

Rugby – Stewarts-Melville v Boroughmuir



A blustery Inverleith welcomed Boroughmuir to play Stewarts-Melville in the second round of the RBS National League. With both teams recording substantial wins the previous week, this match might have provided an indicator of their early season form.

Boroughmuir, having dropped down from the Premier Division – and keen to go straight back up – were the probable favourites to take the win. However, Stew-Mel had made some shrewd additions to their line-up during the close season, so were equally confident of their chances. Confidence that, in the first ten minutes of the match, seemed to be a bit misplaced as they weathered a storm of attacking play from the visitors. Storm duly weathered, once they got their hands on the ball, they looked the much stronger team. After some fine penetrating play, they were awarded a close in penalty by referee Mhairi Hay. Kicker, Nick McCashin needed a bit of assistance to prevent the ball blowing off the tee, but over the it went and the first points were on the board for the home side. Playing with the wind, Stew-Mel went on to dominate the next ten or so minutes of play, using their backs to break through the Boroughmuir line and only a fair bit of desperate tackling saw them held out. They succeeded in getting over the line, but the ref deemed the ball ‘held-up’ and awarded a scrum five metres out to Stew-Mel. The new scrum laws saw the ball out the back quickly and across the pitch to winger, Alan Whittington – no relation – who saw off the ‘Muir full-back to score the opening try. McCashin put the ball through the posts for the conversion and Stewarts-Melville were 10-0 ahead, with Boroughmuir looking decidedly on the back foot.



A penalty awarded to Boroughmuir was missed into the strong breeze, but they were in the Stew-Mel half. The play came straight back from the restart, and it was the visitors turn to do a bit of hammering at the try line. Loose ball from a ruck was pounced on by Boroughmuir's Sam Johnson just on the line, but Hampton was there for the defence and both players had hands on the grounded ball. Referee Hay gave the benefit of the doubt to the visitors and awarded them put-in at the scrum. A mighty heave by the 'Muir pack left the ball free for Johnson to gather up and dive over in the corner, just avoiding the flailing Whittington in the process to score the try. With the wind still making the kicking difficult the score remained at 13-5. Boroughmuir chose to run, rather than kick, a late penalty award but the play fizzled out and the whistle brought the half to a close, still 13-5 in favour of Stew-Mel.

The second half started well for the home side, putting the 'Muir line under a sustained bit of pressure, but once they appeared to run out of steam, Boroughmuir went on some up field forays of their own. After a few failed attempts, mainly due to their own mistakes, they finally crossed the line. However, the referee decided that the ball carrier had been 'shepherded' through the gap and she took play back for a 'Muir penalty, which Dave Reekie popped over the bring the score line to 13-8.

Stewarts-Melville then spent the next five minutes being stopped short of the visitors line as the match was played deep in the Boroughmuir 22. A huge overlap on the left came to nought as the ball was dropped, but a penalty had been awarded on the other side of the pitch. It didn't end as 'required' as an infringement at the resultant line out was viewed as sufficiently serious by the officials to get Stew-Mel's No. 9, Ross Sampson, sent to the bin for ten minutes. He was followed off the pitch a few minutes later by 'Muir's Alex Cox for another card-able offence, but, this time, in Stew-Mel's half.

14 aside and all to play for – as they say.

Stewarts-Melville lost another player to the sin-bin as captain McCashin was 'parked' for ten minutes and almost immediately from the restart, Boroughmuir's Malcolm Clapperton crashed through for a try, followed in a few minutes later by No. 15 Ed Farquharson from a long run up the touch line, receiving the ball from a pass which which took advantage of the extra man to outflank the defence. Both kicks were missed so the score, which was to prove the final score, was 18-13 to Boroughmuir.

So, a close match played under trying conditions – for the kickers, anyway – bodes well for the rest of the season. Some visiting supporters reckoned that Stewarts-Melville possibly had the better of the play, but the final points tally is the measure that counts and that belonged to Boroughmuir. They will have to stop dropping the ball when in scoring positions, though.

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