

Wirral 24 – 12 Bowdon (H) League, Saturday 12 April 2008

On a bright & breezy Saturday at Clatterbridge the Wirral team had a chance to show the home supporters that the previous league performance at home against Widnes had been as big a disappointment to them as those watching plus it was also a chance to avenge an undeserved away defeat in October against the multinational Bowdon.

This game saw young Sam Broadbent starting at standoff as Craig Harvey's shoulder injury had not completely healed plus Colin Davies returned after a few weeks absence. Wirral won the toss & chose to play up the slope & against the wind on Twickenham – which regular watchers know is a good omen.

The first 10 minutes of the game saw the Wirral playing a tight game & their forwards were tying their opponents in whilst the backs were sticking to the basics with Martin Bennett & Colin Davies combining in making some powerful & dangerous runs down the lefthand side. In fact Bowdon's frustration at their lack of ball & territory was shown when they were awarded a penalty after 10 minutes on the ½ way line for a lineout infringement by Wirral & the big Bowdon no.10 attempted to kick it. He then tried again 3 minutes later from in front of the posts on the 10 metres line – once again without success. In fact it was 15 minutes before Bowdon put any pressure on the Wirral line & this only happened because of Wirral missed tackles.

The first score came after 22 minutes & it was a try out wide for the Bowdon no.11 & followed a shoulder injury to Martin Bennett leading to him being unable complete a tackle on the dangerous & aggressive Bowdon no.8 (0-5). In fact it was obvious that MB couldn't carry on & so much against what had been planned Craig Harvey came on as a substitute.

Wirral continued to deny Bowdon territory & possession & it says a lot that once again the only chance Bowdon had to score came from a Wirral mistake after 36 minutes when an attempted chip over the Bowdon defence went wrong & was collected by the Bowdon 2nd row who eventually passed to the no.10 for him to score under the posts. (0-12)

The half finished with Wirral behind on the scoreboard but well ahead in terms of territory & possession. With the wind & slope in their favour in the 2nd half the Wirral players were confident of victory. The other positive aspect of the 1st half had been the large number of supporters who had turned up for this last home game of the season & the vociferous nature of their support which had been generated not only by the team's efforts but also by Bowdon's vigorous attempts to stop them.

The second half continued the way of the 1st with Bowdon doing everything they could to repel the Wirral attackers – both forwards & backs. The referee seemed to be constantly having to stop the game to deliver lectures to both captains about the handbags that were being thrown behind his back.

Eventually after 20 minutes the referee's patience ran out & he showed the Bowdon no.1 a yellow card.

Wirral continued to pressure the 14 Bowdon players & after just a minute of the Yellow Card Craig Harvey scored out wide on the right & brother Danny kicked an excellent conversion (7-12).

There was no stopping the Wirral team now & urged on by their supporters the forwards were destroying their opposition & this led to the next score 6 minutes later. A scrum 5 metres from the Bowdon line was going backwards when it was collapsed by the Bowdon team & the referee redeemed himself in the Wirral spectators eyes by awarding a penalty try converted by Danny Harvey (14-12).

So Wirral had made excellent use of their 1 man advantage to move from being scoreless to being in the lead & they were also maintaining their effort & momentum.

The final scores were a penalty by Danny Harvey (17-12) to ensure that Bowdon would need to score at least a try to draw level but that would mean they would have had to threaten the Wirral line for the 1st time in this half.

Then in the last minute young Sam Broadbent waltzed through the tired Bowdon defence to score a great try under the posts which Danny Harvey converted (24-12).

This had been a great 80 minute performance by all concerned & one thing that has been noticeable this season is that the fitness levels have improved which the players believe is down to the amount of time that is being spent on the move in training. Games that have been lost have normally finished with the Wirral players still running hard.

So with 1 game to go the 1st XV have won 12 lost 12 in all competitions – need to beat Wigan away next Saturday

They are the 2nd highest scoring team in the league, they set a club record with their 102pts against Aspull & they are currently 6th in the league – so results don't lie, halfway in the league & an even split in results.

I don't know whether this will work or not but if you have been watching the team on fairly regular basis then email me your views on the following:

1. Best team Performances – 1, 2 & 3
2. Most consistent player – forward
3. Most consistent player - back
4. Most improved player

My email address is leigh.bennett@ntlworld.com

I will include votes in the last league report of the season, next week – don't forget that you can refresh your memory by going back to the list of results.

By the way best of luck to the Junior Colts next Sunday (20th April) at Doncaster when as Northern Champions they play the Midlands champions for a place in the National Colts finals day in May at the Worcester Sixways stadium.

Leigh Bennett