

**MATCH REPORT: BIDEFORD 13 v TORQUAY ATHLETIC 22**  
**SATURDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2012**

From being 10 – 0 down after 5 minutes Torquay raised their game and the tempo to eventually dominate second half proceedings and run out worthy winners.

On a dry and sunny day at King George's Field the pitch, which was tacky in places, held up well and while Bideford persevered throughout with a short pass running game from all areas of the field their opportunities were restricted in the second half when the visitors had the lion's share of possession.

Matt Jackson kicked off for Torquay and within 46 seconds the home side had run the ball back and crossed the line, using quick hands along their back division for right winger Chris Snell to round the Torquay defence and run in from half way. No. 10 and leading points scorer Ollie Wicket converted for 7 – 0. This lead was increased to 10 – 0 five minutes later when Tics pulled down a maul and Wicket obliged with the penalty from in front of the posts.

Torquay now shook themselves from self-induced lethargy and started to impose themselves on the game. After 20 minutes a line out twenty metres from Bideford's line was rumbled all the way with returning prop Gareth Binmore providing the final touch down. A difficult conversion from James Wood gave Tics a foothold at 10 – 7. Bideford then broke away and Tics were perhaps lucky not to be reduced to fourteen men when a penalty was awarded against a defending tackler.

Back came Torquay driving up the middle and when Bideford went offside at a ruck Wood popped over a routine penalty to level at 10 – 10. The game now swung from end to end until another Bideford breakout led to Tics being pinged for a high tackle and from wide left Wicket succeeded with the penalty on the stroke of half time to give Bideford a 13 – 10 advantage.

Against Okehampton two weeks earlier Tics had been slow starters in the second half when turning round behind on points and on this occasion to ensure collective team focus on the task in hand Coach Chris Dorling delivered a no holds barred interval team talk containing unambiguous invective on what was required.

Although Tics conceded a penalty shortly after the restart this was missed by Wicket. Then a right wing break by Adam Chadwick was stopped short but the home side conceded a five metre line out hacking the loose ball into touch before supporting Tics players could capitalise. From this James Wood came into the back of a drive, smuggled the ball and dived over wide right to give his side the lead for the first time, 13 - 15. The visitors now appeared in no mood to surrender this advantage.

Indeed on sixty minutes Wood joined the line and nearly burst clear but from a last gasp defending tackle he was caught around the area of the eye by a trailing knee and left the field to be replaced by Tony McCarthy. At the same time lock Jake Knight made way for Dan Williams.

The changes did not appear to affect Tics momentum although Bideford broke out again and from a hack ahead the visitors were again perhaps fortunate not to receive a yellow for obstruction on a chasing player. However Wicket drew the resulting penalty wide from which point Tics increasingly kept the ball better and after a series of forward phases close to the Bideford line prop Russ Morris, starting for the first time following surgery before Christmas, burst through under the posts. Matt Jackson's conversion gave the Tics some breathing space at 13 – 22.

Torquay managed to play out the remaining time largely in control of the ball and came close to crossing again from pick and goes on more than one occasion but the bonus point try eluded them. Nevertheless after an inauspicious start this was a solid and valuable away win, which keeps Tics in fourth place with a game in hand on third placed Okehampton who are a point in front.

Dorling was delighted with the overall display and made the team “Man of the Match” for a controlled second half display. With several players getting a full eighty minute game time after periods out with injuries, illness or unavailability the team finished strongly and he remarked on how the proof of the effort put in was that “absolutely nothing was left on the field.”

Picking individuals would perhaps be unfair but the performance of certain players allowed the Tics to dictate the second period on their terms. As a unit the back row was outstanding, creating much turnover ball and within the front five Gareth Binmore enjoyed his most effective game of the season, as did lock Tom Whitford. Tics are currently missing no less than three recognised hookers through illness or injury but once again “Bertie” Turner stepped up to the plate and put in a hard working shift. Defensively no. 9 Alex Jeffery defied fatigue to bring off at least three crucial saving tackles.

One unfortunate postscript to the match however is that talismanic skipper James Wood's injury is more serious than was at first evident. A visit to the Hospital has revealed that he has sustained a suspected fractured eye socket. It is understood that when the swelling has gone down a further visit at the end of this week will be necessary for an updated assessment.

Tics go on the road again next week to St. Ives in good heart. Supporters travelling on the coach will be especially welcome for the longest away trip of the season.

Team:

15 – James Wood, 14 – Adam Chadwick, 13 – Matt Lloyd, 12 – Rory Williams, 11 – Ollie Pitts, 10 – Matt Jackson, 9 – Alex Jeffery,  
1 – Russ Morris, 2 – Carl Turner, 3 – Gareth Binmore, 4 – Jake Knight, 5 – Tom Whitford, 6 – Jon Oliver, 7 – Paul Wood, 8 – Alex Smith.

Replacements: Tony McCarthy, Jon Woodhead, Dan Williams (all played).

At the Rec the Extra Firsts played out an entertaining match which swung first one way and then the other against Barnstaple's Second string with two late tries giving the visitors a 22 – 26 win.

At TVN the Colts went down to a strong Barnstable unit by 12 – 46.