

Rugby – Stewarts-Melville v Watsonians, RBS National League



Report and Photo – John Preece

Watsonians made the short trip across the city to RBS National league rivals, Stewarts-Melville, on a rather grey Saturday, which, at the end of the day, suited the match well.

A fairly uninspiring first half, which saw both sides denied tries by the referee, ended 3-3 with neither side performing at their expected level. Stew-Mel were first on the scoreboard with a penalty from No. 10 Seb Trotter after 16 minutes, the visitors having missed two kicks in the run-up. Three minutes later Watsonians No. 10, Ben di Rollo, scored with his third attempt to draw the sides level. The home side were first on the 'denied try' list when the ref decreed that the ball had been lost forward at the moment of touch-down. Watsonians' effort was lost when a rolling maul which 'succeeded' in preventing the officials seeing the grounding. Initially awarding a scrum five metres out, the referee came in for a bit of abuse from the visiting pack and promptly changed his decision to a Stew-Mel penalty. Mercifully, the first half ended a few minutes later with the match tied at three points apiece.

Stew-Mel were first on the scoreboard in the second half as well, with another penalty shortly after the restart from Trotter. Neither side really dominated for the next 10 minutes or so with possession and territory being fairly even.

Watsonians, and the match's, first try came during the twelfth minute. With the attack drifting across the home side's

defence, a neat 'pop' pass from Tom Hart to di Rollo gave the visitors No. 10 enough of a chance to slip between the defence and dive in for the try. With di Rollo missing the kick, the score stood at 8-6 to Watsonians.

Another 10 minutes of play saw Stew-Mel with the majority of ball and only strong defence from Watsonians prevented a try being scored, Stew-Mel having to settle for another three-pointer from Trotter.

The home side went on the attack again from the kick-off, but, again, had to be happy with another three points from Trotter just before 30 minutes of play. Watsonians followed up straight from the restart with a penalty of their own, this time from substitute, Brian Walls. 12-11 to Stew-Mel.

With the clock winding down, a free kick for a scrum infringement gave Watsonians possession deep in the Stew-Mel half. With the ball being lost in a tackle, Stew-Mel hoofed the ball up the pitch to clear their lines only for Watsonians full back, Rory Steele to collect and scythe his way up the pitch from his own half, through some fairly weak tackles, to score the visitors second try with only four minutes left. Again the kick was missed – it wasn't a kickers' day – and the score was now 16-12 in favour of Watsonians. Straight from the off, the home side gained possession and with only a couple of minutes left, their No. 11 (Hanning?) broke down the line to 'score' near the corner. Unfortunately, his break down the line, turned out to be a break over the line and play was called back for the line-out.

And that was it. Not the best match played at Inverleith – especially that first half – but at least, in the end, it was an Edinburgh team that came away with the points.

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