

Jersey Colts v Tottonians 18/09/11

Jersey travelled to Tottonians for their first game in their Hampshire league campaign hoping for dry conditions to suit their fast running backs but were disappointed as the heavy black clouds opened during the warm-up and the game started in a torrential downpour.

The coaches were looking for a steady start concentrating on the basics given the conditions but it was Tottonians who made that adjustment better. That coupled with gifting a series of early penalties led to points on the board for Totts within the first 3 minutes. The penalty count against Jersey continued and was compounded with being penalised additional ten metres for questioning the decision which put Totts within range to extend to a six nil lead.

The Jersey slow start went from bad to worse when a good running line by Totts fly half broke their line and the covering tackle was missed to allow him to dive in near the corner for the opening try. The conversion was missed but it was an ominous 11-0 lead with Jersey not really firing and struggling with handling errors from the wet ball whenever they did try to move it.

Eventually Jersey settled a little and took their time to build some pressure through the phases patiently waiting for an opportunity which duly came when fast ball from a ruck just outside the Totts 22 meant the defence wasn't properly organised and Chris Levesley stepped through to score just left of the posts. Levesley also converted to take the score to 11-7.

This seemed to give Jersey a bit of confidence at last and they started to build pressure on their opponents. First Totts gave away a penalty in front of the posts for Levesley to peg back a further three points. Then from a Totts scrum that they won and looked likely to comfortably clear their lines, quick pressure on to the fly half from Nick Volpert, making an impressive debut at flanker, caused a handling error which Volpert capitalised on with a swift pick up and dive for the line to score under the posts for an easy conversion for Levesley. So from a slow start Jersey went in at halftime having turned things around to lead 17-11.

The second half started better for Jersey with the forwards starting to gel and with Tim Corson marshalling them they started to gain territory and possession. The younger newcomers to the squad of George Banks, Ed Howgate, Rob Bisson and Jack Lowe started to look the part and made telling tackles and drives and the 'old guard' of James Voss, Ollie Smith and Miles Richardson ably assisted them to make sure most of the play was around the Totts 22.

Struggling to break out, Totts resorted to kicking to try to relieve pressure but really weren't kicking to the right positions for this and it was regularly run back at them. One kick was picked up by Sam Fuller around the 10m line and a quick step inside the first defender gave him room to get some speed up and use his momentum to crash through the next defender then use his pace to have a clear run to the line. Despite leaving it near the corner for the try Levesley had no problem converting to keep his 100% kicking record and a 24-11 lead.

A break in the weather and the sun started to shine which the Jersey backs took as the signal to start passing the ball around. From a ruck on the right just outside the Totts 22m line Jersey moved the ball through the flyhalf, centres and wing in almost a training ground move

for Alex Sumerauer to walk it in on the left and run around under the posts for the try.

With the clock running down there was still time for one more try as the Totts defence struggled with the pace of the Jersey backs as Fuller scored his second try in the corner. Levesley maintained his kicking record to give Jersey a reasonably comfortable 38-11 win.

“A pleasing win for us after a slow start” said coach Ash Elphinston, “we need to be more aware of the way a referee is working the game and discipline ourselves to firstly not give away so many penalties and more importantly not give him cause to penalise us an extra 10m as it could have been very costly if Totts had had their kicking boots on. But having said that, when we settled we played some good rugby and put together a good team effort. We need to do some work on our rucks and the breakdown but there's a solid platform for us to build on”.

Jersey Colts are extremely grateful to Bedell for their sponsorship of their Hampshire league campaign.