

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

Another fine win for Stew-Mel at home.



Kelso were the latest visitors to suffer from one of Stewarts-Melville's late-season home performances as they were beaten in Saturday's match at Inverleith, having come from behind to lead for a period of time.

The home side were on the attack from the whistle, No.13, Ciaran Whyte blazing through the opposition a couple of times in the first ten minutes forcing the defence to scramble back.

However, the first points came with three minutes played when No. 10, Andrew Manson knocked over an easy kick for a 3-0 lead, but he missed another, slightly more difficult, attempt a couple of minutes later.

It was Whyte and fellow centre, Sebastian Trotter that laid the groundwork for the first try in the 12th minute. The ball was run deep into the Kelso 22 where the pack took over and, following a series of close-in rucks, second row, Fraser Morrison burrowed over for the try. Manson then scored the conversion to take the lead out to 10-0.

Stew-Mel continued to press and put a great deal of pressure on the defence, forcing a grounding in the area following a kick-and-chase by full back, Sean Murchie.

Kelso then seemed to find their feet and gradually came back into the game with some fine attacking play of their own. This all paid off with 10 minutes left in the half. With the pack

occupying the defence with a series of rucks under the posts, the ball was then fired out wide and No. 8, Dom Buckley, crashed over for the score. No. 15 Donald Crawford then scored the conversion for 10-7.

The home side returned to the fray with a series of penetrating runs which, with around a minute left on the clock, gave them their second try when wing, Jack Savage slid over in the left corner for the try. Manson kicked the touch line conversion for the points for 15-7.



Kelso had the last laugh, however as, with seconds to go, a quick tap penalty left the defence floundering and wing, Arran Jackson sauntered through a huge gap to touch down. Jackson then converted and the teams went into the break with Stew-Mel leading 15-14.

It took 12 minutes of the second half before scoring was resumed in favour of the home side. The first period of play was fairly even with neither side gaining significant advantage, until a line break from sub, Bruce Ruthven almost came off, but his offload found scrum half, Fraser Strachan, who sprinted clear and then found flanker, Jamie Berrisford, who dived over to score. Manson missed the kick, but it was 20-14 for the home side.

Five minutes later, Kelso scored a third try through Gregor Millar for 20-19, before scoring yet another for the lead.

Kelso had already rehearsed their fourth try when a loose pass was intercepted just outside the 22, the 'escapee' being pulled down short of the line, but this time around, Buckley was on hand – possibly offside – to get in the way from ruck and sprinted 30+ meters to dive over under the posts. With Crawford off kicking duties, their No 16 – *not* the team sheet-named prop, Willie Aitken – converted to take the lead for the

first time at 26-20, with 20 minutes left to play.

But it was only a brief moment in the limelight as the home side struck back rapidly with a converted try scored by Whyte with a long run in under the post and converted by Manson, followed up a minute later when Manson added to his tally with a penalty to stretch the lead out to 30-26.

With less than 10 minutes left in the match, Stew-Mel were again pressing the line and sub, Connor McKay – who had been pretty active since coming on – clawed his way over for the score, Manson, once again, converting for 37-26.



With the referee about to blow up for full time, the home side administered the coup-de-grace when another pile of bodies forced lock, Hugh Lindsay over the line for the final try, Manson scoring the conversion for a final score line of 44-26 to Stew-Mel.

The match result confirmed that Stew-Mel would be playing National League, Div. 1 rugby again next season as, with only one match left, they cannot reach a play-off place. In contrast, across-town rivals, Watsonians, put in another 50+ points scoring performance to win the Division and ensure that, next season, they would once again be back playing in the top flight of Scottish Club rugby. Our congratulations go out to all the players, back-room staff and, of course, their ever-loyal supporters.

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