

Melrose Sevens 2011

✘ by John Preece

Seven-a-side rugby was 'invented' in Melrose in 1883 and now has an international following, as well as a World Tour. The 2010-11 series of the World Tour will close at Murrayfield on May 28th-29th – or as the Melrose announcer put it: – “Get along to see the second-best Sevens Tournament...”

Six Edinburgh teams were invited along, all, apart from Heriot's, playing in the first round of matches. The teams were, Boroughmuir (blue/green quarters), Watsonians (white), Currie (yellow), Stewarts-Melville (black/maroon), Heriots (dark blue) and Edinburgh Accies (blue/white hoops).

Watsonians were first up – and first to fall – letting Dundee HS get too far in front before coming back into the game, eventually going down 33-26. The other four teams all went through, admittedly against lower division teams, who fought hard, nonetheless, to make it less than easy for them.

In the second round, the big(ger) boys came out to play. Boroughmuir were just pipped 21-19 by Hong Kong Scottish. Currie were hopeful against Waikato, from New Zealand, but were seen off 33-0 by a far superior team. Edinburgh Accies managed to draw Heriots in the second round, but the Goldenacre side proved to be far too strong for their Raeburn Place opponents, coming out ahead by 29-5. Which just left Stewarts Melville playing South African side Hamilton. Confusion would have reigned on the Hockey pitch with both teams wearing the same socks! However, Hamilton refused to be confused by anything and were run-away winners 38-7.

Heriot's, the only Edinburgh team through to the Quarter finals, were pitted up against Hamilton. Again the South-Africans just got on with the job, scoring 41 points to Heriots 5, one of their players, Alsham Bock, ending up top

scorer on the day, with 10 tries.

The Semi-finals were Jed-Forest v Melrose, both Borders teams having negotiated their opening rounds with Melrose looking particularly good, and an all Southern Hemisphere match-up, Waikato v Hamilton. Melrose, as expected, won through fairly easily, scoring 35 points to Jed-Forest's 12.

The other match was a bit closer, but Hamilton fought their way through to the final 17-5.

A brief interval before the final saw a women's sevens match between Melrose, the worthy winners, and Stirling County, and a brief flurry of excitement from the ladies in the crowd as the boys from Waikato got their shirts off to perform a impromptu Haka under the posts during their 'Thank you' tour round the pitch.

The final was a fantastic advert for the sport of Seven's rugby, with Melrose (who, it was clear from their performance, hadn't just rung round on the Friday to see if anyone fancied a game of sevens) and Hamilton putting on a tremendous display of skill and fitness in the fading sunshine. Melrose, in the end, came away with a superb win 31-26, their first in 13 years, to cap a fine day in the Borders.

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