

Rugby – Scotland v Italy, RBS Six Nations

Scotland lose out to 79th minute penalty try



With both teams seeking their first win in this year's Six Nations tournament, it was always going to be a disappointing day at BT Murrayfield for one of them. Unfortunately, thanks to a missed kick to touch and the subsequent Italian pressure, that team was Scotland.

It was a bright start for the home side with a penalty from Greg Laidlaw in the first minute to take an early 3-0 lead. This was followed up just over five minutes later by a try from Mark Bennett. With Italy in possession, they were gradually working their way upfield when a loose pass from Kelly Haimona was intercepted by Bennett and, with no one between him and the posts 50-odd metres away, he galloped in for the try. Laidlaw converted and Scotland were ahead 10-0 with less than nine minutes on the clock.

From the restart, Italy pushed the game deep into Scotland's half and, winning line out ball just inside the 22, they built up a rolling maul and drove up to and over the line, enabling No. 5, Josh Furno, to drop down for the try. Haimona missed the kick from near the touchline so the score stayed at 10-5.



The next 5 minutes or so of the match were mostly played well into the Italian half, with possession more or less shared. Scotland were pressing the Italian defence further toward their line, but a succession of clearances moved play up to more neutral territory. However, Scotland returned to win a lineout in the 22 and subsequent foul play earned Laidlaw

another, successful, kick at goal to extend the lead to 13-5. But, once again a penalty awarded straight from the restart, gave Haimona the chance to redeem himself and this he duly did to bring the Italians back to within a score at 13-8.


The following 10 minutes looked good for the home side as they exhibited a fine degree of passing and close-in handling skills. But, as before, the visitor's defence held up and it took another penalty kick from Laidlaw to break the stalemate and move the lead back out to eight points at 13-8 with just over 10 minutes of the half left.

And, as before, Scotland played a good few minutes of attacking rugby, and, once again, they were held out. Then the penalty count rose by two as two scrum penalties moved the game up to within kicking distance for Haimona to have a shot at goal. His kick rebounded off the upright and, while Scotland were wondering what to do, wing, Giovanbattista Venditti, out jumped Laidlaw and gathered the ball. Now the defence came alive and Venditti was stopped just short. But the wily Italian had forced the ball against the post protector and managed to work the ball around, still in contact with the padding, and down onto the line. Referee, George Clancy, initially awarded a knock on, but was persuaded to 'go upstairs'. A couple of minutes and some magic in the TMO's 'office' showed that he had indeed grounded the ball on the line for the score. With an easy conversion for Haimona the score was, a much closer, 16-15 in Scotland's favour and it remained so until the break.



The second half was altogether a much more torrid affair and, although Scotland got into the visitor's 22 once or twice, it was only into the second quarter where a chance was manufactured. Swinging the ball wide to Sean Lamont, the Scottish backline finally got into action. Lamont drew in the defence which left a hole, which Stuart Hogg filled neatly.

Lamont then offloaded through a tackle and Hogg was off and across the whitewash. Sadly, for the home fans, the officials had spotted the slight forward drift in Lamont's pass and play was pulled back just as Hogg crossed the line.

With 10 minutes left, Scotland were again on the attack, but Italy were managing to keep them 10-15 metres short. Then they were caught offside and Laidlaw stepped up to knock over an easy kick for a 19-15 lead. 

That's when it all started to go wrong for the home side. Italy seemed to find a bit of a spark and drove up to the Scots' five metre line. A series of penalties were conceded by Scotland and Italy set up for the long haul. However, with about four minutes left, they infringed at another scrum allowing Scotland to clear in the shape of Peter Horne.

That was to prove costly as, when Horne took the kick, he appeared to twist his knee and the ball stayed infield. Italy then came roaring back and forced another couple of penalties. The first one cost Scotland dear as Ben Toolis – on for his first cap five minutes earlier – pulled the maul down and was carded by Clancy. The following penalty line out was again won by Italy, but this time, Hamish Watson – on for his first cap as well – pulled the maul down on the line. Clancy had no option but to award a penalty try under the posts and Watson was also carded for his part in proceedings. Now with a one-point lead, Haimona stepped up to stick the ball between the posts thus ending the match with a win for the visitors, 22-19.

It was a terrible blow for Scotland who had lead throughout the match, but once again, the penalty count – and not so much the number as the timing – told and that final ten minutes was agonising for the support as they watched their team go into meltdown and throw away a potential win.

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

