

Denmark's "Origin" series
14-03-2015 - West vs. East – Match Report

Bright sunshine and a biting cold wind saw the Copenhagen dominated "East" region maintain its 100% record in the Danish Origin series, beating the Jutland "West" team by 38-0.

East handed debuts to Chris Logie and Aslan Kaplan, and there were plenty of new faces among the Jutland team too. The early exchanges were fierce, as we have come to expect from these origin games, but with mistakes in possession being made by both teams, neither were able to build significant pressure. East's stand-off, Gareth Stone turned his ankle early on and as coach Nigel Kitching was the only member of the away party in addition to the starting 13, he rolled up his sleeves and took his place in the defensive line.

Eventually, East Captain Eugene Hanrahan broke the deadlock, taking a pass from prop Jesper Ika and crashing over from short range. Half back Naylor failed to add the extras, but was soon in action again popping an inside ball to centre Silas Mubanda, who went over for what turned out to be the first of his four tries. Naylor converted and things finally seemed to be going well for the lads from the capital. But the Jutlanders have never let them have it easy, and showed again that this was to be no pushover. They forced several line breaks and stretched East's defence to the limit: Viiga Lima, Hayden Bowler and Allan Llobel all making busts with plenty of support from Zanki Nicolajsen and Mark Nielsen. But the line held firm, and despite Jutland coming close several times, an outstanding defensive effort, with prop Andrei Ungureanu at its centre kept them scoreless, ensuring they went in 10-0 down at half time.

The men in black (and white) from Copenhagen were stretched by their lack of interchange options. As injuries hit other players, an informal triage system emerged, whereby the person worst affected could take a rest, while others did their best to get back on the park and fill any gaps in the defensive line. This hierarchy of invalidity saw Stone play for most of the second half, nursing his ankle as best he could and putting in big hits whenever possible. But East's line continued to hold, and slowly, as in previous origin games, they turned the screw during the second half, letting inexperience and injury among the Westerners spring the leaks in their defence.

Jesper Ika opened the second half scoring. He had earlier put Hanrahan in for the first try of the game, and now the loose forward returned the favour, delivering the final pass for Ika to score. Naylor converted for 16-0, but the Western players had soon pushed play down to the other end of the field and were again threatening to open their account. "Nilling" another team is a rare event, and as such, the defence deserves more credit than it usually receives in a report, when compared to the headline grabbing feats of try scorers and goal kickers.

Time and again Western players such as Orveh Melchior and Viiga Lima brought the ball to (and occasionally through) the line, but there always seemed to be another Copenhagen tackler ready to cut them down. Morten Dam made a memorable tackle on 2012 player of the year Lima, and Steve McCarthy and debutant Kaplan put in a string of big hits. Christoffer Ellebirke, playing at full

back was also frequently called upon and occasionally it was mistakes from Jutland that stopped the momentum: Malipo Yusufu knocking on with the line seemingly as his mercy.

The West team were unable to maintain the pressure and soon East were on the scoreboard again. A training ground move, direct from a scrum saw Hanrahan pick up and attack the short side. While the defence was trying to cover the outside threat of half back Naylor and wing Logie, Hanrahan kept the ball and barged over, taking the would-be tacklers with him. Naylor failed to convert, leaving the score at 20-0.

The final quarter saw East add to the score, as Western legs tired and heads dropped. Mubanda took a simple ball and beat several tacklers, going in under the sticks. He then repeated the trick from his own half, busting the line and going the length of the field. By this time the victory was assured and the kicking duties rotated, Ika converting the first and Ungureanu missing the second of Mubanda's two tries.

East were able to run through their moves and combinations, and the seventh try also showed the advantage they have over the West in terms of regular training time together. Naylor, taking the ball at first receiver dummied Man-of-the-Match Ungureanu, running the drop-off line, and put Kaplan through the large hole that had opened up in the West's defence. Kaplan exchanged passes with Mubanda who was running in support, and then went over himself to finish off a fine team try. Hooker McCarthy lined up to take the conversion, but then decided not to, after the kicking tee couldn't be located. This was the only irregularity for referee Danny Boag to handle in a game that was played hard, but in a very fair spirit.

East finished it off with one last try, Mubanda going over for his fourth on the stroke of full time, and Logie missing the conversion. That left a final score of 38-0: the largest winning margin in a Danish origin match. However, with an expanded Origin series meaning more games between these two sides this year, the West will undoubtedly have the opportunity to avenge this defeat.

East 38 – 0 West
(10-0)

East Tries: Hanrahan 2, Mubanda 4, Ika, Kaplan. Goals: Naylor 2/4, Ika 1/1, missed goals, Ungureanu 0/1, McCarthy 0/1, Logie 0/1.

Man of the Match: Andrei Ungureanu

Man of the match Andrei Ungureanu gets to grips with Jutland's Allan Llobel



Silas Mubanda scored four tries

A good start to the Danish season

