

Rugby – Dollar v George Watsons, Brewin-Dolphin U18 Schools Cup Final

Watsons leave it until final minute to retain the title




This match was an entirely different affair – scoring wise – to the U16 match played earlier. In a match played at 100mph, both sides had an took several scoring chances and both had periods of being in the lead, However, it was the Edinburgh side who came out on top with a final seconds' penalty to secure their fourth U18 title in succession.

Right from the start, Watsons pressurised the Dollar defence and quickly gained territory inside the opposition 22. They lost the ball following a close-in ruck, but Harry Warr's clearance found the opposing full back, Callum Martin who ran in from 20 metres out to touch down in the corner. The kick was missed, but, after four minutes, Watsons were 5-0 to the good.

Dollar came straight back from the restart and, in a period of less than five minutes, won a succession of penalties – which might have seen at least one yellow higher up the ranks – finished the play with a 'held up' decision under the posts. However, the referee was playing advantage from the last of the 'penalties' allowing centre, Ben McIlwraith, to get the first points on the board for Dollar for 5-3.

The next 10 minutes of the match were played at tremendous pace with neither side being able to break down the other until the 20 minute mark when Martin finished off a move he had started inside his own half, with his and Watsons' second try. The missed conversion, however, saw the score remain at 10-3.

A minute later, Watsons' scrum half, Fraser Peters, broke a couple of tackles as he launched himself at the Dollar defence and into the 22. He

was run down by his opposite number, Warr, but the Watsons' pack were soon in attendance and they mauled their way over the line, Michael Calder emerging with the ball for the try. This time Peters scored the conversion and the Edinburgh side were a healthy 17-3 ahead and looking like remaining Champions. 


Dollar had other ideas, however and with less than three minutes played from Watsons' try, they scored their first. Winning ball off the top of a line out the pack repeated Watsons' effort a few minutes earlier and mauled their way to the line. Following a couple of recycles, it was stand-off, Grant Hughes who fired himself over the line to score. McIlwraith then followed up with the conversion to make the score 17-10 with 10 minutes of the half left.

Hughes then scored his second try for Dollar with less than a minute left before the break. Weathering another Watsons' storm, Dollar broke free up the right wing, but full back, Andrew Graham, was tackled into touch a couple of metres out. He'd released the ball before crossing the line, though and Dollar were able to capitalise on their position and, following another lineout, Hughes scored his second try. McIlwraith's second conversion also sailed through and the half time score was 17-17.

After the interval, the game continued where it had left off, with Dollar dominating proceedings. With Watsons on the defensive, Dollar lost the ball following a five metre lineout, but ran the clearance straight back, No. 7, Lachlan Peterson breaking through to score. McIlwraith's metronomic boot then saw the ball over for the extras and Dollar lead for the first time at 24-17.

A penalty exchange, first from Watsons, had the score at 27-20 with 15 minutes left to play, but neither side were looking like falling at the final hurdle.

Unfortunately, the final hurdle loomed for Dollar as Watsons scored a converted try with less than five minutes left. The pack had spent a fair period of time hammering away at – and being repulsed from – Dollar's try line, but something had to give and it was the defence as No. 5, Robbie Begg barrelled over for the score. Peters followed up with the conversion

and, with less than three minutes left, it was 27-27 and another shared Cup loomed. 

It wasn't to be and, taking advantage of a tiring defence, Watsons fired upfield from the restart in a repeat of the previous play, but this time it ended with that final second's penalty to end a fast and furious encounter 30-27 for Watsons' fourth consecutive title.

The two Brewin-Dolphin matches played on Wednesday night probably matched anything the BT Murrayfield faithful see on a Friday night for sheer thrill and excitement, aided and abetted by a hugely enthusiastic and supportive crowd.

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