

Rugby – Watsonians v Stewart's-Melville, RBS Premier 2, 29 October 2011



Watsonians welcomed undefeated Premier 2 leaders, Stewart's-Melville to Myreside on a breezy, but bright Saturday afternoon. With Stew-Mel guaranteed a place in the league play-offs, there were whisperings (faint hopes, maybe...) that they might be tempted to take their foot off the gas and cruise their last three matches. They were indeed handed their first defeat of the season, but it wasn't down to any shortcomings on their part. Watsonians were quickly off the mark and were 6-0 ahead after less than 10 minutes with two penalties from scrum-half, Brian Walls. Stew-Mel's new Antipodean import, Kaide Whiting pulled three points back for the visitors before Matt Hannay went over for the opening try after 20 minutes. With the kick missed the score stood at 9-8 to Stewart's-Melville.

A few minutes later, Walls put another kick between the sticks to take the hosts back into the lead 9-8.

Throughout the first half, referee Lloyd Linton had had a few words with both sets of player and captains all through the first half about what he saw as negative play, slowing the ball down at rucks and just generally too many penalties. This 'wee chat' culminated in Stew-Mel's Reece O'Leary falling foul of the warnings and he was sent to the sin bin a few minutes before half-time.

With the score at 9-8 in favour of Watsonians at the start of the second half, the game was fairly evenly poised for an entertaining second period. Stew-Mel started the ball rolling with another penalty which seemed to galvanise the home side

and first Harris Grant and then Marcus Di Rollo tore through a rather weak defence to score a try apiece, both of which Walls converted. With the score at 23-11 after 15 minutes Watsonians were looking fairly comfortable. Another try for Di Rollo took the home side almost out of sight with the score at 30-11 before Mike Hanning slotted a penalty over for Stew-Mel. This woke the visitors up somewhat and sub Angus Lean galloped in less than two minutes later to score under the posts.

The successful conversion brought Stewarts-Melville up to within 9 points of Watsonians who were forced to defend quite deep at times (pictured) before Richard Borthwick scored the Inverleith team's third try with less than a minute to go. With Mike Hanning adding the conversion, the ref blew up for full time to bring the match to a successful conclusion for Watsonians 30 points to 28.

Watsonians are starting to come good at the sharp end off the before the league split and, with their pack pushing the Stew-Mel forwards all over the pitch, they looked strong in the set-piece department.

Stewart's-Melville are, so far, the only team guaranteed a slot with 40 points, and with Hamilton and Watsonians on 33, Jed-Forest on 31 and Selkirk on 30, nobody can sit back and rest on their laurels. Even Biggar on 24 points have a mathematical chance of a place if they win their last two matches with a bonus point and two of the teams above them fail to score. 'It's all to play for', as they say in the best sporting circles!

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