

## MATCH REPORT – BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> JANUARY 2012-01

### BRIXHAM v TORQUAY ATHLETIC

Brixham retained the Reg Brewer Cup at Astley Park on Bank Holiday Monday by virtue of a 34 – 14 win.

The foundations for this were laid in the first half when the Fishermen scored three tries without reply, all converted by No. 10 Ian Morgan for a 21 – 0 lead.

Both Clubs had agreed to postpone a scheduled second team Merit Table game so that valuable game time could be given to enlarged squads and fringe players allowed to show what they could bring to the table. However whilst the Tics starting line up contained just eight First team regulars plus three others with current term First XV experience it appeared that Brixham went into the match almost at full strength.

Changes to the Tics side included normal scrum half Alex Jeffery at fly half and young Charlie Whitney at no. 9 following his bleeding in that position for the President's XV on Boxing Day.

Torquay spent the first five minutes in the opposition 22 and created opportunities when pressure caused the hosts to concede two early penalties, both of which the visitors elected to take as 5 metre scrums. However when Brixham broke out Ian Morgan opened the scoring with a try on 10 minutes when picking a good line from just inside the Tics 22'.

Brixham were playing towards their favoured bottom seaward end corner and Torquay found it difficult to gain any territorial advantage for the rest of the half. Indeed it was not until the final minutes before the break that they visited the opposition 22' again.

Dogged defence restricted the home side to two further tries, the first coming on 22 minutes when flanker Tom Clarke broke off from the back of a rolling maul to scythe through after a 5 metre Brixham line out. A few minutes later the lead increased to 21 – 0 with only just over a third of the match gone. This time lock Adam Thomas was the scorer. It looked as if this was to be a long afternoon for Athletic but for the rest of the half the players dug in and defended stoutly.

On the restart Brixham made a number of changes, including at half back where former First team regular Ben Lovell came in at 10 and Sean Irvine at 9. Former Tic Andy Knight also joined the fray at No. 6.

Likewise Tics rang some changes with right wing Arron Graham replacing Jack Keiller, second row debutant Marc Relph giving way to James Norris and another First team debutant Marcus Phillips, studying at Bicton College, coming into the back row for Richard Read who moved up to hooker to replace the injured Carl Turner.

Although Tics went further behind 24 – 0, conceding the first score early on from a penalty kick in front of the posts after an offside decision, the second half was a much

more even affair and despite the changes in personnel the visitors were not flattered by outscoring their hosts by 14 – 13 points overall in this second period.

Then on 52 minutes Torquay switched the ball from left to right on half way where full back James Wood rounded two advancing defenders and then accelerated down the Grandstand side right wing to score a good individual try in the corner, which he converted for 24 – 7.

Brixham came back when Sean Onslow stole the ball from the back of Tics set scrum and he released flanker Tom Clarke for his second try. Lovell missed the conversion so it was now 29 – 7. Tics kept their composure and much of the territory and with 10 minutes left Brixham had a forward yellow carded. However they then mounted an increasingly rare attack with Paul Davis crossing in the left hand corner for a 34 – 7 lead.

In the final minute the excellent Matt Lloyd, playing at no. 12 made a break down the centre from halfway and his pass to the supporting centre James Hill was well timed with the latter scooting in from the 22' under the posts. Jack Keiller, on again for James Wood at full back, converted to make the final scoreline 34 – 14.

Brixham lie top of the League above and have developed a good all round game. They average over 41 points per game with dextrous hands in the threes' and a pack which is able to dominate when the game demands it. Their speed of thought and all round ability means that they are able to move the ball quickly away from the opposition and although this was another defeat for the Tics against their oldest rivals there were several positives from the way that the home side were restricted to points scoring, notably in the first half when they were potentially at their strongest and looked to have the will to blow the visitors away after leading 21 – 0 with only just over a third of the match played.

All Tics players came out of this encounter with credit, especially the pack which never allowed the opposition to rest. Prop Jon Woodhead made his presence felt with some telling tackles while on the other side of the front row Gareth Bimore kept the scrums steady and Paul Wood used his considerable energy to spoil all round the park. Debutant Charlie Whitney was never shaken out of his stride at scrum half, being competitive right throughout and Matt Lloyd put in a magnificent defensive display before setting up Tics final score.

Team:

15 – James Wood, 14 – Jack Keiller, 13 – James Hill, 12 – Matt Lloyd, 11 – Tom Brookman, 10 – Alex Jeffery, 9 – Charlie Whitney,  
1 – Gareth Bimore, 2 – Carl Turner, 3 – Jon Woodhead, 4 – Tom Whitford, 5 – Marc Relph, 6 – Richard Read, 7 – Paul Wood, 8 – Dan Williams.

Replacements (all used) – James Norris, Marcus Phillips, James Milton, Nick Wright, Arron Graham, Matt Pascoe, Nick Blackhurst.

On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> January Tics resume League duties with an important game V Exeter Saracens at the Rec. with a 2.30 pm KO. A win is vital to give the side momentum in

the New Year. Tics beat Saracens away in mid September 13 – 44 and the opposition currently reside fourth from bottom in the table.

The Extra Firsts are away at Paignton in a DMT 1 game, the Quins travel to take on Exeter Saracens II's (who they beat 26 –5 at home in the Merit Table in October) and the Colts resume league fixtures at TVN home to Topsham, KO 2.30 pm

Meanwhile the Quins lost a Devon Merit 2 game at the Rec. which kicked off early at 11.30 am. The final score was 17 – 57 and reflected the fact that although dominant up front for large parts of the game the Quins had few regular backs on which to call. The half time score was 10 – 14 but Brixham rather ran away with it after the break when they elected to keep the ball away from the home pack as much as possible.