

Match Report 06/04/2019

3rd team League game

Ashford Barbarians 24 - 19 Maidstone (mainly) Vets

"And now, the end is here. I've had my fill, my share of losing. And more, much more than this. I did it my way." [Tribute to Neil Cole, with apologies to Frank Sinatra.]

Duly it came to pass that three minutes after coming on as a half time sub and taking a tweak on the nipple, El Capitano goes down, squeals for a bit of physio and takes his bow as Vets' Captain. You've received plenty of plaudits elsewhere on these pages Neil. Surely you didn't expect much here?

To be fair - and not that you would expect anything different (especially with the opposition lying second in whatever league this match was being played in) - this was, as well as being very enjoyable, quite a tough, physical game with a few from our ranks reporting the word "broken" and requesting help getting dressed the following day. And probably a little thankful (a) that this was the last game of the season, and b) that the Vets do not play all our games covering a league fixture against opposition with an average age a third younger than ours. (See also a recent report against the other Ashford.)

On to the actual game. Playing up the slope in the first half we held out pretty well, conceding only one try until just before half time when the hosts doubled their advantage. On the whole some experienced heads in the backs (such as Walker, Whitehead and Moore) kept the team well marshalled in keeping the deficit to manageable levels with flanker Adrian Clark and 17 year old winger Ryan Harrison excelling in the tackle count. We also spent a period down to 14 men after the ref took exception to Mick Walker's ring-side commentary.

Prior to that our scrum-half even tried a new tactic - kicking the ball into an opposition prop forward's bread basket in the hope that this would leave him doubled up, gasping for breath as well as knocking the ball on. Unfortunately his gut was rather plump and the ball simply nestled into his pouch. In attack No. 8 Tom Clarke and prop Louis Frost ploughed a few furrows into enemy territory and 19 year old centre Adam Pearson, who learned his trade through our youth system (as Louis did), looked promising with ball in hand as well as knowing how to clear out a ruck or two.

As hoped and with the slope now to our advantage in the second half, we spent more time on the front foot. After a spell of pressure in the oppo's 22, fly half Gary Whitehead drove over the line. The ref couldn't see any grounding - though there appears to be photographic evidence suggesting otherwise courtesy of our unofficial TMO, Phil Hadfield. This proved to be largely irrelevant however as the referee awarded a penalty try.

Buoyed by this we kept the pressure on - Tom and Louis particularly enjoying the advantage of the slope. Our second try came courtesy of a swivel of the Whitehead hips in their 22. Their midfield momentarily went one way while Gary straightened

slightly to waltz under the posts and partially make up for not being allowed the earlier touchdown. Mick's conversion put us two points ahead.

Unfortunately concentration levels proved to be our undoing, proving that the mind can tire as much as the body. They scored a couple of quick tries - one of which was particularly disappointing (or even "f****n' embarrassing" according to Mr Whitehead's erudite debriefing under the posts). We rallied and some good hands across the backline culminated with fullback Eugene Moore giving this sometime scribe and centre a run in to the right hand corner from a dozen yards or so. Ultimately however it was too little, too late.

Post match then where before Gary Whitehead swept all before him in the boat race (knocking back all three concoctions before some had even finished their first) our out-going skipper was buying the drinks for his charges. Until he discovered he left his wallet at home. (I won't mention anything about Neil trying to set son Harry up for a date with our physio for the day, Charlie.)

Until next season...

TotM: Mick Walker (with an honourable mention to Neil Cole).

MotM: Gary Whitehead (with honourable mentions to Ryan Harrison, Adam Pearson, Tom Clarke and Louis Frost).

Try scorers: Penalty, Whitehead, Ellesmere.

Con: Walker.

Match report by Matt Ellesmere

Squad

01 Christopher Hogg (1st half) Jason Hudson (2nd half)

02 Mark Ingram

03 Louis Frost

04 Gary Griffiths

05 Karim Neseiyif (1st half) Peter Bulford (2nd half)

06 Colin Frost

07 Adrian Clark (1st half) Neil Cole for 3 minutes of the 2nd half then back to Adrian

08 Tom Clarke

09 Mick Walker (On field Captain)

10 Gary Whitehead

11 Ryan Harrison

12 Adam Pearson

13 Matthew Ellesmere

14 Marco Trismegisto Bauchiero

15 Eugene Moore

16 Matt Eastwood (sub, injured, not used)

22 Charlie Knight – Physiotherapist

50 JJ Hudson – part time waterboy

1356 Phil Hadfield - Photographer.