


# Rugby – Stewarts-Melville v Kelso BT National League Division 1

*Stew Mel hammer Kelso in their hunt for play-off place.*



Normally three tries would see a team in with a chance of the points, but when your opponents put seven past you, then maybe your game wasn't all you'd hoped it to be. That was the fate that befell Kelso on Saturday at Inverleith in the BT National League's Division 1 as they were demolished by a rampantly superior side.

The match started benignly enough, but a turnover inside their half gave Stew-Mel the stepping stone needed to put immense pressure on the Kelso defence. The home side then proceeded to encamp on Kelso's five metre line for the best part of 10 minutes. A couple of scrum collapses cost Kelso a yellow as the home side threatened to roll over the line. Kelso almost lost a second player when removal of a lifter in the lineout left Stew-Mel's no. 4 with fresh air under him. Setting up a maul from the resultant penalty, Stew-Mel pushed over the line and their No. 5, Scott Brewster touched down for the first points. Stand off, Nick McCashin, who was to have a fine day with the boot, scored the conversion for a 7-0 lead. Less  than two minutes later they were at it again. Another turnover, this time in their 22, gave Stew-Mel a bit of space which Matt Morrell took full advantage of the sprint half the length of the pitch and into the opposition 22. Mike Hanning then took up the attack, but Kelso held their line. A couple of recycles later and No.3, Rhys Morgan, dived over from another ruck for the second try. McCashin scored with the kick – which shaved the bar on its way over- to take the hosts 14-0

ahead.

Less than a minute later, with Kelso in complete disarray they crossed the line again via Hanning, but he knocked on as he dived in the kick through. Then it was the forwards again, but they were stopped short another three times before Kelso even had a sniff of ball. But, with less than 10 minutes to the break, Kelso eventually managed to hold on to the ball long enough to drive up near the home line. Shifting the play left, they set up a few metres in from touch, wing, Dom Buckley, crashed over for Kelso's first score. Andrew Skeen missed the kick so the score remained at 14-5 and that's how it stayed at the break. It seemed to be a different Kelso who took to the field in the second half and, less than five minutes in, they scored their second try. Winning line out ball from a penalty, they rumbled and rolled the ball along the Stew-Mel line. A second penalty and line out gave them another ruck platform, from which Max Gordon fired through for his try. Skeen, in contrast to McCashin, was not having such a good day and missed the kick. However, in spite of Stew-Mel's dominant display in the first half, they were only four points clear at 14-10.



Then, just as Kelso hopes were on the rise, the first of the home side's many breakaways came courtesy of Matt Morrell. The wing galloped up the right from well inside his own half and into the Kelso 22, but was tap tackled about 10 metres out and brought down. However, a poor clearance gave the ball back and 30 seconds later McCashin eluded several tacklers on his way to the try line. He dived over near the posts, then converted to extend Stew-Mel's lead to 21-10 halfway through the first quarter.

Kelso then enjoyed another five minutes or so of possession around half way, interrupted by an 'incident'. The referee pulled over one of the Stew-Mel players for a deliberate

infringement at a ruck, and, as he was administering a yellow card, a scuffle broke out. One of the home props then hit the deck and stayed down. It must have been through sheer embarrassment as, when things calmed down, the opposition scrum half, Andy Tait was carded for 'striking an opponent'.

✘ The initial penalty was reversed, Stew-Mel gained possession, then Morrell repeated his break, this time up the middle. He got a bit closer before being stopped again, but this time had support. He offloaded to centre Neil Bowie who threw himself over the line for the bonus point try. McCashin slotted home his fourth kick of the day to take the score out to a healthy 28-10 with about 20 minutes left to play.

Once again, Kelso got straight back on the horse and up the park. They only lasted a couple of minutes deep inside the host 22 before they turned the ball over near the line. McCashin popped out in possession and carried for a few yards before the try of the day. He offloaded to Mike Hanning who sprinted clear and carried for, at least, 75 metres – and just avoided a last gasp tackle on the line – to dot down under the posts. Once again McCashin came up with the goods for the 35-10 scoreline. That changed less than five minutes later as Kelso, once again went straight back up the field and scored their third try, and 35-15, but with less than 10 minutes left, it was a bit too late.

Not too late for Stew-Mel, as in the final minutes Hanning – easily the ER's Man-of-the-Match – scored another two tries, only one of which was converted to put the final scoreline out to 47-15.

Despite the result, Kelso made more of a game of it in the second half and threatened the Stewarts-Melville try line on several occasions, but their mistakes and a good defensive display from the hosts ensured that it was not going to be an easy day.

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