

## Heriot's v Selkirk 01.10.2022

**SELKIRK defied what at times was their own death wish to claim four championship points after defeating a Heriot's side that richly deserved their losing bonus point and which judging by their performance in the middle section of the game look to be back in business.**

**Phil Smith**, the Heriot's Blues head coach, was disappointed but nevertheless chipper after watching his side challenge a Selkirk team which has already drawn with Hawick and beaten Glasgow Hawks this season.

"The best thing for us is that's really the first time [this season] that we felt we were in the game to the very end," he said. "We've had a tough few weeks against good opposition but now we're in a position where we think we can win games. We've got a couple of returning players, we've got a couple of youngsters getting used to this level, so we're in a good position despite the loss."

But in the end, and despite themselves, Selkirk were the victors, even if their performance lacked the composure shown earlier in this Premiership campaign. **Scott Wight**, the Selkirk head coach, hinted at a get-out-of-jail-card but modified his post-match summation by saying: "We're the kind of team that plays against ourselves; there were so many small decisions that could have proved costly."

"We were 7-3 up in the first half and we did have dominance in the set-piece. But we needed to kick on from there. They got into our 22 once and they scored from there just before half-time. We don't get many wins away from home, so to come away with victory and still be disappointed is brilliant," he concluded.

As a spectacle the match offered excitement throughout and not least in the final five minutes when Heriot's had two chances at goal to win the game. Selkirk could have been in a much safer position midway through the second half had they come away with a try from the best move of the match, only for the penultimate scoring pass to be correctly judged forward by referee **David Young**.

Overall Selkirk had the better of the forward exchanges but much of their handling and decision-making fell short of top drawer. But Selkirk are to be applauded for their attacking shape and for their work at the breakdown. Selkirk also used their bench intelligently, particularly bringing on **Andrew Grant-Suttie** in the second half during as the former Loretto player certainly made an impact at centre. Elsewhere in the Selkirk team **Aaron McColm** impressed in his first game back after a lengthy injury-enforced absence and his return should add spark to the his side's attack.

For their part Heriot's were second best for much of the first half, but their score just before the break seemed to imbue a new confidence going into the second half which translated into dangerous backline moves, albeit they were met with stiff defence. In the end, however, inaccuracy off the kicking tee proved costly for Heriot's.

Heriot's were the quicker off the mark, taking the lead with a third-minute penalty from veteran scrum-half **Graham Wilson** which seemed to evince a reply from the gods in the form seriously torrential rain that made conditions inhospitable for open rugby.

That is until McColm marked his return to rugby with a searing break after fielding a high kick, leading to a series of pile driving surges at the line, ending with Poland international

prop **Zenon Szwagrak** bundling his way over for a try, converted by the instigator of the score, McColm.

The dancing feet of McColm again created space for Selkirk and then when **Josh Welsh**'s kick was carried over by Heriot's, the visitors had opportunities to add to their points tally, only for their attempts to go awry.

Selkirk had looked likely to score again after putting together a fluent passage of play but a dropped pass and then a massive kick downfield by replacement **Charlie Simpson** followed by a crucial tackle by **Paul Christie** gave Heriot's a five-metre line-out, from which their forwards drove a try scored by hooker **Danny Dineen**, one of three Dineen brothers in the home line-up, with the conversion by Wilson giving the Goldenacre men a 10-7 half time advantage.

Buoyed by their 40th-minute score, Heriot's looked a much more confident team at the beginning of the second half and were rewarded for their more accurate play behind the scrum and a tighter forward effort with what was very much an artistic try – a pin-point accurate kick from stand-off **Dom Martin**, taken on the full by Simpson, who had the pace to outflank the defence.

Wilson missed the conversion attempt but the gap still left Selkirk needing to score twice to come back on terms with the Blues.

If Heriot's had profited from good fortune just before the interval then lady luck squared matters when after a bout of pin-ball, **Josh Welsh** gained possession before romping over for his side's second try, which the winger duly converted to bring Selkirk to within a point of Heriot's.

A penalty by Welsh gave Selkirk a two-point lead, setting up a nail-biting finish for both sides. The contest might have been decided when Heriot's were awarded a penalty 35 metres out only for Martin to pull his kick wide of the upright. The drama continued with a further penalty attempt, this time by the reinstated Wilson, a metre inside the Selkirk half.

The kick dropped short but even then Selkirk failed to clear but in a final scramble the home side knocked on and to the relief of Selkirk's players the referee called full-time.





