

Match Report - London and South East League 2 North
Saturday 9 February 2008
Eton Manor 5 Staines 22

Staines Rugby Club maintained their push for promotion back to London 1, when they overcame a committed display by home side Eton Manor, at Nutter Lane, on Saturday, winning this encounter by 22 points to 5.

The home side had previously beaten the 2 sides occupying first and second spots in the league and are a formidable outfit on their own patch, they had a game plan designed to frustrate Staines and disrupt the away side's expansive game, it was an occasion to win 'ugly', something that is not necessarily in Staines psyche but they worked hard, exerted good control when required and came out ahead in this extremely physical encounter.

Next up is the League game with Chingford, at home, on Saturday 16 February, kick off 230pm, a must win game against the League leaders, followed by the eagerly awaited Intermediate Cup match against Birkenhead Park, the North 1 team from Liverpool, the following Saturday, 23 February, at 'The Reeves', exciting, if keenly anticipated times ahead, for the Snakey Lane based Club.

Eton Manor proved a very difficult side to break down, soaked up early Staines pressure and then attacked themselves, threatening the Staines line, however, on 20 minutes the away side engineered a breakout from a defensive position through their openside flanker, Luciano Silvera, who snaffled a loose ball, instigating a move upfield, the ball was taken on by No 8 Eddie Jones, who made a classic break into the Eton Manor 22 metre area, before off loading to Silvera, who scored under the posts, fullback James Cornish added the extra 2 points.

Eton Manor quickly proved that they were up for this contest and quickly replied with a try of their own, when the Staines defence was undone by a clever piece of play by the home side backs, their centre sliding a low kick through the advancing Staines line, for their winger to score, the try was not converted and it was to be Eton Manor's only score of the game.

Staines then took the game to Eton Manor, whilst not finding top gear, they increased the pressure on the Eton Manor defence, through a prolonged series of grinding forward attacks, the Eton Manor resolve was bound to crack and when a prop was sin binned for illegally slowing down possession at a ruck, Staines converted the resultant penalty, to edge 10 points to 5 in front.

Just before half time, Staines gave themselves some breathing space and the ascendancy in this game, when hooker Stefaan Myburgh, broke from the side of a driving maul and burst up the touchline, cleverly slipping the ball inside to the Staines' scrumhalf Richard Scott to score, 15 points to 5 for the away side at halftime.

The first half had been a real test, the Staines team had withstood the physicality of the Eton Manor game and had ground out a useful lead on the break, the Staines forwards were impressive, with flanker Luciano Silvera having a useful game and lock Tom Cleary getting through a lot of work in both the lineout and loose.

In the second half, the Eton Manor blanket defence continued to frustrate the Staines backs, who had a fruitless afternoon, it took a moment of sublime rugby to unpick the home side defence, scrumhalf Scott, on a lateral run, chose his moment to perfection, to pop an inside pass to lock Junior Harrison, who taking the ball at speed, shot through the smallest gap in the Eton Manor defence, even from 30 metres out there was no stopping his charge for the line, the try was again converted by James Cornish.

With the score now 22 points to 5 for the visitors, the game was now effectively over, the final 20 minutes was played out with neither side able to break through two very well organised, hard tackling defences.

Although the Staines backs had been unusually subdued in attack, the win was nevertheless satisfying and other aspects of their play shone, including the positional kicking of flyhalf Andy Regan, together with the assured defence and counter attacking skills of fullback James Cornish, this was a positive, professional performance from a Staines side which would not look out of place in the league above, getting back there is the objective, a win next week would take them a long way towards achieving that goal.

Tony Brightwell
President.