

Rugby – Scotland v New Zealand, 2017 Autumn International Series

New Zealand hang on for the win.



Described as possibly the best sports team in any genre in the World – ever – the latest incarnation of New Zealand All Blacks arrived in Edinburgh to, once again, put Scotland to the sword....

The anthems and the Haka followed a spectacular Sound and Light show, before Scotland kicked off – with a ball delivered by, the emotionally welcomed, Doddy Weir – to the usual, hefty, BT Murrayfield roar.

Two minutes in, Scotland managed to engineer a three man overlap down their left flank, but the offload from Stuart Hogg was knocked on and the ball cleared.

Scotland then won their lineout and continued to press the All Blacks' defence, eventually winning a penalty which Finn Russell slotted home for a seven minute, 3-0 lead.

With the visitors struggling to get out of their half, a mistake from a scrum gave Hogg the chance to clear to well inside the opposition 22 putting more pressure on the defence.

The Scots were forced back to almost half way, but another penalty chance went begging when Russell just missed a 45 metre attempt at goal in the 14th minute.

For the next 20 minutes, or so, the general viewer may well have thought that the teams were wearing the wrong jerseys as

Scotland dominated proceedings, limiting the visitors to a couple of penalties, but no great territorial advantage, while causing a great deal of angst in the New Zealand dugout.



As half time approached, the New Zealanders upped their game and took advantage of an error which gave them a series of five metre scrums, but Scotland held out and, eventually, got the ball away. However, the All Blacks weren't quite done and they won a kick-able penalty which Beauden Barrett converted to level the scores with a couple of minutes left to the break.

So with the half time score at 3-3, and, Scotland, seemingly, playing way above their pay grade, a fantastic second half was on the cards.

And a fantastic start it was. Just not quite what was required from the men in white...

An early Scotland attack was successfully repulsed and, once the New Zealanders had a sniff of Scotland's 22, there was no stopping them.

A long carry down left the put the visitors inside the Scots' 22 and the defence on the back foot. Now the All Blacks' went to work and the attack swung right, before quickly reversing and manufacturing an overlap down the left, which they well exploited to put hooker, Codie Taylor, clear to dive over in the corner. Barrett missed the conversion, but it was now 8-3 after just a couple of minutes of the second half.

The sages in the crowd were now all nodding knowingly and stroking their, metaphorical, beards as the tide they had predicted before the match, looked to be finally coming in.

A brief period of Scots' possession didn't cause any anxiety in the visitors, but a 50th minute scrum caused all sorts of

damage to the score board. Winning a penalty from said scrum, Barrett kicked for touch and a line out in the opposition 22. The ball was then mauled across the pitch before Arron Smith passed out to Barrett in the centre. With Damian McKenzie streaking through from the full back position, Barrett slotted a neat grubber through the defence for McKenzie to chase through and dive on to score their second try. Barrett then converted for 15-3 after 52 minutes and things were looking as if they were beginning to turn.

Scotland came back, however, and enjoyed a fair bit of possession for the next few minutes, eventually forcing New Zealand into defending on their line, costing them a player to the sin bin on the 60 minute mark. The home side then immediately took advantage of the extra man and the pack squeezed Jonny Gray over for the first Scots' try, which Russell converted for 15-10 to the Blacks with just over 15 minutes of play remaining.

Then the visitors showed why they are the best team in the World. With 14 men, they repulsed Scotland and drove into their half to win a scrum inside the home 22.

Off the back of this, Sonny Bill Williams broke up the centre and 'attracted' three or four defenders before releasing one of his trademark off-loads to be gathered by McKenzie. With Scotland now scrambling back, he passed out to Barrett giving the stand-off a clear run in to dive over for the try in the 69th minute. He then converted to put the All Blacks 22-10 ahead with just over 10 minutes left.



Scotland again tried to, again, take advantage of the extra player and pressurised the opposition, driving deep into their half and, with 71 minutes on the clock, they forced another penalty which saw Wyatt Crockett binned for foul play.

Unfortunately, they just couldn't take advantage of that two minute period with extra two men and were eventually turned over and the ball cleared.

As New Zealand tried to run the clock down with four minutes left, they took too long at a line out and were penalised, giving a free kick to the Scots. A quick tap saw Hogg charge up the field before slotting a grubber kick – which matched Barrett's previous effort in every way! – through for Tommy Seymour to gather and he then slipped an inside pass to Huw Jones, who, with, nobody in front, fired himself over for the try. Russell then converted from the five metre line to put Scotland within a score at 22-17.

But, despite a late charge down the left from Hogg, the final whistle blew with the All Blacks still ahead and, probably, feeling as if they had dodged a resurgent Scots bullet on their way to the win.

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