

Stafford Rugby Club

Match Reports

Old Salteians 18-7 Stafford XV

16th January 2010

Midlands West 2 (NORTH) League Fixture

Stafford started the game playing with the slight slope and a wind that blew diagonally across the pitch. The opening exchanges were equal with both teams suffering from match rustiness due to the recent inclement weather. Stafford's scrum and line-out were more than a match for Old Salts, and the selection of both Tom May and Oli Greatholder brought improved strength and guile to the forwards. Indeed, a strong run from May, midway through the first half, seemed to gel the forwards and gave them self belief and confidence. Carl Williams was also prominent both in attack and defence and proved a real thorn to the hosts. A loose kick from Old Salts resulted in a counter attack from the backs which saw Stuart Lewis pass to Rhys Powell with the line at his mercy - but the Old Salts cover tackle was excellent and resulted in them having a defensive line-out just 5 metres from their own line. Old Salts cleared their line but Stafford maintained their pressure in both open and set piece play which resulted in Richard Whatling claiming a try from sustained driving by the forwards. This was superbly converted by Tom Hodgkinson and Stafford went in at half-time 7 points to 3 up.

Stafford were unfortunate in that they had to replace both Tom Leese and Michael Davies at half time due to injury and this saw the return to action of the experienced Darren Mottershead to the centre and also Dan Smith to the blind side flank.

From the second-half kick off, Old Salts mounted an effective attack and caught Stafford half asleep as their strong running winger danced through some ineffective tackling to score a try which went unconverted. The hosts, now with the elements in their favour, kept up relentless pressure for the next twenty minutes but which only brought them a deserved penalty which was goaled to give them an 11 points to 7 lead. Stafford, by sheer determination and doggedness, fought back manfully to launch some attacks of their own. From one such attack, the hosts kicked the ball downfield which Will Richards, playing securely at full back, fielded and kicked ahead when he was blatantly late tackled. The referee did not see this and unfortunately for Stafford, Old Salts regained possession and counter attacked which resulted in them being awarded a controversial try which was converted to give them what turned out to be an unassailable 18 points to 7 lead. Stafford bounced back and retained possession throughout the last 10 minutes but despite determined running from all Stafford players, they could not break through a strong and resolute defence. Despite their early match rustiness, Stafford can be satisfied with their efforts on the day and another much improved performance.

Stafford Third XV 34-10 St Leonards

16th January 2010

Friendly Fixture

This fixture was originally scheduled to be played at St Leonards ground but was moved to Castlefields due to the state of the ground and the Thirds XV made the home advantage pay. Gaz O'Connor opened the scoring after a quick tap penalty from Vinnie Hogan which he also converted; Hogan then added one of his own after taking another quick penalty. After the break Stafford continued to pressurise the visitors which saw Polish Majiec top a fine performance with a try following a powerful run from a lineout. Hogan added a penalty before St Leonards replied after some good work from their forwards. Taking yet another quick tap penalty, Hogan went over again adding the conversion before Jez Barber finished the scoring for the home side after some good support play. St Leonards added to their points after some excellent rucking and mauling deep in the Stafford half before releasing their backs.

On Saturday 23rd January 2010, Stafford XV host Shrewsbury at Castlefields, Development XV travel to Aston Old Ed's, Thirds XV travel to Eccleshall whilst Veterans travel to Trentham