


Scotland v New Zealand, EMC Autumn Test, 11th November 2012




In spite of the 51-22 scoreline, Scotland can come away from Sunday's match with a lot of pride. Matching the all-conquering All Blacks in a lot of areas, the Scots, however, couldn't manage to keep the visitors in sight for more than the first 15 minutes.

Almost from the kick off, New Zealand were awarded a penalty, which Man-of-the-Match, Dan Carter, slotted home for the three points. Honours were fairly even for the next period of play with both side probing, but not breaking through, the All Black's, though, probably ahead in the territory stakes. Just as they got an attack on the go, a loose pass was collected by Matt Scott and the centre was off. With the defence closing in, Scott released the ball to the ever present, Tim Visser and the winger romped home for the try. Understandably, the crowd went ballistic and the sheer noise was painfully loud. It all calmed down a bit to allow Greg Laidlaw to take the conversion and the home side were 7-3 ahead. Yes, AHEAD! Against the All Blacks!

 Sadly that was the last Scotland were to see of the lead. A swift repost by Israel Dagg, from a Dan Carter defence-splitting pass, saw the full back over in the corner. Carter scored with the kick and it was 10-3 to New Zealand. An exchange of penalties took the score to 13-10, before the All Blacks showed why they are World Champions.

A try down the right from Julian Savea on the 20 minute mark was quickly followed up by two tries in quick succession from Corey Jane and Andrew Hore, Carter scoring all three

conversions. Within 15 minutes of play the score had stretched out from that 13-10 to 34-10 and it looked all over. However, with less than a minute to go to go in the first half, Scotland got themselves down on the New Zealand line and hammered away, winning penalty advantage after penalty advantage. Matt Scott went over from one quick take, but the TMO couldn't see the ball grounded, so from another penalty restart and another bit of hammering, Geoff Cross got the ball over the line and, more importantly, in a position the referee could see and the, thoroughly deserved, try was scored. Laidlaw put the kick over and the Scots, while not quite back in the game, were 34-17 down as they went in.

Half time saw a parade round, to rousing applause, by some  of Scotland's medal winning Olympians, chief amongst whom was Sir Chris Hoy. Having delivered the match ball at the start through a Guard-of-Honour from the Scottish team, he was inundated with high-fives and hand shakes all the way around the ground. He'd have still been there if he hadn't had some 'minders' to keep the procession going.

But, we still had a match to finish, so the sides trooped out again to carry on. A few minutes in, New Zealand's Adam Thomson was yellow carded for 'unnecessary use of the boot' against Alisdair Strokosch's head, which will be looked at by the citing officer in the days to follow. This gave Scotland a small bit of uplift and they went at the opposition hammer and tongs. The pack took the game to the All Blacks and had them under the cosh before a lost ball was pounced on by Mike Blair. Again the ball was passed out to Visser and the Flying Dutchman roared over the line to score his second (top photo) – and Scotland's third – try of the match. Laidlaw missed with the kick so the score stayed at 34-22.

Despite some spirited attacking from the home team they couldn't break down the All Black's defence any further and the last 20 minutes or so saw the score pulled out to 51-22 from two tries and some success from Carter's boot. Indeed it was Carter who supplied the ball for the easiest won of the New Zealand tries. A neat kick over the defence – and a 'good' bounce – left Julian Savea with an uncontested run-in to the line.

A hammering? Well, probably not as much as the scoreline would suggest. The Scot's matched the New Zealanders in a lot of areas, particularly in the scrum and it was mostly, according to pundit and one-time All Black, Justin Marshall, the lack of clinical precision – something the visitors had in spades – and too many simple errors at set pieces that left them trailing by such a margin. Still, nobody's scored three tries against New Zealand for a year, and when was the last time an individual player scored two?

Report and Photo – John Preece

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