

Rugby – Stewarts-Melville v Dollar Academy, Brewin-Dolphin U18 Cup Final

Mistimed kick costs Dollar the Cup



Two more seconds were all that Dollar Academy needed to take the Brewin-Dolphin U18 Cup back to Clackmannanshire, but a misjudgement of the time left gave Stewarts-Melville College the possession they needed – and exploited – to keep the title in Edinburgh.

The first few minutes of the match saw Stewarts-Melville defending for all they were worth as the ‘visitors’ threw everything at them, forcing a couple of clearance kicks, before coming straight back.

Then, in the ninth minute, the pack set up on the Stew-Mel line and drove flanker, Reece McCallister through for the opening score. No. 15 Ben McIlwraith then converted for an early 7-0 lead.

The next 12, or so, minutes of the match ‘belonged’ to the Edinburgh side as they ran at the Dollar line from all over the pitch, forcing play into their opponents 22, a couple of dangerous breaks from wing, Jacob Lineen, causing a bit of concern for the Dollar defence. Reward came with just over 21 minutes played when a long passing move across the pitch left Lineen with just enough space to get outside his opposing number and dive over for the try. Captain, stand-off and – incidentally – Head Boy, Ross Thompson, stepped up for the conversion, but watched the ball slide past the post, keeping the score at 7-5 to Dollar.

The bane of all coaches then set in as, straight from the restart, Dollar won a kick-able penalty which McIlwarith successfully slotted home for 10-5.

Following the score, Stew-Mel returned to where they had left off, attacking the Dollar line and retaining possession and territory, until, with just over five minutes of the half remaining Lineen got on the end of another overlapping passing move and, despite being under a bit more 'attention' this time around, scored his, and Stew-Mel's, second try of the match for 10-10.

With Thompson missing again – although, to be fair, he was a long way out – that is where the score remained until the break, when, playing under advantage, No. 5, Jonathan Davies fought his way through from 15 metres out to score near the posts. McIlwraith then chipped the conversion home to take the sides in at 17-10 to Dollar.



Less than two minutes in to the second half, Dollar scored again. Not giving their opponents time to settle from the kick off, Dollar launched themselves upfield and a combination of fine play and lacklustre defence, saw them knocking on the door of the Stew-Mel line again. The ball was lost forward in a tackle near the line, but once again, they were playing under advantage and McAlwraith knocked over his attempt at goal to stretch the lead out to 20-10.

In what was becoming a match of *deja-vu* periods, Stew-Mel returned to the fray with another try. And, once again, it was pressure that told. A series of line breaks had the ball up near the Dollar 22 again and, again, a wide passing move brought the other wing, Jack Bain, into the game and he sprinted in from distance to go over on the left. Thompson's mild nightmare then continued and he hit the post with his attempt at goal, so the score stayed at 20-15.

Next up was the return of 'Coaches Bane' as, less than a minute, or so, from the restart, Dollar scored another try. Winning their scrum inside the Stew-Mel half, a quick ruck and recycle was enough to see No. 14, Charlie Dineen over in the corner for 25-15.

As the match progressed, things were beginning to open up a bit as players tired on the big, International pitch and it was Stew-Mel's Lineen who scored next. A high, hanging restart gave Stew-Mel time to get up and tackle the receiver as soon as he secured the ball. With the ball then unsecured, the attack commenced and finished on 48 minutes when Lineen went over in the left corner for his hat-trick. Thompson must have wondered when his guys were going to deliver an easier attempt at goal, but, nonetheless, he stepped up and, with his worst strike of the match, eased the ball over the bar – somehow – for 25-22.

As the clock ticked over the hour mark, Stew-Mel found themselves hammering away at the Dollar line with a series of rucks and mauls off the back of a close-in line out. This time it was the forwards turn to take the plaudits as, pressure told, and, with 63 minutes on the clock, flanker Connor Boyle, battling over for the try. Thompson then scored the conversion to take the score to 29-25 and seeing Stew-Mel in the lead for the first time in the match.

The 'final' five minutes of the match saw the lead and, potentially, the match slip away from Stew-Mel as Dollar went on a major offensive, forcing the opposition further and further back into their own end, defending for all they were worth.

However, with two minutes left, pressure, once again, took the upper hand and, in a copy-cat move, Dollar got the ball wide and crossed for the try. McIlwraith converted and, with less than a minute to go, it was 32-29 to Dollar.

And then it all went wrong.... Playing possession rugby through a series of rucks which would have made the Munster of old proud, Dollar retained the ball until, with two seconds left, someone took the hasty decision to launch the ball into the stands to end the match. However, there were still those two seconds to go and the referee had no option, but to award Stew-Mel a lineout a couple of metres from the Dollar line.



Now was the chance for the pack to come to the fore again try to score the winner. They rucked their way across the face of the goal area, but the defence held until a slight error by the defenders gave prop, Rory O'Hara the tiniest of gaps to squeeze his bulk through for the winning touch down. As the fairly inconsolable Dollar side lay about in disbelief, Thompson stepped up and, with no pressure, drop kicked the conversion to seal the burgled win for Stewarts-Melville at 36-32 and retaining the U18 Cup in Edinburgh for another year.



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