

Rugby – Heriots v Melrose, BT Premiership Final

80th Minute try wins it for Heriots

In spite of finishing 10 points clear at the top of the BT Premiership, Heriots were staring defeat in the face in the Championship Final at Goldenacre until Jason Hill saved the day with an 80th minute try from the back of a ruck.

Melrose had the first chance at points after a few minutes with a penalty attempt from near halfway which went nowhere near the posts. A second penalty a couple of minutes later from 11, Joe Helps, made it over to give Melrose a 3-0 lead.

Heriots then stepped up their game and launched a series of attacks which drove Melrose back into their 22.

They cleared their lines but the referee found the visitors wanting in the disciplinary area and Heriots were able to advance with relatively little effort. Four penalties in succession near the Melrose line had them treading a wary line and a five metre lineout gave the home pack something to work with. A succession of rucks held the defence and the final driving maul carried Jack Turley over the line for the first try of the day. Graeme Wilson slotted the kick over and Heriots were 7-3 ahead just on the quarter hour.


For the next 10 minutes or so, Heriots showed just why they were at the top of the table with an extended period of play which saw some desperate defending from Melrose, which told as the home side had to settle for three points from Wilson and a 10-3 score line.

They came close to their second try a few minutes later off the top of another lineout/maul combination, this time hooker

George Turner broke free only to fumble the ball just short of the line.

This may have distracted the team as, almost immediately, Melrose scored their first try. Fielding a clearing kick near half way, the ball was moved quickly through the hands and out to full back, Fraser Thomson who skipped through a couple of diving tackles on his 30+ metre sprint to the line. The kick was missed, but Melrose were creeping closer at 10-8.

The rest of the half was played out with neither side making much ground and the sides went in at 10-8.


From the restart, Melrose had the upper hand, but Heriots managed to clear, until five minutes in, when a kick to near halfway bounced neatly up for No 14, Tito Mua. He neatly evaded the advancing line and had a clear run in for Melrose's second try. The attempt at goal was charged down, but the visitors were in the lead 13-10. 

Heriots then lost a man to yellow for a late – as in LATE – tackle on the full back, but 10 minutes later, they had managed to keep a rampant Melrose at bay.

Back to 15. Heriots now had a go and, once again, the pack proved to be an asset and drove the ball deep into the opposition 22. Making up for his first half fumble, Turner dragged half the Melrose pack across the front of the post before handing the ball to full back, Glenn Bryce, who battled over the line for Heriots second try. Wilson scored with his kick to put Heriots into a 17-13 lead.

But not for so long. Coming back strongly, Melrose proceeded to camp themselves on the Heriots line, with the pack hammering away, looking for a way through. That way through came just seven minutes from time. With the defence tied up, the ball was passed quickly through the hands and Andrew Nagle fired himself over from short range for the lead. Sub, Richard

Mill scored the conversion and, at 20-17 with five minutes left, it was looking good for the Border's men.

However the final few minutes were an object lesson in keeping the ball by Heriots. They crept closer and closer to the Melrose line with a combination of passing and rucking until, in the final minute, Jack Turley got round the outside of  the defence and made it into the 22. He got the ball off to Jamie Richie, but he was stopped a metre or so out. With the ruck set up, Jason Hill picked the ball up from the base and dived between the legs to cross the line in the 80th minute for the win. He was immediately buried under a massive pile up of players as Melrose slumped to the floor. Wilson still had to take the kick, but he didn't try too hard and the ball slid wide, leaving the mightily relieved Heriots faithful to celebrate '..a damn close run thing..'

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