

Rugby – Scotland U19 Dev. v Japan National Schools XV

Scotland U19s fight off comeback from Japan Schools at Inverleith



A touring side from Japan's National Schools were the opposition for Scotland's Under 19 Development squad on Sunday at Stewarts-Melville's Inverleith ground. Appropriately, two of Stew-Mel's first team were playing on opposite wings and, even more appropriately, Ali Greig and Ross McCann scored Scotland's three tries.

Early pressure from Scotland won them the first points with a fairly easy penalty conversion from No. 10, Josh Henderson for a 3-0 lead after four minutes.

The next 20 minutes of the match were then fairly evenly matched with the Japanese team having a couple of visits to Scotland's 22 and looking dangerous at times. They were, however, let down by technique as all of their attacks were defeated by Scottish turnovers from rucks and mauls, the home side choosing to run the ball clear rather than kicking.

The first try of the match was pretty much a Stew-Mel affair. Ali Grieg carried the ball up the wing before breaking inside and passing to Ross McCann. Eventual Man-of-the-Match, McCann, then made a scything, 30-odd metres run before handing the ball back to Greig about 10 metres out from the line. His dash to the whitewash – with his gum shield clenched unconventionally between his teeth – was almost brought down, but a timely hand-off put the winger in the clear to dive over for the opening try. Henderson then slotted home the kick and, 24 minutes in, it was 10-0 to the home side.

The remaining 10 minutes of the half – they play 35 minutes at this level – were mostly played in the visitor's half and, indeed another try was almost scored from close-in ruck, but the defence held out and the half finished 10-0 to Scotland.

The second half started as well for Scotland as the first with an early score. This one was a more impressive end-to-end try, though.

Japanese lineout ball was turned over deep in the home 22 and the ball passed out to full-back, Bruce Sorbie, who, slipping his marker, ran the length of the pitch before being brought down just outside the five-metre line. Following in his wake, however, was McCann and, with Sorbie's pass off the floor going to hand, McCann had the relatively simple job of diving over the line. With the touchline kick falling short, Scotland were now 15-0 ahead four minutes into the second half.



Then it almost all went wrong for the home side as Japan rallied and scored a brace of tries to pull up to within a point.

With about 10 minutes played, the visitors were deep in Scotland's 22 and were pressing the line. The defence was holding, but being pulled back and forth across the front of the posts. The first try came when the ball went right, followed by the defenders, leaving the left side of the field clear. A 'simple' kick over from their 23, landed in the hands of the winger, Tomoya Yamamura who raced round the back of the defence to dot down near the posts. Yuhei Shimada then converted for a 15-7 score line.

Less than five minutes later, they were on the scoreboard again. This try was from rolling maul set up from a penalty lineout close to the Scottish line, Kenta Matsuoka emerging from the pile of bodies with the ball. Shimada then kicked the conversion to make it a one-point game at 15-14.

From the restart, McCann crossed the line again following a battling run from half way to dive over in the corner, but one of his opponents had got sufficient contact on the winger to have him put a foot in touch, so the 'try' was chalked off.

The Scots now dominated play and, for the next 15, or so, minutes put a huge amount of pressure on the Japanese defence, forcing many a clearing kick before running the ball straight back at them.

The breakthrough came with four minutes left on the clock. A break up

centre of the pitch left McCann with a clear run in from 30 metres out to take the game beyond the visitors. Ewan Fox then knocked over the conversion to leave the final score at 22-15 to Scotland.

The sides will play the second leg of the two-match series at Meggetland next weekend



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