

Rugby – Scotland U18 Home v Exiles Trial

Home –based side defeats Exiles at Peffermill.



If you had sent your children out to play in weather like we had at Peffermill for the Scotland U18 Home v Exiles match Social Services would be calling round and asking some awkward questions. Both sides made the best of the conditions, but the home players have had more time together and it showed. They dominated almost every area of play to take a comprehensive win over their cross-border counterparts. It rained a bit as well.....

However, the match was not about who won or lost, but was designed to let the U18 coaching staff to look at and assess players in time for the 44-to 26-man cut to face England on the 6th March in Stirling.

Playing, more or less, with the strong wind in the first half, the Home side were almost immediately in the Exiles' 22. Winning their lineout, the pack quickly formed up and mauled the ball over the line, No. 8, Ryan Sweeney dotting down for the try. No. 11, Ben Appleson then stepped up and, somehow, negotiated the wind to convert with a drop kick. 7-0 to Home.

From the restart the match settled down a touch, with the Exiles making some progress, but the weather was playing havoc with the handling and several passes went amiss.

With about 12 minutes on the clock, the Home side turned over ball from a ruck and shifted play wide. One of the Home front row then made a significant break down the line, but he was tackled to the floor by the opposing scrum half. The Home side recycled quickly and a couple of passes put Stafford McDowell through for the try. Appleson's kick 'drifted' wide so the score remained 12-0.


The Home side were now almost completely dominating play and winning several penalties for a variety of transgressions. With the half hour approaching, another well worked move down the left saw McDowell crossing for his second try. This time Appleson was on target and he stretched to score out to 17-0 which was to be the half time score line.

With the Exiles now playing with the wind, the second half possibly should have mirrored the first with the Home side coming under pressure. It was not to prove thus, however, as the Exiles were still well outplayed by the opposition.



Six minutes in, the Home side scored their fourth try. Following another penalty line out, the ball came into the middle before play switched to the outside. A series of penalties and rucks in quick succession, drew players in, leaving an almost clear run in, down the left again, for No. 16 Paul Cairncross to dive over in the corner. This time, Appleson's kick didn't even make it to the line – not for lack of skill – so 24-0 was the score.

The Exiles were not completely devoid of attacking moves and they had more of the ball in this half than they did in the first. A couple of breaks nearly made it through, but the defence was up to the mark and these moves, unfortunately ended in penalties for the Home side for ruck infringements.

 However, by the time this was coming together, the Home side had scored their fifth try, mauling the ball up the middle of the field and leaving Sweeney the relatively simple task of falling over the line. Appleson had sussed the wind at this point, but his low trajectory conversion was just a touch low and it skimmed the bottom of the bar to leave the score at 29-0.

The Exiles saw a bit more of the ball over the final 15 minutes, but gave away, what seemed to be, dozens of penalties in their attempts to retain the ball.

With the temperature dropping away, the match ended none too soon for

both the players and their families on the sidelines, and leaving the coaching staff some things to mull over before that game against England in Stirling.

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