

Stafford 1st XV 34-17 Ludlow
Saturday 13th September 2008
Midlands 3 West (North) League Result

Match kindly sponsored by **Public Sector Governance Ltd** and its owner Peter Williams.



Stafford's performances in their pre-season matches had been steadily improving in the run up to their first league fixture and went into the game confident of repeating last seasons win over the visitors. The match started with Ludlow having most of the play in Stafford's half. The pressure saw Ludlow earn plenty of penalties in kicking positions but couldn't convert the chances into points. Slowly Stafford got into the game and they scored from virtually their first chance, with Richard Walklate outstripping the opposition defence and Jonny Watson Jones adding the conversion. Although Ludlow finally scored one of their penalties, Stafford had the momentum in the game and great work from the backs allowed Tom Smith to break through for another try. The home side stretched their lead further straight from the kick-off as Walklate again ran clear to take the score to 17-3.

Stafford continued to dominate and threatened to score whenever they had the ball. They seemed to be heading to half-time with a comfortable lead when Ludlow got quick turnover ball and broke away for a converted score to bring the score back to 17-10 at the break.

Coach Graham MacDonald wanted his forwards to provide better ball for the second half. It was also clear that fitness would have a part to play, with the warm weather taking a lot of energy out of the players. Stafford started the second half brightly and thought they'd got their fourth try through Walklate before the referee ruled he didn't ground the ball.

The Newport Road side continued to put the pressure on and got their reward in fortunate circumstances. Darren Mottershead's penalty attempt hit the post only for captain Ben Ryder to be first to the rebound and charge through under the posts.

The Stafford backs continued to look dangerous and as Ludlow went down to fourteen men, there was more space opening up for them. The ball was spread wide again and Smith forced his way over the line for his second try.

The home side then looked to tie the game up but Ludlow gained some ground and found a way back into the game with a score in the corner. Stafford were not to be denied though, and after

Mottershead slotted home a penalty they saw the game out with few other scares to win 34-17. Having got off to a winning start Stafford will be hoping to continue their good form away next week.

Stoke on Trent (2nd) 7-21 Stafford Development XV

Saturday 13th September 2008

Stafford 2nd XV opened their merit league with a good 21-7 away win at local rivals Stoke 2nds. The first 10 minutes was fairly quiet with Stoke happy to kick for the corners forcing Stafford to attack from deep. As the game progressed, Stafford started to impose their style of play on the game forcing Stoke to repeatedly kill the ball at the break down allowing Stafford to make camp in the Stoke half. From a penalty, Gaz Phillips took the ball deep into Stokes 22 and a quick ball to Rich Whatling allowed him to power over from 15 yards with Tom Hodgkinson adding the conversion. The half continued in the same way with Stoke being forced to go in off their feet to stop Stafford from gaining quick balls but from another penalty taken by scrum half Ali Oxley, the ball was fed wide to the impressive Ross Donavon, who sliced his way through the defence to go under the posts with Hodgkinson again adding the conversion. Stoke came out in the second half determined to level the scores and after a period of prolonged pressure some good back play got their young outside centre cross the line for a deserved score. Stafford replied in the best way possible by reclaiming the kick off powering down the pitch with good support play and finally releasing Scott Raine to power through 2 tackles and crash over the line. Hodgkinson again adding the extra points. Stafford can be pleased with this impressive display and can look forward to a good season ahead.

Stafford 3rd XV 19 -22 Stoke on Trent (4th)

Saturday 13th September 2008

This game between Stafford and Stoke should be viewed by the home side as a wake up call. For 60 minutes the 3rds were out-played, especially around the rucks and mauls. Stoke took a deserved 15 – 0 lead by half time. The second half started much the same and Stoke went 22 – 0 up, all the tries coming from their forwards. With 10 minutes to play it looked a forgone conclusion but Stafford found their fighting spirit and rallied together. Lead by a fantastic performance from second half sub, Lee Wilson, Stafford ran in 3 tries, two of which were converted, to leave the visitors clinging on to their short lead and praying for the final whistle. A lack of belief and confidence were, without a doubt, the 3rds undoing, but the final 10 minutes of the game should stand them in good stead for next weeks clash with Eccleshall 2nds.

Stafford Colts XV 7-39 Wolverhampton

Saturday 13th September 2008

Staffordshire Under 19 Colts (Senior League)

Stafford Colts welcomed Wolverhampton for their opening game of this season. Wolverhampton started with a blast and scored from a loose ball situation from a Stafford breakdown in the centre of the field with a surging run from their No.8 who was tackled well but Wolverhampton linked well with their three-quarters to run easily through the Stafford defence to score an unconverted try. Stafford continued to play to a set pattern that was gaining them ground and punching through the Wolverhampton defence but again on two occasions the ball was turned over and the visitors midfield broke through and scored, converting on both occasions to lead 19-0. Stafford responded by tightening up their defence and also retaining the ball and after the initial 20 minutes of the game started to come back into the game putting pressure on their opponents. From one surging move from the forwards the ball was made available and Tom Curry took the ball from deep to score a converted try under the posts. Half-time arrived with Stafford trailing 19-7.

The second half started in the same vein as the first with Stafford having switched off and

allowed Wolverhampton to score a quick try. The game was evenly contested for the next quarter of the game with Stafford refusing to lie down. They continued to attack their opponents at every opportunity with Tom Berry and Gaz O'Connor leading the way in the forwards but again retention of the ball was the main concern allowing Wolverhampton to clear their lines. Unfortunately fitness took over and Wolverhampton ran in series of tries with some good link-up between their forwards and backs to run out 39-7 winners.

This was a well contested game for 65 minutes with Stafford showing courage and commitment and putting into place moves from the training field that only if ball retention had been better the final score would have been closer. This was a good start to the season and with fitness, improvement will continue to progress. Stafford Colts look forward to October 4th for their next game away to Tamworth.

Stafford Ladies XV 10-46 Dudley Kingswinford

Sunday 14th September 2008

Pre-season friendly



Stafford Ladies started their 2008/09 season with a friendly against Dudley Kingswinford and was with a un-converted try down after five minutes. The Ladies confidence was wearing thing until some great play from Kat Williamson scoring a try by falling into the goal area. Stafford tried to hold down the drawn score line but Dudley seemed to break through on several occasions after some hard defence from the backs. Dudleys luck was dwindling as Stafford started to pull together more and more teamwork as the game progressed. Stafford came back in the second half with more aggression and with a great tackle from Fiona Gardener, and shortly after the break a substitution, Dee Holebrook made her debut as replacement Hooker but unfortunately due to current laws Stafford dominating pack scrumming was made un-contested. Stafford held the 29-5 score line for the next twenty minutes with Ellie Hill making some good jumps at the line outs. In the last twenty

minutes Stafford put pressure on the Dudley Defence. After a great twenty metre dash, Ellie Hills try was denied by a lucky last minute tackle by Dudley pushing her foot out of play before she had chance to touch the ball down. Julia Kendrick shortly after kicked the ball over the Dudley defence and with some speed broke through the bewildered defence and with a chase, kicked the ball down the field. After scoring by the ball hitting the base of the posts, with Dudley in close chase Julia picked the ball up and made sure by touching down between the posts. Stafford failed to score the conversion and final score was 48-10 to the visitors. Stafford was pleased with their ending performance and enjoying first game of the season they look forward to the season ahead.

Stafford 1st XV travel away to Old Halesonians on Saturday 13th Spetember 2008 while Stafford 3rd XV entertain Eccleshall whilst Stafford Vets XV also entertain Uttoxeter, both at home. Stafford Ladies 'kick-off' their first ever League campaign against Shrewsbury at home on Sunday 14th Sunday 2008.

GOOD LUCK LADIES!