

Saturday 5th January 2019

[London 3 South West](#)

Match Report by Jim Dixon

Old Whitgiftians 15 – 29 Portsmouth

Portsmouth travelled to South Croydon for this return fixture and the first of the New Year. Like a lot of London Old Boys sides they possess a good set of backs who can cause problems and are usually stronger at home. In fact their bottom of the table position belies their abilities and although Portsmouth won 15 - 29 with a try bonus point it was to prove a hard fought encounter.

Old Whitgiftians got proceedings underway and Portsmouth soon showed their intent by taking the ball into Opposition territory for the first 10 minutes or so and although they came close to scoring, resolute defence by O.W's kept the score sheet at nil. A good break by No.8 Rhys Bowen and taken on by prop Finn Parry again saw them stopped short of the try line. O.W's then tried to break out from their 22 but when the tackled player failed to release Portsmouth were awarded a penalty which No.10 Cam Duffus duly converted to give the Visitors a 0 - 3 lead after 13 minutes. O.W's then put Portsmouth under pressure and it was the Visitors turn to defend well, and eventually a penalty to Portsmouth enabled them to get the ball up field. From the resultant line out they put in a good drive which saw them make about 10 - 15 metres before O.W's transgressed again giving Portsmouth another penalty. A good move by Portsmouth was only stopped when an O.W's player knocked on the passing ball and away from the receiver giving another penalty to Portsmouth but no other sanction. From another line out a series of pick and drives came to nothing as good defence held them out. Matt Farnes then had to leave the field having received a knock and was replaced by Chris Morgan. Eventually though, the pressure told when a good move involving forwards and backs saw Cam Duffus step his way through the defence to score Portsmouth's first try which he also converted giving them a 0 - 10 lead on 25 minutes. 3 minutes later he was on hand to add to his tally with another well worked try. His conversion narrowly missed and the score was now 0 - 15. Just prior to this score winger Luke Simmons had a chance to get on the score board but he was pulled back off the ball when he would have scored but again no sanction was given. O.W's were not giving up and a good break out by them saw the ball carrier with only full back Mark Ovens to beat but the full back was up for the challenge and an excellent tackle stopped them in their tracks. However that seemed to spur them on and with the half in stoppage time they eventually crossed for a converted try as the half time whistle went with the score now 7 - 15.

SECOND HALF.

Portsmouth got the second half underway playing down a considerable slope. The visitors soon had O.W's pinned in their half but again were unable to take advantage and eventually O.W's cleared the ball up field. A penalty against Portsmouth saw O.W's take a kick at goal which was successful and the gap closed to 10 - 15 still in favour of the visitors with 48 minutes gone. O.W's were upping their intensity now and were soon rewarded with a well taken try scored by their winger wide out. The conversion failed and the scores were now level at 15 apiece with 50 minutes now gone. Jack Easterbrook then came off to be replaced by Anthony Fooks. He went to No.6 with Will Brock moving into the 2nd row. This was followed shortly after when centre Gareth Richards had to leave the field and he was replaced by Chris Morgan, Matt Farnes went onto the centre with the 2 wingers

swapping places. Portsmouth then got back into the groove with some well worked moves but could still not find that final touch. Portsmouth then made another change with prop Parry coming off to be replaced by 19 year old Colt, Liam Avis making his debut appearance for the 1's. Yet another good move was thwarted by O.W's when again they slapped the ball down from what would have probably been a try but other than a penalty no other sanction was given and this was the third time they had transgressed in this manner. This seemed to spur Portsmouth on and from a well worked move the ball was passed to Will Brock who from about 10 metres out crashed through the defenders to score wide out. Cam Duffus was again on target and they re-took the lead 15 - 22 with 20 minutes of the match remaining. From the re-start Tim Snowden caught the ball and passed to winger Simmons who took a wonderful run from inside his 22 into the Opposition 22 before he was tackled and lost possession of the ball. Portsmouth then scored their 4th. try through full back Mark Ovens who scored wide out after some good handling through forwards and backs. The conversion was successful and the lead extended to 15 - 29 with 67 minutes gone. Cam Duffus then had to leave the field more as a precaution than anything serious. Richards went to No.10 with Matt Farnes going back on in the centre. Another good scoring chance went begging when the final pass went forward with the line open to the receiver. Portsmouth kept up the pressure and eventually the final whistle went with Portsmouth still in the O.W's 22 and trying to increase their 15 - 29 lead.

A bonus point win was vital to keep pressure on the teams above Portsmouth, especially as U.S lost away to Trojans 22- 14. Portsmouth still have to play Trojans twice, at home in the replay of the abandoned game in December and then in February in the Hants Cup. Despite leading in the abandoned fixture 19 - 0 this result should focus the mind!!

This was always going to be a difficult match for Portsmouth who hadn't played since December 15th. and having no training over the Christmas period, and it showed. The urgency and desire was only there in fits and starts so let's hope that training sessions next week get things back on track. Today's win sees Portsmouth still in 4th place on 47 points but with a game in hand. U.S are still in 3rd on 48 with Battersea 2nd after beating Old Tiffinians 54 - 21. They are on 49 points with Winchester still top on 58 points after their 49 - 12 win over Old Georgians. Next week sees Portsmouth play Teddington at home 2.00 p.m. kick off. Teddington beat Warlingham on Saturday 19 - 15 and are in 10th. place on 19 points.

TEAM.

PARKS, HOOLIHAN, PARRY.

LEGGOTT(c), EASTERBROOK.

BROCK, SNOWDEN, BOWEN.

DUFFUS(A), DUFFUS(C)

FARNES, RICHARDS, GATES SIMMONS,

OVENS.

REPLACEMENTS,

AVIS, FOOKS, MORGAN (Chris).

