

PRE-SEASON FRIENDLIES

DRAGONS MADE TO WORK FOR WIN

TOULOUSE OLYMPIQUE 22
CATALANS DRAGONS 46

MICHEL LAMBERT
at Stade des Minimes, Saturday

IN the first-ever encounter between these two sides, the Catalans of the Super League were given a searching examination by the Championship side Toulouse, who led for almost half the game.

Both sides had plenty to be positive about, despite the high score suggesting some laxness in defence. For the Catalans, new signing Dallas Johnson made an impressive first performance in a team which was seeking to improve on last week's narrow home defeat to Castleford. Toulouse's first outing for four months saw coach Gilles Dumais rotating 21 players, among whom their new signing from the Catalans, Vincent Duport, made a solid start in the centre, though their on-loan back-rower from Leeds, Simon Worrall, suffering from a groin strain, was not risked.

In an excellent match played in front of a more than satisfactory 4,000-plus crowd, the Catalans put out their first-choice starting line-up, with only Jean-Philippe Baile and Dane Carlaw missing from the seventeen, but it was Toulouse who had the better of the early exchanges.

"There was a stiff wind against us and Toulouse played good football in the first half," said Catalans' coach Kevin Walters. "Although they scored 22 points, two of their tries came from quality kicks. Our ball retention was much better. There were no real stand-outs – it was a good team performance and most of the boys played better this second time out. We still have work to do over the next two weeks. We understand that it will be tough [in the opening Super League match at Wakefield]."

France skipper Olivier Ellina gave the Catalans a quick lead, the conversion coming from Thomas



Jerome Guisset crashes over for a try to bring the sides level

Bosc, who was named as the Dragons' new team captain in place of the departed Greg Bird. Toulouse replied almost immediately when their former captain Sylvain Houles, who has given way to Eric Anselme, capitalised on Constant Villegas's kick and went over from 25 metres, shrugging off Clint Greenshields's tackle on the way.

Nathan Wynn could not add the goal, but the home side moved ahead when Martin Mitchell, who was a key figure in the middle of the field, darted across the line, before Sébastien Payan contributed Toulouse's third. Wynn converted both tries to put the Championship side, showing the solidarity which their recent

commando training camp had been intended to produce, into a 16-6 lead. The Catalans hit back and, after Greenshields's converted try had reduced the deficit, Steven Bell's touchdown brought the teams level at the interval.

Straight after the break, numberless Kevin Larroyer, who had displayed good form on loan to St Gaudens, showed a fine turn of speed to beat all others to the touch down, Wynn again converting.

But after Guisset went under the posts from first receiver for a try goalled by Bosc, bringing the sides level again on the 48th minute, the Dragons monopolised the scoring.

Greenshields linked up with the threequarter line to score his second, goaled by Bosc, before Sébastien Raguin made use of Bosc's chip to serve Bell, who went in for his second at the corner.

The power of the Dragons' forwards had started to take its toll on the Toulouse defence, which shipped six second-half tries. Greg Mounis was next to find the line, going over from close range, while a productive final quarter for Raguin ended with the former Toulouse man benefiting from Setimata Sa's drop-off and then, at the final hooter, crashing over for his second.

"We had a very good first half with

WOLF CUBS TOO HOT FOR TOWN

THOSE Wolf Cubs were just too good for a Town side almost totally recast since last year's disastrous campaign. The youngsters were quicker in both thought and deed.

And although there was little between the two packs size-wise, the Warrington lads used their superior pace to get up in defence, and create some go-forward in attack.

Enjoying the space, the halves, Craig Harvey and Gareth O'Brian buzzed around to good effect, pushing Tyrone McCarthy hard for the gamestar award. An impressive mid-field trio that augurs well for the Wolves' future.

With Marty Blythe, Rhys Evans and Rhys Williams providing pace and penetration behind, Town were faced with formidable opponents. In the first half, they couldn't cope.

Phil Hewitt, at hooker, provided some good moments from dummy-half, while Brett Carter performed well at fullback. Jamie Marshall and Scott Burgess had some good flashes too, particularly with their kicking. Honest endeavour from the forwards in the shape of veteran Stewart Rhodes,

WORKINGTON TOWN 12
WARRINGTON WOLVES 34

MARTIN BUTCHER
at Derwent Park, Saturday

Paddy Couper and Ryan Campbell were never going to be enough against classier opposition.

So, after an early Town error, compounded by a penalty concession, it was all Warrington. Good passing stretched the home cover, and Alex Thompson simply dived over from acting-half.

Town had a good spell with Hewitt foraging for Rhodes to go close. Burgess's grubber brought a repeat set, but Town were not sharp enough to make their pressure pay. The Wolves soon showed them how to do it with a superb passing movement up the left. The ball had been through several pairs of hands, before Harvey provided the final ball for Blythe to surge over.

Almost from the kick-off, Thompson was away up the middle. He put out a peach of a pass for Mike Cooper to romp to the posts. Town were being ripped apart around the ruck, and were lucky not to concede

more tries. When Jarrad Stack came on, he steadied the Cumbrian ship and provided much needed go-forward. Andrew Beattie followed up, and Hewitt scooted over from dummy-half. Things were looking up for Town, until Stack got himself sin-binned for an injudicious remark to the referee.

In the circumstances, Workington did well to keep the Wolves at bay. Carter was superb at the back, as Blythe made a great run, and the bombs came raining down. Then Town gave away a draft obstruction penalty and the dam broke. Harvey made a break which ended with Scott Leatherbarrow storming in. Within two minutes Lee Mitchell's charge ended with Harvey bursting through a tired defence.

Many changes of personnel gave the second stanza a very different feel. But not immediately, as Williams went in at the corner off a wonderful bullet pass. However, Town dug in, and started to trouble the Wolves with some much better play. Mike Backhouse, James Finch and John Lebon made good contributions, while Beattie raised his game. Aaron Low and Scott Kaighan provide some penetration, along with Stack, and

Carter, now on the wing, continued to look the business.

Despite Warrington being next to score, we were watching a much more competitive game, with Town showing up well in defence, and looking much sharper in attack. They conceded a bad try straight from a scrum, when the pacy Evans came on an arcing run to slice through the centre and sprint to the corner in fine style.

Apart from that, Town held firm. And they finished off with a real cracker of their own. From a scrum deep in defence, Marshall put in a long kick. Carter sped after it, hacked on then kicked it in-field on the run. Campbell scooped it up brilliantly and sent a joyful Marshall under the posts. It brought the house down. They don't see many eighty metre specials at Derwent Park!

GAMESTAR: Tyrone McCarthy. The Warrington back-rower was the major influence on this game. He organised his side, made many important tackles and his runs often ended in damaging offloads. A great all-round performance.

GAMEBREAKER: As early as the 16th minute, Mike Cooper's excellent six-pointer sent the Wolves 14 points clear. Town were never coming back from there.

MATCHFACTS...

TOULOUSE	DRAGONS
1 Rory Bromley	1 Clint Greenshields
2 Sébastien Payan	2 Steven Bell
3 Sébastien Planas	3 Sébastien Raguin
4 Vincent Duport	4 Setimata Sa
5 Carlos Mendes	5 Dimiri Palo
Varela	6 Adam Mogg
6 Constant Villegas	7 Thomas Bosc
7 Nathan Wynn	8 David Ferriol
8 Brendan Worth	9 Casey McGuire
9 Martin Mitchell	10 Jérôme Guisset
10 Mathieu Griffi	11 Olivier Ellina
11 Tim Wynn	12 Gregory Mounis
14 Antoni Maria	13 Dallas Johnson
15 Eric Anselme	Suns (all used)
Suns (all used)	17 Cyril Gosard
15 Jérôme Gour	22 Jamal Fair
16 Sylvain Houles	23 Chris Walker
17 Cadric Gay	24 Remi Casey
18 Yoan Tesseire	
19 Norman Benarini	Tries: Ellma (4)
22 Oghenri Bheles	Greenshields (25, 53)
- Kelvin Larroyer	Bell (36, 58), Guisset
- Andrei Olari	Raguin (68, 80)
Tries: Houles (9),	Goals: Bosc 5/9
Mitchell (14), Payan	
(18), Larroyer (43)	
Goals: N Wynn 5/4	

SCORING SEQUENCE: 0-6; 4-6; 10-6; 16-6; 16-12; 16-16; 22-16; 22-22; 22-28; 22-32; 22-38; 22-42; 22-46

Rugby Leaguer & League Express Man of the Match: **Toulouse:** Martin Mitchell
Dragons: Clint Greenshields
Half-time: 16-16; Referee: Mohammed Driaza
Attendance: 4,182

a lot of open play," said Toulouse coach Gilles Dumais. "In the second half we lost some of our discipline and dropped the ball, but we still have five weeks to prepare, while the Catalans only have two. We've seen that we can face up to them. I hope that we will be better prepared for the start of this season. We have a year's experience and have added players to the squad."

GAMEBREAKER: Clint Greenshields and Steven Bell each scored their second tries in a three-minute period after Jerome Guisset had brought the sides level. It was then that the Catalans took charge.

GAMESTAR: There was no outstanding performer on either side, but for Toulouse Martin Mitchell, Constant Villegas, Sébastien Planas and Sylvain Houles all looked in good shape for the season ahead. In the Catalans' side, Dallas Johnson and Chris Walker gave notice that they should be key players, while Clint Greenshields, Thomas Bosc and Steven Bell were also among those who impressed.

MATCHFACTS...

TOWN	WOLVES
31 Brett Carter	6 Marty Lomax
2 Neil Frazier	2 Rhys Evans
3 Andrew Beattie	3 James Mandelka
6 James Finch	20 Marty Blythe
28 Martyn Wilson	29 Rhys Williams
19 Scott Burgess	1 Craig Harvey
5 Jamie Marshall	7 Gareth O'Brian
17 Stewart Rhodes	18 Mike Cooper
20 Phil Hewitt	24 Alex Thompson
10 Dean Bragg	28 Adam Neal
16 James Robinson	11 James Lathwaite
22 Paddy Couper	19 Lee Mitchell
Suns (all used)	22 Tyrone McCarthy
14 Jamie Peesnell	14 Jamie Peesnell
8 Anthony Morrison	16 Ryan Shaw
15 Jordan Burke	9 Scott
9 Scott	Leatherbarrow
17 Mike Stewart	12 Ben Evans
12 Ben Evans	
Tries: Thompson (3),	Blyth (14), M Cooper
(15), Leatherbarrow	(37), Harvey (39)
Goals: Burgess 1/1,	Williams (47), R Evans
Kaighan 1/1	(58)
Sin bin: Jarrad Stack	Goals: Harvey 1/3,
(28) – verbal abuse of	O'Brian 2/4
referee	

SCORING SEQUENCE: 0-4; 0-6; 0-14; 6-14; 6-20; 6-26; 6-30; 6-34; 12-34

Rugby Leaguer & League Express Man of the Match: **Town:** Brett Carter
Wolves: Tyrone McCarthy
Penalty count: 7-5; Half-time: 6-26
Referee: Gareth Heier
Attendance: 298