

Lordswood Dixonians 11-9 Stafford XV

6th February 2010

Midlands West 2 (NORTH) League Fixture

Stafford 1st XV squandered the chance to pull away from the relegation zone as they let a second half lead slip in an 11-9 loss at Dixonians last Saturday. Stafford were looking to build on their good form having won two of their previous three league games and were hoping to take advantage of their rusty opponents - who hadn't played since Christmas. It was the away team who dominated the opening periods, sending the Dixonians scrum backwards time after time. It wasn't long before Stafford took the lead they deserved as Tom Hodgkinson kicked over a penalty for 3-0 lead. Dixonians then managed to force their way back into the game, and thought they'd grabbed a try as their winger chased down a kick through, only for excellent covering by Rhys Powell to prevent the score. The solid Stafford defence then ensured that Dixonians only came away from their period of pressure with three points from an easy penalty kick. Stafford were then dealt a cruel blow as flanker Carl Williams was forced off the pitch after aggravating a shoulder injury he had carried into the match, but substitute Andrew Carter made the best possible impact as he and James Wilkinson powered through the heart of the Dixonians defence, setting up Hodgkinson for another penalty from a similar position.

Going into half time 6-3 up, Stafford still knew they should be further ahead and weren't yet playing to their full potential.

The second half saw the match begin to turn into a scrappy affair with the heavy Dixonians pitch preventing any real pace being injected into the game. Despite Stafford continuing to threaten, it was again left to Hodgkinson to extend his side's lead with his third penalty of the day. The Newport Road side then took their foot off the pedal, and a succession of penalties allowed Dixonians to pull the score back to 9-6. The home team were now going all out for the win, and with ten minutes left lax Stafford defending saw Dixonians break down the blindside for the only try of the game and an 11-9 lead. With little time left to salvage the win, Stafford spread the ball wide in the hope of finding a gap in their opponents defence, but ultimately could not get close enough for a penalty or drop goal as they suffered another heart-breaking defeat.

Stafford's inability to close games out may still come back to haunt them - they have now been ahead at some point in nine of their league fixtures, yet only going on to win three of them. The loss keeps Stafford in ninth place, with only points difference keeping them outside the bottom two. They will look to pull away from danger with a victory in their next match against Stourbridge Lions.