

Rugby – Stewart's Melville v Gordonians, Tennent's NL2

Stewart's Melville went into this game knowing that, as a result of their loss to Dumfries at Inverleith a fortnight before, they had very little margin of error if they wanted to stay in the National 2 promotion race. Anything less than 20 points from their remaining four games and they would start to rely on snookers (like GHK beating Dumfries at Park Farm on 2nd April) to get them over the line.

Saturday was glorious, the sun splitting the sky and with very little wind. As they had done against Dumfries, Stew Mel started on the front foot, a series of solid carries from James Ferguson, Danny Morrison and Kyle Henderson taking them deep into the Gordonians' half. Just as Stew Mel started to get excited, though, the move petered out as they knocked on and then conceded a penalty that allow the visitors to clear their lines.



Stewarts Melville RFC v Gordonians RFC, Tennent's National League – Div. 2, Inverleith, Edinburgh, 26th March 2022
Score – Stewarts Melville 33, Gordonians 10

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With eight minutes on the clock it was Gordonians' turn to attack, a stolen lineout allowing them to advance ominously towards the home line. The Stew Mel defence was solid, though, and the attack ended as the home team were awarded a penalty.

Stew Mel were forced to make an early change two minutes after that as Jamie McGurk went off injured, James Ferguson moving into the centre after making a rare start on the wing and Adam Greig taking up the wing berth.

Stew Mel finally got the scoreboard ticking over with fifteen minutes on the clock, the pack rumbling over in front of the posts at the Castle end. Willie Malcolm claimed the try and Euan Morrison added the points to give Stew Mel a 7-0 lead.



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With tails up Stew Mel continued to attack, Aaron Porteous making a fine break on the 20 minute mark then Chris Baikie doing the same five minutes later. Chris's break soon turned into a scoring opportunity, his 20 yard canter up the middle ending with a neat pass to Geoff Angco. A few more phases and Stew Mel were up to the Gordonian line where a pop pass to Ally Scott allowed him to breenge over from close range. Morrison missed the more difficult conversion but Stew Mel were still 12-0 up.

The third Stew Mel try came after 35 minutes, a great break by Scott ending with some fine team play and Henderson strolling in for the try. Morrison's conversion made it 19-0.

While the Stew Mel defence had been rock solid for most of the first half, they (almost literally) took their eye off the ball on the verge of half time, a knock on by Scott allowing

Gordonian flanker Daniel Brown to hack the ball into the home 22. Ferguson was back to cover but, rather unwisely, tried to scoop the bouncing ball up one handed. He didn't manage to do so, fumbling the ball so it could be kicked over the Stew Mel line. Gordonian winger Rory Riddell was on hand to dot down. That made it 19-5 at the break.



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Stew Mel didn't go into their shell after conceding a soft try and started the second half like they did the first, an excellent line out on the far side setting Adam Greig off on a searing break up the line. George Lee ran an excellent support line and gratefully received Adam's neat pass to score in the corner. An excellent try that was then followed by an excellent conversion, Morrison landing an absolute peach from the far touchline that stretched Stew Mel's lead to 26-5 with 45 minutes gone.

Stew Mel brought on the Bomb Squad fifteen minutes after that, Fraser Strachan, Max Hancock and Rory Anderson coming on to freshen things up.

Gordonians weren't done, despite the score line, and came close to scoring shortly after Stew Mel brought on the three subs, a fine kick to the corner at the south end of the stand leaving Angco in No Man's Land as the ball arced towards the onrushing Gordonian winger. The winger got to the ball but couldn't hang on to it, the knock on allowing Stew Mel to clear their lines.



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The next ten minutes were pretty scrappy as Stew Mel started to get a bit cocky, several promising moves ending in 'Hollywood' offloads that never seemed to find their intended target (if there even was an intended target!) Stew Mel finally managed to string a few phases together with 70

minutes on the clock, the ball moving through the hands from right to left inside the visitors' 22. It was Greig who took the scoring pass, straightening up to score in the clubhouse corner. Morrison landed his second peach of the day to take the score to 33-5 with barely 5 minutes left to play.

It is to Gordonians' credit that they made the most of those 5 minutes, a knock on in the home 22 leading to a tap penalty and a solid drive over by the Gordonian forwards. The unconverted try by lock Struan Robertson made the final score 33-10 to Stew Mel.

Five of the needed 20 points secured, then, so a decent day at the office.