

Match Report - London & South East Division 2 North
Saturday 1 March 2008
Long Lane, Thurrock
Thurrock RFC 15 Staines RFC 35

Staines put last weeks cup disappointment behind them, with a 'regulation' win at Thurrock on Saturday, the home side did not make the result easy for Staines, putting up a spirited, committed performance, which belied their second from bottom position in the league and demonstrated what a tough competition this is, with most teams more than capable of beating each other on the day, in the end, Staines stuck to the task and ran out comfortable winners by 35 points to 15, scoring 6 tries to the home side's 3, a 20 point margin away from home is not to be 'sneezed' at and the Snakey Lane side continue to put pressure on their two promotion rivals, who also won at the weekend.

Thurrock opened the scoring on 10 minutes, when they worked an overlap for their wing threequarter, Staines had started slowly and were yet to hit their stride, they were taking time to settle in the set piece, allowing Thurrock plenty of early possession, nevertheless, the away side slotted a penalty for offside, shortly thereafter and were up and running.

A typical phase of Staines pressure and Thurrock infringement led to a lineout in the home side's 22 metre area, the physical presence of Stain's lock Junior Harrison was evident in the resultant maul and he broke off the side of his forwards drive, to score the first of three tries in the match.

A strong wind, meant that conversion and penalty kicks were a lottery and the score remained at Staines 8 Thurrock 5, not for long however, Staines failed to secure possession from the restart and Thurrock attacked the loose ball, a lineout close to the Staines try line, resulted in a pushover try for the home side, who now had their noses in front at 10 - 8.

Staines now cranked up the gears and began operating as a tighter unit, putting Thurrock under the hammer for a 15 minute spell, desperate defending resulted in a flurry of penalties for killing the ball and Thurrock were lucky to have 15 men on the pitch, following a disallowed Staines 'try', when the referee was unsighted, the Staines forwards again drove for the line and on this occasion, flanker Luciano Silvera came up with the ball and the try, Staines now leading by 13 points to 10, they would stay in front for the remainder of play.

The away side extended their lead before half time, when Junior Harrison scored 2 tries in quick succession, the first was run in from the half way line, when he shrugged off the first line of defence and found himself in the clear, his pace and size making him virtually unstoppable with the try line in his sights.

With time running out in the first half, Staines once again took the game by the scruff of the neck and up to the Thurrock try line, although Harrison was initially held up as he pushed for the score, his long frame enabled him to stretch out and plant the ball over the line to score his third try, giving Staines a 23 to 10 lead at half time.

With a strong breeze favouring them in the second half, the Staines supporters were confident of an easy victory, Thurrock, however, had other ideas and continued to frustrate and harry the Staines players, reducing the game to a sometimes scrappy affair, the home side deservedly came back into the game, with a bizarre if quick witted try, following the award of a penalty in front of the Staines posts, they elected to kick the points, however, the ball blew over in preparation and their kicker, sensing that the away side were expecting it to be retaken, siezed on the ball, quickly feeding a runner to score out wide, an unusual try and Thurrock back in the game with a 'sniff' at 23 - 15.

Staines now buckled down to the task but were forced to make 3 substitutions, which had a disruptive effect on their game plan, nevertheless, they were now in the ascendancy once again and following a series of surging runs and collective drives from the forwards, they

secured quick ball for their backs, feeding a short pass to centre Jon Turner, who took the ball running from deep and at pace, scoring a try close to the posts, flyhalf Dave Knill converted and the game was now beyond Thurrock at 28 - 15.

Staines had the last word and were by now putting Thurrock under intense and immense pressure, several good direct probing runs by their broken play runners, Sibthorpe, Willis and Andy Turner, punched holes in the Thurrock defence, putting them on the back foot, centre Dan Major scoring a fine try, oflanking the Thurrock defensive line to touch down out wide, final score Thurrock 15 Staines 35.

Staines continue their run in and bid for promotion next Saturday, when they take on Bury St Edmunds at The Reeves, kick off 3pm, following that they have a break for two Saturdays, during which time they can regroup and hopefully, address a mounting injury situation, before a tough away encounter at Ruislip on Saturday 29 March, a 'Super Saturday' in the league, which sees Staines two promotion rivals play each other and could well go a long way in defining the outcome of Staines season.

Tony Brightwell
President.