

MATCH REPORT – 19/11/11 TORQUAY ATHLETIC 25 v TRURO 15

Torquay Athletic started this game with visible intent following criticism from many quarters of a losing performance at Devonport Services seven days earlier, including a dressing down from Coach Chris Dorling who was quick to praise the positive response and a renewed intensity at training sessions during the week.

From winning the first set scrum against the head Tics dominated the first half to such an extent that it was difficult to recall any occasion when Truro incurred into the home 22' from open play.

On 10 minutes the Torquay back row won back ball off Truro's own scrum and Matt Jackson playing at 10 hoisted a beautifully weighted up and under, directly from which a ricochet off a Truro defender shot into the hands of left wing Tony McCarthy following Jackson's kick at speed. He ran in from 30 metres and managed to stretch over the line despite a desperate last ditch tap tackle. James Wood playing at full back converted for 7 – 0. He then added to the tally 4 minutes later with a penalty from 30 metres in front after Truro strayed offside.

However from the Truro kick off Jackson caught the ball and went to ground from where Tics were penalised at the ruck and no.10 Jake Champion reduced the arrears to 10 – 3.

After 20 minutes and following sustained territorial pressure Tics showed a desire to add to their try tally and kicked a penalty from hand to secure a 5 metre line out. An efficient catch and drive saw prop Russ Morris touch down under a pile of bodies.

Once again Tics were pinged straight from the kick off, this time for crossing but Champion's attempt from 49 metres fell just short. Wood then gave Torquay an 18 – 3 interval lead by kicking one out of two penalties, the other effort hitting a post and bouncing wide.

An enforced re-shuffle of the pack took place 5 minutes in to the second half when livewire hooker Simon Mabin and prop Nick Gill left the field, the former being replaced by 18 year old Ben Sharples, given his first opportunity to play for the Senior side at his preferred position of hooker.

Unfortunately these changes seemed to disrupt the Tics momentum for a spell but in the 55th and 60th minutes Truro handed back the initiative to the home side when first right wing Mark Lea and then open side flanker Shaun Rosevear were yellow carded; the latter for foul play which resulted in home no. 9 Alex Jeffery having to leave the field.

Whilst Truro were down to 13 men Torquay capitalised straightaway and on 61 minutes a line out on Truro's 22' was taken by no. 8 Alex Smith who picked a gap to run through with Wood adding the extras for a 25 – 3 lead and a fourth try bonus point in prospect.

However Truro have a recently acquired a reputation for finishing strongly, best illustrated away to Okehampton in mid October where in the last 11 minutes the team scored three tries to get back to 28 – 27 before running out of time to complete an upset.

Restored to 15 men they pressed in the final 10 minutes, securing two attacking 5 metre line outs, both converted for tries by replacement prop Stuart Miliner from a rolling maul and then with flanker Sean Rosevear breaking through in the 73rd minute. Coach Chris Dorling later expressed the view that the Tics had defended naively from both of these set plays. Champion kicked one of the conversions to leave the score 25 – 15 at which it remained. In the final few minutes replacement prop Jon Oliver retired with a damaged shoulder.

Tics may come to rue the lack of a bonus point after such a dominant first half performance on a firm and dry pitch. After this game Torquay lie fifth in the table, three points behind new leaders St. Austell who share the same playing record as the Tics with two losses and one drawn from eleven games but who have garnered eight bonus points compared to four for the Tics. Once the weather slows down the pitches four try victories may be harder to achieve.

However efforts are being hampered by a continuing catalogue of injuries although there is now a break of two weeks before Tics travel to second placed Bideford for a game which they must win to show true promotion credentials. There is also an opportunity for coaching staff to run the rule over emerging talent in the Extra Firsts who play Paignton II's at the Rec. next Saturday, 26th November with a 2.30 pm KO.

After the match Chris Dorling commented”I cannot say enough about the squad for the way players conducted themselves this week in both training and the game. Our commitment was first class. Although we must give credit to Truro for their endeavour to get back into the game it was massively pleasing to see us dominate for such long periods. Of course the icing on ther cake would have been to get the bonus point but to see two 18 year olds in Matt Lloyd and Ben Sharples take to First Team rugby like ducks to water was for me the biggest plus of the afternoon.”

Torquay Team:

15 – James Wood, 14 – Ben Chadwick, 13 – Ollie Pitts, 12 – Matt Lloyd, 11 – Tony McCarthy, 10 – Matt Jackson, 9 – Alex Jeffery

1 – Russ Morris, 2 – Simon Mabin, 3 – Nick Gill, 4 – Jon Arnold, 5 – Tom Whitford, 6 – Jon Oliver, 7 – Richard Read, 8 Alex Smith.

Replacements: Ben Sharples, Dan Williams, Jonny Brown (all used).

The Extras ran out worthy winners away to Crediton by 31 – 15 in a Devon Merit Table 1 match with tries coming from Jon Woodhead, Matt Allanson, Paul Davis, Marcus Phillips and Tom Brookman.

Torquay Quins had no game on Saturday but next week return to Merit Table action V Teignmouth II's at TVN with a 2.30 pm KO.

Meanwhile Torquay Colts went down 10 – 17 in the concluding area Merit Table match to local rivals Paignton; each team ending as runner up and winner of that Table, respectively. Both now progress to play 1st and 2nd teams from the other three area Tables on a home and away basis to decide who will be Devon Under 18 champions, with the young Tics starting that campaign on 10th December at home to Ivybridge. Next week they go for a friendly to Kingsbridge to provide more members of a large and enthusiastic squad valuable game time.