

Rugby – Scotland v Wales, U20 Six Nations

Scots come from behind to beat Wales in the Borders



The dark expanse of Gala's Netherdale stadium was the venue for the second round U20 Six Nation's match between Scotland – defeated by France in Round 1 – and Wales – who had beaten tournament favourites, England.

And, to emphasise the cosmopolitan nature of today's rugby, the match was in Scotland, filmed by S4C for broadcast by BBC Alba, with a French set of match officials and an Irish TM0. Never mind the variety of nationalities playing and coaching for both teams. Despite all that, though it was still Scotland v Wales.

Young Scotland took an early lead with two successful penalties by scrum half, George Horne, but Wales struck back in the ninth minute with a try from Tom Phillips to bring the score to 6-5. Scotland came back at Wales after the restart, but the visitors were soon on the front foot and drove up into the home 22. Once the backs got involved the ball was moved swiftly through the hands and a neat offload from centre, Owen Watkin left full back, Dafydd Howells, with only one man to beat for the second try of the match. This time Dan Jones found the posts and it was 12-6 to Wales.

Following a couple of minutes of play deep in the Welsh half, Dillon Lewis tried to get clear but was turned over by two Scots and the attack was on. The ball was moved up into the 22, but the Welsh infringed at the breakdown and gave Horne the chance to pull the Scots up to within a score with an easy kick from in front of the posts. 12-9 Wales with 20 minutes to play in the half.

However, the visitors were straight back into gear and less than two minutes later wing, Joshua Adams crashed over in the corner for the third Welsh try of the match. Jones missed with his kick so the score remained at 17-9.

A well struck restart kick found a gap in between two of the Welsh players and, while they were dithering about, the Scot's left wing, Alec Coombes slid in between them and gathered the ball giving Scotland good possession well into the opposition 22. The forwards then took over and hammered away at the defence which eventually fumbled and gave away another penalty in front of the posts for Horne to pop over for a 17-12 score line.

The game then took a bad turn for the home side as Wales camped themselves in the Scots' half and a succession of scrums followed up by some fine backline interplay put centre, Garryn Smith over for a try and, with a successful kick from Jones, widened the gap between the teams to 24-12 with less than 10 minutes of the half remaining.

Then it was Scotland's turn to switch on the afterburners and for the final 10-12 minutes they settled in the Welsh 22 and battered away at the defence from all angles. The Welsh held out, but gave away another 'red zone' penalty. This time, Horne went for touch and the cycle started again. Eventually, the forwards organised themselves into a powerful rolling maul and rolled, pushed and heaved their way up to and, eventually, in the 43rd minute, over the line. The French referee called for a TMO decision and, after a bit of deliberation, he awarded the try to front row, Murray McCallum. Another of Horne's kicks sailed between the posts – only just over the bar, though – for a more respectable 24-19 half time score.



Wales started the second half better than their hosts and were soon attacking the 22, but the defence held and Scotland broke

upfield and won another breakdown penalty which Horne knocked over to bring the score to 24-22 to Wales. Scotland then lost a man to injury but, off the back off another fine scrum, they found themselves with players over and, eventual Man-of-the-Match, Lewis Carmichael piled over for a try. Once again, Horne's kick went over and Scotland were ahead 29-24.

However, the curse of the restart bit and Wales pulled back three points from Jones' penalty less than a minute later. The next 15 minutes, or so, of the match were played with a slight bias toward the Scots' half with Wales getting to within a few metres of the line on a couple of occasions. But the defence held and Scotland pushed up into the Welsh half. Another penalty cost Wales a man in the shape of their No. 5, Adam Beard. With the match now in the final quarter, the Scots got themselves organised and choosing to kick for touch, the pack set up the platform for prop, Zander Fargason to drive over the line for the third try. With the kick through, the score was now 36-27 with just over 10 minutes left.

It was to be a nervy 10 minutes for Scotland, and Wales – still a man down – went on the offensive again. Once more the Scottish defence came in for a bit of a roasting with the pack getting up to within a metre of the line, but it was the backline who got the plaudits as swift movement of the ball saw wing, Joshua Adams over in the corner for his second, and Wales' fifth, try of the match. Jones, by now had found his kicking boots and converted to, once again, make it a two-point game at 36-34.

The final few minutes were again tense – with a desperate, last ditch tackle by Rory Hutchinson stopping a Welsh breakaway in the dying seconds – but Scotland saw out the match for a fine, but rare, U20's win.



Overall, it was a superb display from both teams, with Wales

looking the better in the first half, but the young Scots side showed a bit of character and didn't let their heads drop when they were behind and, hopefully, they can use this performance as a springboard for the rest of their Six Nations campaign and for the looming World Cup in Italy in June.

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