

Rugby – Scotland v France

France gifted win with penalty two minutes from time.



Penalties! What felt like a million penalty awards to France from Scottish indiscipline left the home Nation rueing the loss of a match they should have won with some ease. With France misfiring in their lineout and their scrum not up to its usual standards, the Scots had the upper hand at the set piece. But, the first of those penalties came in the first minute with penalty award which No 9, Maxime Machenaud slotted home for three points. Less than 10 minutes further into the match, they had their second. Following a period of kick swapping, France got on the attack, but a fine tackle from David Denton and Duncan Weir stopped France's centre, Maxime Mermoz, breaking through for a try. The ensuing ruck was then infringed by Scotland and an easy kick saw Machenaud extend the lead to 6-0.

Then it was Scotland's turn to threaten. Weir's kick off went deep and in the ensuing battle for the ball, the box kick was charged down by Jim Hamilton. Scotland recovered the ball and the attack swung over to the left. A couple of recycles later, Scotland had a penalty and, playing advantage, Stuart Hogg hoisted a high kick into the goal area for Sean Lamont to chase. He went up with two defenders, who lost the ball in the contact and the following up Hogg just had to fall on the loose ball and score the opening try. Referee, Chris Pollock went 'upstairs' to check for a knock on, but all was good and the score was 6-5 to France, which Greig Laidlaw turned into a 7-6 Scottish lead with the successful conversion.



From the kick off, the visitors regained possession and set off upfield. They eventually turn the ball over, which Tommy Seymour clears, but they are soon back and win another penalty from another breakdown infringement. Machenaud regains the lead with his kick, but the play costs Scotland the services of Johnnie Beattie with a serious looking leg

injury. 9-7 to France. From the restart, France were forced into a couple of clearing kicks and from one of these, Scotland set up their second try. Quick ruck recycle from the edge of the 22 saw the ball move swiftly along the backs. Matt Scott then dropped a neat inside ball into the hands of Seymour and he was through the gap and over the line for Scotland's second try. Laidlaw slotted home a difficult kick and, at 22 minutes in, 14-9 was now the lead to Scotland.

The rest of the half was very much give-and-take, with both sides gaining and losing possession, and kicks aplenty raining down on from the all over the place. However, it was Scotland who had the better chance to increase the try count, but another ruck penalty when in front of the posts stopped that. France then had a late chance to score another three points but Machenaud failed with that one and the half ended 14-9 to Scotland.

The Scots had a good start to the second half, forcing the French back into their 22 and having an early chance at goal. The wind foiled Laidlaw's attempt. But, from the restart, they were straight back up the field. Setting up from turnover ball, the attack reached the five metre line, but a huge, looping pass across the defence from Weir was picked off by wing, Yoann Huget, and, with nobody home, he galloped the length of the pitch to touch down for France's solitary try. Machenaud scored the easy conversion and France retook the lead 16-14 after six minutes of play.



With France still struggling at line out time and their scrum starting to lose the plot, Scotland were beginning to dominate, but were still more than capable of giving away daft penalties at any time. However, with the wind getting up, Weir stood up for a 61st minute attempt from a rare French penalty. With Laidlaw holding the ball steady, it clawed its way over the crossbar to retake the lead for Scotland, 17-16. Still with the majority of possession and territory, Weir missed a crucial 71st minute penalty, and then came the killer blow. With less than two minutes left on the clock, France drove up into the Scots' 22 and a simple penalty

give-away at a breakdown gave away the match. Machenaud slotted home the easy kick for a 19-17 lead which was the final score in a thrilling, but ultimately disappointing, match for the home fans.

It was a tremendously exciting match, with Scotland showing fair bit of attacking ability and the Gallic flair coming to the fore on occasions – running the ball from behind the goal line rather than kicking, for instance – but it was the penalty count which told against Scotland in the long run, so that will need sorted. And sorted soon....

Images from the match will appear [here](#) over the next few days.