




Rugby – Scotland v Italy, Pre-World Cup warm-up match

Scots record record victory over Italians  Scotland recorded a record points tally against Italy, in front of a record crowd for a Summer test, in their only home warm-up match before departing – to England – for the 2015 Rugby World Cup. Six tries and a handful of penalties saw off the Italian challenge – marred by poor discipline – and gave the squad a boost before their final warm-up match next week against France. With less than five minutes on the clock, Scotland were awarded the first of many penalties which gave captain Greg Laidlaw the chance to open the scoring at 3-0. With Italy seemingly unable to secure the ball, another Scottish advance led to the first of Sean Lamont's brace of tries. Taking advantage of a narrow defence, Finn Russell put in a precision kick out to the wing which Lamont collected in stride and went over for the five-pointer. Laidlaw followed up with a successful conversion and it was 10-0 with 10 minutes played. Following the score, Scotland once more enjoyed the majority of possession but Italy did manage to get up into Scottish territory once or twice, but, the defence held and, in the 23rd minute, Laidlaw opened the gap to 13 points with another penalty. Three minutes later, another breakdown penalty was slotted home by the captain for a 16-0 lead and Italy were looking like a beaten side. Only 'looking like', however, as a fairly speculative kick was hoisted into the Scots' in-goal area, Tim Visser and Greg Laidlaw outdid each other in their comedy attempts to get to the ball, resulting in Michele Campagnaro having the easiest of dives onto the ball to score. Tommaso Allan – so nearly a Scotland player – knocked over the conversion to open – and, as it turned out, close – Italy's score sheet. Once again, Italian ill-discipline came to the fore as, nearing half time, Francesco Minto was yellow carded for collapsing a Scottish maul just short of the try line. From the resulting penalty lineout, the Scots forwards set up and, with the opposing pack fully occupied, John Barclay peeled off the back and was driven over the line for a third try. Referee, Romain Poite, chose to go upstairs, but this just delayed the inevitable and with the try

awarded, followed by a fifth successful Laidlaw kick, Scotland went into a 23-7 lead.  With just a few seconds left, the match restarted, and, with 40 minutes on the clock and in possession, Finn Russell hoofed the ball into the crowd to finish the half. Or, at least, that's what he thought he had done. Poite must have taken exception to a player deciding when the half was finished and, as the players were halfway to the tunnel, he called them back for an Italian lineout. Italy had a decent go, but were once again turned over and Scotland attacked up to the halfway line. But common sense soon prevailed and the ball was once again consigned to the crowd and the half ended, this time for good, with Scotland 23-7 ahead. The second half was more of the same, although Italy held onto the ball for a little longer, four second half tries – three from interceptions – put a fine gloss on the Scottish performance. The first of the tries came from Tim Visser less than 10 minutes in. From an under-the-posts ruck the ball was fired out via Laidlaw and Russell to Visser who was clear out wide and had one of the easiest gallops to the line of his career to bring up 28 points. Laidlaw blotted his copybook with the kick and just shaved the upright, but 28-7 was an encouraging score line. Following wave after wave of Scottish pressure, yet another penalty gave Laidlaw the chance to 'redeem' himself and the successful penalty on 55 minutes took the score beyond 30 points at 31-7. The first 'intercept' try was from Lamont, for his second, with a clear-ish run in to score just wide of the posts with 62 minutes showing. Laidlaw then recorded his second miss of the day, followed up with his substitution by Henry Pyrgos, but 36-7 was now the score. With Italy coming a bit more into the game the focus moved toward the home end, but a loose pass well inside the Scots' half was gathered by Visser and he ran the ball in for his second, and Scotland's fifth, try (dive over the line needs work, though...), Russell scoring the conversion for 43-7. The final try near full time was another intercept, but this time sub, Mark Bennett only had about 40 metres to run in. Russell missed the kick from wide, but it was job done, at 48-7 and the final whistle blew on a record day for Scotland.  *Images from the match will appear [here](#) over the next few days.*