

Wirral 15 – 3 Huddersfield YMCA - Saturday 17 November 2007
(EDF Energy Senior Vase Round3 North)

A view from the Railway Sleeper Stand...

This was the 2nd EDF Energy Cup match in successive weeks & was expected to be a very competitive & fast game against past winners of this national cup from the Yorkshire league 1. – the referee from the previous week had refereed a game in which they were involved & stated their strength were their speedy backs.

Wirral had a couple of changes from the previous week's starting line-up with Craig Harvey moving to outside centre, young Sam Broadbent starting at outside-half, Ian White moved to the rightwing & Ross Paige started at no 8. with the late withdrawal of Tim Hodson due to an ankle injury.

Huddersfield certainly started with the intention a playing at a fast pace but they found the Wirral players more than a match for them in all areas. The defence which had been somewhat lacking against Hoylake a fortnight ago has certainly returned over the last two weeks in the Cup matches.

Wirral opened the scoring after 4 minutes when Craig Harvey kicked a penalty from 22 metres & just to the right of the posts. Huddersfield's discipline was already beginning to let them down as well as costing them metres and testing the referee's patience with their continual comments on his decisions.

The next score came on the half hour with Huddersfield converting one of the few penalty chances Wirral gave them in the match.

By now Wirral's forwards were beginning to dominate their opposite numbers in everything except the lineout & with scrumhalf Ieuan Jones & the backrow disrupting the service of his opposite number the Huddersfield backs were struggling to put any passages of play together. The Wirral backs on the other hand were defensively & attacking wise starting to take the play to & through their opposite numbers & it came as no surprise when on the stroke of halftime Craig Harvey chipped the ball from left to right for Ian White to gather & score in the corner. The conversion failed & Wirral turned round 8-3 in the lead.

Halftime saw the coaches once again ringing the changes in the excellent & hardworking front row with Steven Pendergast & Chris Hughes coming off & being replaced by James Duckers & Jason Green.

Wirral started the second half where they left off in the 1st half putting the pressure on the Huddersfield team and 10 minutes into the half Martin Bennett scored a try close to the posts following pressure at the breakdown close to the Huddersfield line caused them to lose possession & the loose ball was scooped up to Martin and he proved unstoppable from 1 metre out! – Craig Harvey converted 15-3 – and that is how it stayed for the rest of the game. The other substitutes when they came on – Alan Mountfield for captain

Mike Ludbrook & Matt Luxton following an injury to Sam Broadbent – fitted in well & performed excellently.

In summary it was an excellent defensive display from the whole Wirral team & if they can now start turning some of the numerous half chances they are creating into points then the current disappointing league form will become a thing of the past. Mind you the Wirral injury list is growing with Sam Broadbent, Paul Rawsthorne & Craig Harvey picking up injuries that required them leaving the pitch.

The vote from the stand both from the Huddersfield & Wirral supporters was that the best team won & that the visitors were their own worst enemies. After the game, in the clubhouse, the man of the match award was given to No 8 Ross Paige with scrumhalf Ieuan Jones running him a close second.

Leigh Bennett