

Match Report - Saturday 19 January 2008
London and South East Division 2 North
Tring 11 Staines 5

Staines high tempo, expansive game, became well and truly stuck in the mud at Cow Lane on Saturday, when their promotion rivals, Tring, deservedly got the better of a close encounter on their tight sloping pitch, running out winners by 11 points to 5, both sides scoring a try a piece.

Staines Rugby Club, coming off the back of a great victory in the Intermediate Cup against Cheltenham and a 10 game winning streak, looked tired, both mentally and physically, whereas the home side, having not played for two weeks, were fresh, well prepared and definitely up for this important match.

The away side, started the game with the breeze and steady rain on their backs, playing down the slope, a distinct advantage at this ground, they needed to build a solid, defensible lead by half time, the conditions demanded a dominant, controlling game plan, executed primarily by their players in the 1 to 10 positions, this did not materialise, Staines failing to gain any sort of ascendancy in the forwards and, on the day, possessing a non-existent kicking game.

Tring, on the other hand, were extremely well drilled and exploited the conditions on a familiar pitch, their pack disrupted the Staines lineout all afternoon and their number 10 and fullback (their man of the match) controlled proceedings with an astute kicking game, collecting a barrage of often misdirected kicks from Staines and repaying them with interest, the fact that Staines gave them time on the ball to do so, was another factor in the game.

Staines opened forcefully enough, having the better of the early exchanges and putting Tring under significant pressure, nevertheless, the home side weathered the storm, disrupted the Staines lineout and defended well in midfield, on several occasions they were also able to break out of defence and relieve the pressure, something that Staines would be unable to do in the second half.

It was fully 35 minutes before the first score, after squandering several earlier chances, Staines finally broke through the home side's valiant defence, when centre Jon Turner, slipped his marker and was able to force his way through to the line, the conversion failed.

As half time approached, the Staines supporters (there were several travelling fans at the game), sensed that a lead of 5 points would not be enough and their fears were compounded further when Tring snatched an important try, just before the whistle, it was nothing less than they deserved for their commitment and endeavour and the two sides turned round at 5 points each, however, Staines were now on the back foot, with a player in the sin bin.

The second half began with Tring well in control, Staines' poor kicking game had by now deserted them and Tring would spend most of the second period in the Staines 22 metre area, the away side could not break out, their prospects further weakened by another yellow card and a string of injuries.

Tring went ahead with a rather fortuitous drop goal, which bounced on top of the bar, nevertheless, the points had been well earned following a prolonged period of pressure and Staines could count themselves lucky that additional points had not been conceded by this juncture.

The game stuttered on with several stoppages for injuries, some serious, Tring missed a couple of shots at goal but nailed one with 10 minutes to go, this was to be the final score, all in all a disappointing day for Staines, however, their promotion aspirations are still very much alive, although they have slipped to 3rd in the league, it seems that Staines will probably have to go unbeaten for the rest of the season, to secure top spot but this is not beyond them.

A worrying aspect for Head Coach Eddie Jones are the rising amount of injuries, Staines having lost 2 backrow players in successive games and with several competitive matches on the horizon, including must win home games against Chingford in the league and Birkenhead Park in the national cup, on back to back Saturdays in February.

Tony Brightwell
President.