

# Rugby – Stewarts-Melville v Dundee, BT National League, Div. 1

*“A Damn Close Run Thing”\* at Inverleith as Dundee hold on for a narrow win*



The BT National League resumed hostilities at a breezy Inverleith as second place Dundee HSFP made the trip South to play 8<sup>th</sup> place Stewarts-Melville FP RFC in the latest round of the season long competition. Stew-Mel lined up as advertised, but Dundee had made several changes to their squad, a couple of which gave their coaching squad a few memory challenges...

Nevertheless, playing with the wind, Dundee looked, by far the better side in the early exchanges and were quickly up in the Stew-Mel half. Some fine running and handling then had the ball out wide and with a clear run in, No. 11, Mike Brown had the first points on the board with his 5<sup>th</sup> minute try. Centre, Duncan Leese kicked the conversion to add the extras and it was 7-0 before Stew-Mel were seemingly aware of what had happened.

Seven minutes later, and despite a swift response from the home side, a dropped ball in the centre returned possession to Dundee and they returned to the attack. Brown carried the ball into the outer reaches of the 22 where he was tackled by Angus Rennie, but he still got his pass away. A couple of moves later and a neat reverse pass – Dundee made good use of the reverse all match – put full back, Blair Cochrane through under the posts for the second try. Lees slotted home his kick and, 14 minutes in, it was 14-0.

The next 10 minutes, or so, of the match were a bit more evenly contested with Dundee shading the territorial advantage, but getting turned over a couple of times allowing the home side to clear. Rennie made a strong run upfield and moved the play away from the danger zone, setting the ball rolling for Stew-Mel's first score.

A penalty lineout close to the Dundee line was won by Stew-Mel – lineout issues would later cause them all sorts of problems – but the ball was eventually lost forward a couple of metres short. Dundee won the ball from the disintegrating scrum, but pressure on the defence led to a catalogue of errors culminating in a poor clearance from Brown. 'Poor clearance' is probably a mild understatement as his sliced kick landed in the hands of home centre, Ali Greig, who was minding his own business in front of the posts. He quickly overcame the shock and charged in the score. Mike Hanning added the points for the conversion and it was 14-7 with 15 minutes of the half still to play.



Stew-Mel followed up from the restart with a fine display of running rugby, but they were turned over near the posts, allowing the visitors to clear and eventually get up into the home 22, however, neither side were able to score further so the half ended 14-7 to Dundee.

Five minutes into the second half, Stew-Mel had Dundee under a great deal of pressure and managed to force a poor clearance from centre, Nick Alston. Stew-Mel's Alexander Rappestad collected the ball in his own half and set about returning play to the other end. His powerful run, scattering opponents as he went, took play into the Dundee 22, where he got a clean pass away to scrum half, Gregor Portus. His pass then found full back, Ross McCann with empty space in front of him, giving the 15 a clear trot in for his try. Hanning just missed the kick from out wide so the score stayed at 14-12 to Dundee

with five minutes of the second half played.

The two point gap lasted just over two minutes as the visitors returned to the fray and scored their third try of the afternoon following up a fine display of attacking rugby, the final pass putting No. 10 Ewen Fox over for a 19-12 scoreline.

Mike Hanning pulled three points back for the home side with a penalty on the 50 minute mark, but Dundee soon stretched away again with their fourth – and bonus point – try of the match. Pushing Stew-Mel deep into their 22 a series of rucks lead to a couple of penalties, the final one of which was taken quickly by Leese who fired himself over the line from close in to take the points tally to 24. He then converted to give the Tayside men a 26-15 lead.

The next period of play was dominated by Stew-Mel as they drove the match deep into the Dundee half. Some fine attacking play then lead to a couple of penalties which were kicked to touch. For once – or twice, as it happened – the home lineout managed to fire properly and the second of the penalties lead to a set of rucks which eventually put front row, Michael MacDonald, over for the score. Hanning conversion then made the score 26-22 to Dundee.

☒ Three minutes later, with Dundee still on the back foot, Hanning added three points from an offside penalty award to make it a one point game at 26-25 with just over 15 minutes left on the clock.

Stew-Mel spent the rest of the rest of the match hammering away at the Dundee defence, but, aided and abetted by the home lineout woes the visitors held out and pushed back. As the clock slipped into overtime, Dundee were knocking on the door of the home try line. Rucking their way across the field they soon won a penalty and Leese stepped up to close out the match with a successful kick and the try bonus point win with a final score of 29-25. Stew-Mel, for their part, clawed their

way back to, and stayed within, seven points to gain a losing bonus point at the end of a tough encounter at home.

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

*\*As Wellington was alleged to have said after victory at Waterloo.*