

Wasps Ladies Find Form to Defeat Bristol

Last Sunday, Wasps left behind the bitter cold of London travelling to Bristol to face Bristol WRFC for the first time since their name change. Wasps seemed invigorated by the weather and a combination of forward power, flowing backs moves and superb kicking gave them a 32-19 win.



Clifton – Wasps matches have traditionally been tense affairs and, with many familiar faces on both teams, Sunday's match showed that the new name changed little. Old rivalries seemed as fierce as ever, and tensions ran high as Wasps' fought for perhaps their most enjoyable and deserved victory of the season so far.

Wasps didn't have it all their own way. Despite a strong opening, where they dominated both possession and territory, they were unable to score as Bristol kept players out of the rucks and formed a 15 man defensive line. A quick turnover near the halfway line allowed Bristol to find space and a

mazy run through the Wasps attacking formation saw Bristol take the first points of the game with a try in the corner.

The home side followed up with a second try just minutes later. After an attacking line-out, Bristol pulled off a well-executed move bringing their full back into the line. She found the gap between the Wasps 10 and 12 and ran under the posts to score.

Wasps' spirits remained high. With their forwards dominating the game it was only a matter of time before they managed to take the ball over the Bristol try line. Shortly after the restart, the Wasps' attack finally clicked. The backs got quick ball inside the 22 and moved the ball quickly to scrum-half-turned-winger Mariska Loots who sprinted past the defence to score in the corner.

Wasps levelled the game shortly after, with stand-in full back Liz Riley scoring her first try of the season. Again, the backs moved the ball quickly down the line and Riley was on hand, using her pace to round the opposition winger and touch down in the corner.

The half ended with one final try. Wasps were unable to hold onto the ball, conceding too many turnovers. Another set-piece for the home side led to a carbon copy of their second try. The full back hit the line at full pace and found herself clean through scoring her second try of the game.

The second half was a different story. Wasps tightened up their defence, added players to the rucks and started to enjoy the rugby match. The forwards were dominating the scrums while the line-outs were hotly contested in the air. They were rewarded with the 6th, and Wasps 3rd, try of the game. After a first effort from a Wasps' prop was held up, Claire Purdy made sure when she crossed the line minutes later that the try counted.



With three tries and one conversion a piece the game was tied. However, Wasps were now playing with the wind and Shelley Rae, who has received favourable comparisons with Jonny Wilkinson, showed why she deserved that mantle. Her kicking from hand was superb, pinning Bristol back in their own half. She gave Wasps a bit of breathing room with 20 minutes to go, bisecting the posts with two long range penalties.

The away side put the game beyond doubt as only 5 minutes remained. Bristol had been threatening on the Wasps' 5 metre line but a defiant scrum and long clearing kick removed the danger. Bristol did themselves no favours with a cynical trip on Rae as she chased her kick giving Wasps a penalty on the half way line. A few phases of play led to a scrum to Wasps in the 22. Loots, as the blind side winger, cut into the backs' line and displayed her thrilling pace running in her second try of the game.

The excitement from the Wasps' players at the final whistle was genuine. While the final score was close, and Bristol put up stern opposition, there was only one team that was going to win the day. The players worked harder than they had done all season and to greater reward as some outstanding performances demonstrated what Wasps are capable of producing.

