed early season rustiness in terms of poor handling skills and, at times, ball retention, “West” eased ahead to win only in the last five minutes from a penalty try conceded by “Hills” when they had only seven forwards, Stuart Rose having been sin binned just before. Despite a final frantic few minutes, it was unlikely that there was any way back as the home team had been further reduced in numbers with Joe Stafford entering the “bin” immediately following the award of the try.

Yet it was “Hills” that were ahead from the 22nd minute following an equalising penalty goal from scrum half Andrew Gilman, countering that from West’s Stephen O’Donnell. But in truth, most of the first half, although of honest endeavour and effort, was of poor fare with both sides guilty of basic handling errors and constantly cutting inside, while ignoring the “wide” boys on the wing, all of whom seemed hungry for the ball. Although the “West” scrum drove their opposition at times, there was no clear domination and referee, Gary Gordon, penalised both sides for front row offences. The game badly needed a try and it came from “Hills” when stand off Cammy McCulloch sensed some space on the blind side of a scrum, transferred the ball quickly via David Paterson to left winger “Mini” Mitchell who made good ground down the “West” right hand flank, and, with a spectacular basketball overhead pass, found Marty Lane in support. Marty, more “beanpole” than “pine tree” scampered in for the try beneath the posts for Gilman to add the conversion points. “Hills” were now 10 points to 3 ahead with the breeze at their backs in the second half.

It was not too long, however, until “Hills” extended their lead with a fine try in the left hand corner. David Mitchell began the play, fielding a wayward “West” kick to start a fine handling movement involving Cammy McCulloch and Will Marshall with finally Stuart Ross, playing his 100th National League game for “Hills”, claiming the try. Rather than trying to play the game in the “West” half, some loose play detracted from the “Hills” earlier efforts, and allowed the visitors to begin to dominate. At last “West” engineered some space for their danger man, Ben Wright, and he ran in to score a fine try in the left corner, which Stephen O’Donnell converted with an excellent kick from the touchline. This was a “double whammy” for the “Hills” as their main line-out forward, Marty Lane, was injured trying to save the try, and the loss of his control of the touchline contributed to the “Hills” undoing in the final quarter.

“West” now began to raise their efforts, and it took some desperate defence, in which Will Marshall excelled, to stop the visitors adding to their score. The game was now sited in the “Hills” danger areas with the visitors monopolising the line-out and controlling the second phase. Stuart Rose’s dismissal produced a predictable “West” onslaught on the home line. The rolling maul was finally held up over the home line, but the resulting scrum, against seven “Hills” forwards collapsed as the visitors drove to the line. Referee Gary Gordon had no doubt it was a penalty try, and Stephen O’Donnell kicked the conversion high and handsome between the posts to take the visitors two points ahead. Although the “Hills” were reduced to just 13 players, they did strive manfully to snatch a score in the remaining three minutes of play, but there was no way through a resolute defence, and the “West” held out to record their first win in SHE Premier division 2, with “Hills” having to console themselves with a bonus point.

“ I am disappointed, but not deflated by the defeat”, said “Hills” head Coach, Keith Robertson. “We fielded three young backs and it showed them they can compete at this level in the game. We have to tighten up in several areas, but we can take a lot of pride from this performance. I cannot wait to get them organised at Tuesday night training”

“Hills” 1st XV – Dan Witko, Gavin Mahindru, David Paterson, Will Marshall, David Mitchell, Cammy McCulloch, Andrew Gilman, Gavin Blackburn, Ewen Weir (Stewart McMillan), Nick McAuley (Joe Stafford), Stuart Rose, James Howarth (Douglas Wood), Stuart Ross, Cammy Kerr (C) and Marty Lane (C)

