

**MATCH REPORT –17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2011 –**

**WELLINGTON RFC 18 – TORQUAY ATHLETIC 18**

The Tics stay fourth in Western Counties West at the half way stage of the season after a well contested draw against opposition who are a different proposition on their home turf and have won all of their home matches this season.

Torquay travelled without unavailable pack members Dan Williams and Simon Mabin.

The first half was a tight affair with the only scoring coming from penalties. Skipper James Wood, playing at outside centre, slotted two out of three efforts and in reply Wellington's Will McKegney succeeded with one kick. Wood also crossed the line on 20 minutes but the "try" was ruled out because of an adjudged forward pass so the midway point saw Tics turn round 3 – 6 to the good.

In the second half Wellington, now playing with a slight slope, struck first and after a series of pick and go's had sucked the Tics defence in close to the rucks winger Alan Jarman found space to cross in the corner for 8 –6. This lead was then extended to 11 - 6 by a penalty against Tics for not releasing the ball and McKegney kicked successfully.

Tics then put pressure on the home side with a number of phases before No. 10 Matt Jackson burst through from the 22' and although held he managed to pump his legs to get over the line. Wood converted from close in to restore Tics the advantage at 11 – 13. Wood then created an excellent individual try from half way after he and fellow centre Matt Lloyd pressured their opposite numbers into spilling the ball. Wood hacked ahead and then showed composure and control in dribbling the ball down the left touchline before winning the race to touch down to take Tics 11 – 18 clear with minutes to play.

Wellington came back and took advantage of the slope by electing for a scrum when Tics were penalised 12 metres from their line. The home pack got a second shove on and in anticipating a back row pick up Tics flankers broke off early leading to the Referee eventually awarding a penalty try which McKegney converted to bring the scores level.

In injury time Tics had the opportunity to sneak the win when Wellington were penalised for the tackler not rolling away but Wood's penalty drifted wide.

Coach Chris Dorling picked out No 8 Alex Smith for an outstanding all round performance after being chosen to lead the pack for the first time this season. Also praised was young centre Matt Lloyd for a mature solid defensive shift.

Dorling reported that his opposite number, ex- Gloucester stalwart Dave Sims, expressed the view that he could not have complained if Tics had run out winners on the balance of play. Travelling Chairman Chris Edwards said that it was a gutsy

performance, especially in the face of a large vocal home crowd, whose support visibly lifted their side. Edwards also remarked that it was encouraging to see so many Tics followers who had travelled up to Somerset.

Tics will need that support in the New Year. Although they have a game in hand on all except Bideford there is a log jam of five teams at the top and little margin for error from now on.

Torquay Team:

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

1 – Russ Morris, 2 – Richard Read, 3 – Jon Woodhead, 4 – Jon Arnold, 5 – Tom Whitford, 6 – Jon Oliver, 7 – Paul Wood, 8 Alex Smith.

Replacements: Nick Gill (FR) (45 minutes for Jon Woodhead), Ben Sharples (76 minutes for Richard Read), Jack Keiller.

Other results: A young Extra Firsts faced a very strong Exmouth II's away and lost 53 – 5 in Merit Table 1 and the Quins went down at the Rec. to Exmouth III's by 12 – 26 in devon Merit table 2. The Colts game at Clennon Valley V Paignton was called off due to a flooded pitch.

Next up at the Rec is the traditional Boxing Day game between a Club XV and Old Grammarians. This popular match fell victim to the weather last year. Thus far both sides have confirmed squads of 20 players each but if others wish to be involved the advice is to turn up with kit and boots at the meet time of 11.00 am. KO is scheduled for 12 noon

Written 20 12 11.