

Rugby – Stewart's-Melville v Dundee

Stew-Mel manage to resist a overtime pressure from Dundee to take a narrow victory at Inverleith ❌

Inverleith was the venue for Dundee High School's trip to Edinburgh for the seventh round of this year's RBS National League. With both teams hogging the mid-table, a win either way would boost fortunes for the victors.

Right from the off, Stew-Mel looked the better side. Straight into the attack, they put the Dundee defence under a fair bit of pressure, rewarded after only five minutes with their first three points from a Mike Hanning penalty. And from the restart the hosts went on the offensive again, pinning Dundee back in their own half and forcing them to kick ball away. Their best chance came down the right as a string of passes put wing, Alan Whittingham, in the clear with one man to beat. He choose to stab the ball through with his foot, but the vagaries of the 'rugby ball bounce' took it away from him and the defender collected the ball cleared to touch. This gave Stew-Mel a line out near to the Dundee line and following the line out win, a couple of broken tackles left an easy pass to No. 8, Donald Sangster, who unfortunately couldn't hold on to the ball and the ensuing scrum went to Dundee. However, the referee deemed that the visitors had fouled at the scrum and awarded a free kick to Stew-Mel. Two quick passes saw the ball in the hands of Jonathan Hamblin who fended and hammered his way to the line for the opening try. Hanning scored the conversion and Stew-Mel were in the lead by 10-0 after just ten minutes of play. ❌

Another period of intense play by the hosts forced Dundee back again and another penalty awarded. This one was missed by Hanning, so the score remained the same. The visitors

then lost Chris Cumming to yellow, which seemed to tap the first nail in Dundee's coffin. But, rather than sit back in defence, the visitors went on the offensive and pushed the hosts back, deep into their own half. They were rewarded with a penalty which No. 9, Andy Dymock, scored to put their first points on the board, 10-3. The remainder of the half was fairly evenly matched – although Stew-Mel lost their scrum half to yellow for 'over-enthusiastic use of the boot' at a ruck – with both sides gaining and losing possession in equal measure until a minute or so from the break. Dundee were awarded a scrum in front of the posts which saw them retain the ball and a grubber kick through the defence from Dymock was grounded over the line by Stew-Mel. The subsequent five-metre scrum was won again by Dundee and this time, Dymock found a hole in the defensive line and dived over to give the visitors their try. However, Dymock missed the kick. Then a missed penalty from Hanning on half time left the score at 10-8 to Inverleith side.

With Stew-Mel's Strachan still off the field, Dundee took full advantage of the extra man from the start and five minutes in, scored their second try from a rolling maul on the hosts line, their No. 2, Neil Dymock, coming up with the ball. The other Dymock missed the kick, but Dundee were ahead 13-10. With Strachan now back on, the play swung back in favour of Stew-Mel and a series of penetrating attacks, held out by the visitors, culminated in another Hanning penalty in front of the posts. No mistake this time and it was 13-13. Less than five minutes later another penalty saw Hanning skew the ball miles wide, but Stew-Mel still appeared to be in the driving seat. However, that was lost on Dundee and the next five minutes saw the visitors pin Stew-Mel back against their line and the ball swung from side to side as they tried to break through. And break through they did, as the hosts failed to get enough men across to cover the left side allowing No. 15, Mike Brown to dive over for Dundee's third try. Again the kick was missed, leaving the score at 18-13 to the visitors.

A smart restart kick along the ground saw the hosts gather the restart, immediately putting Dundee on the back foot and defending desperately. Hanning broke through a couple of tackles to get Stew-Mel into the opposing 22, but a ruck near the line saw them lose the ball. The clearing kick was charged down by the hosts' Struan Allan, and the ricocheting ball was gathered up out wide by Whittingham, who dived over the line to draw the sides level 18-18. Hanning missed the kick, so the score remained level.

The next 15 or so minutes of the match were dominated by the Inverleith side, and only some frantic defending – which cost Dundee's No. 20 a badly pulled ham string – held them out and they had to be satisfied with another penalty from Hanning with just a couple of minutes left. And it was to be a couple of minutes that nearly won the game for Dundee. They had Stew-Mel pinned to their line in a repeat performance of their third try play, but keeping the ball in play through the 80 minute mark was to prove a step too far as Stew-Mel managed to hold up the ball in a maul, which was then awarded in their favour as it went to ground. The ref blew for full time and it was more a sigh of relief than a winning cheer that went round the stand. Final score, 21-18 to Stew-Mel.

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