

# Rugby – Scotland v England 4 February 2012



The Auld Enemy turned up at Murrayfield on Saturday with eight new caps, a new head coach and the full support of Britains bookies, but with a bit of rumbling from the English 'experts' about dropping most of the old hands. While they weren't anywhere near as dominant a force as some English teams have been in the past, they did manage to cross the finishing line seven points clear for their first Murrayfield win since 2008, Scotland's eternal lack of success in the try scoring department letting them down in the end – but it was close.

Scotland kicked off into the seething cauldron that is Murrayfield when Scotland and England compete and straight away went on the attack with players all over the field making it difficult for the visitors to decide where the kick off was going to end up. However, once the game was underway, both teams were playing a cagey game with possession and territory swapping regularly. England had the first scoring opportunity 13 minutes in with a penalty which, new cap, Owen Farrell stuck just wide, giving the nay-sayers of English rugby a chance to stroke their beards and nod sagely. Less than 10 minutes later though, Scotland gave Farrell another chance to open the scoring, which he duly slotted home to give the visitors a three point lead with 24 minutes on the clock.

Straight from the kick-off, the home side put the English team under immediate pressure in their 22 and were awarded with their own penalty, a chance which Cardiff's Dan Parks scored to draw the sides level.

Weathering an England attack which failed to penetrate the home sides defence, Scotland turned-over the ball, which was

hoofed off down the field to get Scotland on the attack and just short of the England try line. With Chris Cusiter forcing Chris Ashton to hold onto the ball just short of the line, Parks took the chance the chance to put Scotland in the lead.

The half ended with Scotland in possession, on the attack, but not really doing anything to look like making a try-scoring opportunity and going into the break 6-3 ahead.

From the restart, the ball ended up in Parks' hands for a nice, simple kick to touch. It didn't quite work out as planned when Charlie Hodgson charged the kick down and then fell on the ball over the Scotland line. With Farrell scoring from the kick, England were 10-3 ahead with still 39 minutes to play. The Scots didn't let their heads drop and attack after attack saw first David Denton making a charge up the left hand touch-line, then Richie Gray battling up the middle of the field (pictured) and finally a kick through from yet another assault on the 63 minute mark which saw the 'nearly try'. Greg Laidlaw, on for Parks, chipped the ball in behind the visitors defence, and charged through to compete with Ben Youngs for the touch down. Oh, it was close! It took the TMO almost 5 minutes to decide that Laidlaw hadn't got enough on the ball to warrant the score and match referee, George Clancy, gave the 'no-try' signal that the home fans were dreading.

And that was that, more or less. England came up with another two penalties, Farrell only scoring from one, and Scotland ended the match as they had begun, on the attack, but just failing to make the breakthrough. With David Denton being awarded Man-of-the-Match, Scotland came away from the encounter with another 'brave' defeat, 13-6 down, too many turn-overs and lack of penetration being the match losers which need to be worked on before meeting Wales in Cardiff next week.

As a footnote, such is the aura surrounding the Calcutta Cup encounter that the tongue-in-cheek reckoning in the Photographer's room afterwards was that Scotland's bid for Independence could hinge on the result of this very match. Choose your date wisely Alec...

Report and Photo – John Preece

Web – <http://www.photoboxgallery.com/jlp-photography>