

Women's Rugby



Scotland Women v The Army WRFC, 18 January 2013

Report and Photo – John Preece

This match was meant to be the first phase in a training weekend for the Scotland women's team, but it didn't quite turn out as scripted.

Originally scheduled to be played under lights on the Murrayfield back pitches, the weather forced a change of venue to Saughton Park artificial pitch. There was a covering of snow on the pitch before the start, but the ground was deemed playable by the officials so the task of cleaning the lines – and making up some new ones (it's a football/hockey pitch) – started. And so did the snow. A quick discussion ensued, but as so many players and the Army team, had made considerable efforts to get to the venue, the match was to go ahead, but in three half hour periods rather than the usual two 40 minute ones. Scotland were missing a few of their team, stuck in various distant parts of the country. One player was 'trapped' at Birmingham airport. Having made the appropriate calls to the management team, she had quickly arranged to get the train, only to, at the last minute, realise that all her luggage, with her kit, was still on board the postponed flight! She may still be there...

✘ Anyway. The game. With the cold wind and very slippery underfoot conditions, the match started in a light snow shower. The Scots girls were easily the superior team, but the conditions played into the hands of the Army side. Keeping it simple, and in spite of being pinned back in their own half, they kept the Scots at bay. When they did gain possession, they only really made individual runs up the field, which were relatively quickly snuffed out. Once they did manage to get a

team attack on the go they scored their only points of the match in the second period. Scotland book-ended that score with a try in the first period from Lindsay Wheeler, who was 'helped' over the line (a brushed 'line' in the snow. Somewhere...) by the pack. The other was scored by Lauren Harris, in the third 'half', to take the win 10-5.

But the big story was the weather. At some points, the snow was so heavy it was difficult to see across the pitch. Cold, wet hands made for difficult handling of the cold, wet ball and the slippery pitch – with almost two inches of snow by the end – made it virtually impossible to change direction. Had everyone been a bit more local, then it is doubtful whether the match would have gone ahead, especially on an all-weather pitch, without posts and with 'lines' just brushed into the snow.

Did the Scotland backroom staff learn anything? Possibly, but with a good few players 'missing in action', then selection will be another difficult game.

One, apparently, good thing to come out of the match was the Scotland team doctor's camera phone being put to good use. As she remarked, a couple of photos and a bit of video would be useful next time she spoke about 'doctoring' in adverse conditions!

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