

Rugby – Scotland v Ireland Under 20



Scotland v Ireland Under-20, RBS Under-20 6 Nations

Played 'down the Borders' at Gala's Netherdale ground, the young Scots took the game to the young Irish and came out, totally unexpectedly, winners in a thrilling encounter on Friday night.

Weathering a storm of Irish attacks for the first 10 minutes of the match, the hosts managed to dodge the bullet of a penalty from 25 metres out. On 10 minutes, Robbie Fergusson kicked through the Irish defensive line and 'the perfect bounce' met with the perfectly timed run of Ruaridh Young to net Scotland the opening score. Tommy Allan scored with the kick and the home side were 7-0 ahead. Ireland struck back soon after, as is the way, with a successful penalty from Tom Daly. Sixteen minutes in and with Ireland in possession, Scots winger Damien Hoyland, intercepted an outside pass and shot off up the field to score Scotland's second try to the right of the posts. Young again scored the conversion and Scotland were, if you trust the pundits, unbelievably 14-3 ahead.

However, the second quarter of the match belonged to the visitors. First scoring a try in the left corner, then another soon after over on the right, it looked as if the Irish steamroller was finally getting up to speed and the result was heading their way, Unfortunately – or, maybe, fortunately – their kicker Daly seemed to have brought the wrong boots and neither conversion, nor a last minute penalty were successful, and the teams went into the break 14-13 to Scotland.

✘ The third quarter of the match again belonged to Ireland, with only some desperate defending from the home side keeping out the rampant Irish. It couldn't last, however, and with Will Bordell binned for a ruck infringement near the line, Ireland went for the scrum. The first one was wheeled round illegally to win the visitors another penalty. Again they took the scrum and another illegal wheel left the referee with but one option, a penalty try. Daly scored with his one successful kick of the night and Ireland were 20-14 ahead and Scotland still had six or seven minutes to play before Bordell's return. With him back, the Scots attacked up the left which came to naught and the next ten minutes or so were reduced to a display of opposition turn-over at ruck and maul. Eight minutes to go, and Ireland looking confident of the win, sub Ali Price delivered the ball from a maul into the hands of speedster Hoyland who bisected two defenders to score his second try on the right a metre in from the line. A hush greeted the kicker Allan and, with the score poised at 20-19 to Ireland, there was no little pressure on his shoulders. A fairly wobbly kick clawed its way over the bar and the ground erupted. 21-20 with five minutes to go and all the Scots had to do was play 'keep ball'. This they managed to do to run out worthy winners in a very close match, 21 points to 20.

A second consecutive win in the Under-20 Championship has given a tremendous boost of confidence to a team who, it can be said, have never shone in their respective 6-Nations competition.

Photos and report – John Preece

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