

Rugby – Scotland v England, U20 Six Nations

Coming off the back of defeat to Ireland, Scotland's U20 side faced England's youngsters at Myreside on Friday night in Round 2 of the this season's U20 Six Nations Championship.

And, having been dumped out of the U20 World Championship last year in Argentina, a new management structure and, as is the way of age-grade rugby, a raft of new players were seen as the way forward.

Ireland's U20 coach certainly saw that last week, describing the team as the best U20 Scotland side he'd seen in recent years. Only the next 80 minutes would see if that held true.



Scotland destroy England's scrum early on, and were dominant

for most of the match
Anyway... 7:30 and
Scotland kicked off and were quickly up into England's faces,
forcing
an early scrum at the breakdown, barely 15 metres out. The
pack then
destroyed the English scrum, winning their first, of many,
encounters
of the game.

However, going for
broke with the penalty – Really? 15 metres out... – Nathan
Chamberlain managed to kick the ball dead and return England
to
possession.

The visitors then
enjoyed a brief flurry of activity, mostly in their own half,
before
a turn over near half way, returned the home side to the
attack.

And attack they did.
Pressure on the English defence from some of Scotland's big
ball
carriers had them scrambling to prevent a break through and
the home
side got encouragingly close to the line more than a few
times.



England defended with their fingertips at times
England then regained
possession and broke away, only to lose the ball and be forced
to
defend again. Once again, despite Scotland's best efforts,
they
couldn't get through and, eventually they were turned over and
the
ball cleared.

Back with the ball,
Scotland battered away at the line, but again, England held
steady
until a deliberate knock down – 5 metres out and no yellow? –
followed by offside during advantage, gave the home side a
penalty in
front of the posts and Chamberlain knocked over the kick for
3-0
after 15 minutes.

And then the 'coach
killer'. Straight from the restart, England won a penalty
which Manu

Vinipola kicked to within a few metres of the Scots' line.

They then won the lineout, manufactured a wee gap and put hooker, Theo Dan through for the first try of the match. Vinipola then converted from wide – off the far post – for 3-7 after 17 minutes.



Pretty much the story of the game. 'Scotland almost break down England's defence'

From the restart,

England, came under serious pressure again from the Scots attack and

it didn't take too long for that pressure to tell and a string of

infringements then lead to Scotland's try.

Setting up a rolling

maul, 5 metres out, the pack, once again, crushed any opposition and

Ewan Ashman emerged from the pile up with the ball for 8-7, then,

quickly, 10-7 thanks to Chamberlain, on the 22nd minute

mark.

Following that score,
England gradually gained a bit of an upper hand, and spent more time than of late in the Scotland half, interrupted by another dangerous assault on their defence, but the visitors were looking better than they had up to that point.

As the break approached, England were making space in the Scots defensive line and, then the ball was slung wide and Freddie Steward was in the clear down the right to sprint in and go over in the corner. Using all his luck in this one game, Vinipola then converted off the same post as before for 10-14 at half time.



Attack after attack was held out
The first 10, or so,

minutes of the second half were more of the same. Scotland were easily the dominant side and it was only powerful defence from the English side – aided by another raft of penalties inside the 22 – and still no cards – that kept the score as is.

But, pressure told. A maul in the corner, off the top of yet another penalty line out, was held up by the visitors and the subsequent scrum was then illegally challenged by England, prompting the French referee to, finally, give his first warning of the match.

Going for touch, Scotland won their line out, set up their rolling maul and were duly pulled down again. No option this time, but for the referee to award a penalty try and a yellow card. So, Scotland were now in the lead 17-14 after 54 minutes and against 14 men.



Penalty try for the Scots.

For most of the next 20

minutes, or so, Scotland were well on top, with the visitors struggling to make much in the way of ground, but that old Scottish

talent – in any sport we play – of being almost completely dominant, but failing to score, won through and England kept their try line intact.

With 10 minutes left to

play, England came roaring back into the game and made great gains.

Taking advantage of a 'not straight' line out, they made acres of

space and, eventually, centre, Conor Doherty, crashed through for

their third try and the lead, leaving Viipola with an easy conversion

for 17-21.

The final few minutes

were spent with Scotland, largely, on the defensive as England

probed

away and wasting precious, for the home side, time with
pointless
drop goal attempts from distance.

Scotland had a last

flurry down the right, for old times sake, but this was easily
snuffed out and England emerged as 17-21 winners of a match
where

they barely saw the opposition 22, never mind the line. But,
like all

class sides, when they did, they made it count, leaving the,
overwhelmingly, dominant Scots to rue, yet another, brave
defeat.

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