

Rugby – Scotland v Argentina, 2016 Autumn Test Series

Laidlaw seals it with a kick



After last week's narrow loss to Australia, Argentina provided the second opponents in a row to subject the Scots' supporters to a nail-biter of a close finish. This time around, however, it was the home side who triumphed via the boot of Captain, Greg Laidlaw, who, under tremendous pressure having struck the post with an earlier attempt, slotted home an 83rd minute penalty to give the home fans plenty to cheer about.

Which, given the rather dour first half, was certainly something they needed.

Other than a successful penalty from Laidlaw in the third minute, the first 20-odd minutes of the match lolloped about the centre of the pitch from scrum to scrum with very little going on. The one exceedingly minor, bright note is that the Scots' pack had managed to hold their own most of the time against one of the World's best scrumming sides. They did get blown apart a couple of times during the match, but, generally, gave as good as they got.

Another Laidlaw penalty on 27 minutes then opened the lead out to a – considering the soporific nature of the match at that point – highly impressive, 6-0.

If one has to be fair, however, both sides had had a couple of probes into the opposition 22's, but none had looked particularly menacing.

That all changed just a minute or two after the restart. Argentina won their own scrum just inside the Scottish half

and a combination of good passing and running soon had them knocking on the door of the home try line. A desperate defence from the Scots ensued, with bodies being flung into the mix to prevent a score. The post came in for a bit of attention as the visitors tried to use the base of the post, but eventually, the referee had to blow up and award a scrum to Argentina for 'held up'. The nation then held it's collective breath as the teams set up, but the ball got stuck in the scrum and took an age to emerge. When it did, the away side clawed their way back to the line, but a loose placing of the ball gave a Scottish boot the chance to clear and all was – temporarily – well.



With the break approaching, Argentina were awarded their first shot at goal, which stand off, Nicolas Sanchez, gratefully accepted to narrow the gap to 6-3 as the teams went in.

The third minute of the second half then saw the scores level as Sanchez kicked an early penalty for 6-6 following a period of advantage play from the referee.

Scotland then provided the next bit of excitement as a break from first cap, Magnus Bradbury lead to a penalty line out in the Argentine 22. Edinburgh Flanker, Hamish Watson, made inroads, followed in by club-mate, Grant Gilchrist, but the attack was snuffed out and the ball cleared.

Winning line out ball, the visitors set up a passing move which ended with a deft kick over the defence from centre, Juan Martin Hernandez, for his fellow centre, Matias Orlando to run on to. A favourable bounce meant that he just beat Scotland's Sean Maitland to the ball and with a clear run in, slid over near the posts. Sanchez then knocked over the conversion and it was 13-7 after 10 minutes of the half played. Given the relative dominance of the visitors up to this point, could Scotland come back?

Oh, yes! And it took all of three minutes. Keeping Argentina confined to their own territory, Scotland won a line out just outside the 22 got things moving. The ball was swiftly advanced into the 22 where last week's Man-of-the-Match, Huw Jones pummelled his way through several defenders before getting an offload out to Sean Maitland on the wing. The No. 14 then had nothing better to do(!) than fire over in the corner for the try and 13-11. Laidlaw then converted from neat the touch line to draw the sides level at 13-13.


After another period of to-ing and fro-ing, Argentina were next on the board with a penalty from Sanchez on 62 minutes for 16-13.

Scotland followed this up with their most sustained assault on the opposition line started by a missed gather from the restart kick. Eventually, Argentina gave away a penalty, and Laidlaw again levelled the scores a for 16-16.

So, just over 10 minutes left and all to play for....



It was to prove a period of play almost totally dominated by the Scots. With eight minutes left, a drop goal attempt from Finn Russell drifted wide, but the home side returned to the attack from the drop-out and, then, with four minutes of normal time left, Scotland won a penalty. The reliable Laidlaw stepped up for the shot and, unreliably, struck the post! However, Maitland was first to the ball and the onslaught continued. With a minute left, Russell had another drop attempt, but this one was charged down and the ball cleared to the 10 metre line

But, there was still time on the clock, and as 80 minutes neared, Russell was replaced by Tim Visser to add a bit of – albeit late – power to the attack. 

With the final play of the match, the Scots once again threw

themselves at the defence and, in the midst of an 82nd minute ruck, Argentina handled the ball and the penalty was awarded. With all the collective hopes and aspirations of a Nation – well, maybe just those in the stadium – on his shoulders, Laidlaw stepped up and struck the ball through the posts for 19-16 and the win!

Given that the first half was a write-off as far as inspiring rugby was concerned, the second half certainly came alive and served up a tense and enthralling encounter. And we won!!

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