

Selkirk v Marr

SO, the race for the fourth spot in the play-offs is going to go down to the wire. Marr came back from a disastrous start to overcome an eight point deficit and in the end it took some brave defence from Selkirk to hold out for what could still be a crucial losing bonus point.

Both sides had their periods of dominance but Marr were able to harvest enough points when they were feeling the pressure to make all the difference in a game that realistically could have gone either way.

The delight in the Marr camp was obvious. After a few problem weeks earlier in the season they have given themselves a chance at the top four and know their fate is mostly in their own hands. They have two home games in the remaining three and though the league part of the season ends with them away at Currie, they could have the points in the bag by then.

Selkirk remain three points ahead of them, however, and if they can continue their remarkable unbeaten away run, can still frustrate the men from the West. For both sides there is still all to play for.



“Delighted with the win, a little disappointed that at the end we maybe should have kicked a penalty and denied them the [losing bonus] point but we dug deep,” said **Craig Redpath**, the Marr coach. “I think we were in the ascendancy for parts of the game but it was a case of taking a couple of chances and that made all the difference.

“We are delighted to still be in it with half a chance of the top four and that was the aim for this game. They have a tough couple of games but it depends on how everyone plays those games. Selkirk put a lot of energy out there and caused us a lot of problems. We live to fight another day, we will see what happens next week.”

It was undoubtedly frustrating for Selkirk, who started both halves with a bang but were left defending grimly in the final play to hang onto the point they did get from the game. Their pack was under pressure for large parts of the match and, as **Scott Wight**, the head coach, admitted later, there were long periods when they struggled to win possession.

“We really didn’t make the most of playing with the wind,” he added. “We maybe should have played a bit more than we did while they did well to kick a couple of penalties to keep themselves in it. For all that, there were long periods of the game where we couldn’t get the ball off them and that played a part.

“We probably played better in the second half against the wind than we did in the first half with it. Credit to the boys, though. That defensive effort at the end could be huge at the end of the season. We are still three points ahead of them so we still control our own destiny though we have not got the easiest of run-ins.”

They head for Currie next with Edinburgh Academicals to follow before finishing at home to Heriot’s Blues.

That means the key play from this match could turn out to be the last of the game when Marr were on the attack. They went for a tap-penalty from a position that would have been an easy kick for **Colin Sturgeon**, who had already landed eight points with two penalties and a conversion. **Archie Smeaton**, the No8, did make the line but the determined Selkirk defence stopped him grounding the ball and the game ended with the home side salvaging something from it.



The irony was that at the start of the game it had all looked so different. The fans had not even finished drifting out of the prematch lunch when **Ryan Cottrell** took advantage of a dozy start from Marr to slide through and put **Josh Welsh**, the wing, in for the opening score with seconds on the clock.

Aaron McColm, the fly half, soon added a penalty and Selkirk were cruising – at least as far as the scoreboard was concerned.

It was different on the pitch, though. There, their lead was anything but comfortable. Marr were dominating the scrums and using that to dominate field position despite the wind behind Selkirk. Two Sturgeon penalties resulted and the odds were in Marr’s favour when they were only two points down at the break.

The game swung again when the teams returned with Selkirk rejecting a kickable penalty and reaping the reward when the pack powered over from the resulting maul, **Andrew Cochrane**, the lock, claiming the try.



At last, Marr started to find their attacking groove and, with the pack laying a solid platform, it was a question of how they were going to make it all work for them. Selkirk resisted manfully but could do nothing as Marr laid siege to their line and eventually **Conor Bickerstaff**, the centre, found space to go over. With Sturgeon converting, the scores were level.

The Marr pressure continued and the reward came when they again went for the corner, and switched play across the field to drag the home defence out of position. Sturgeon spotted a gap on the left and a perfectly weighted cross-kick made it easy for **Scott Bickerstaff** to complete the brotherly scoring double.

That turned out to be that. Selkirk had a spell hunting the levelling score but couldn't make it pay. In the end it all came down to that last gasp defence to rescue something from the game.

Teams –

Selkirk: C Anderson; L Ferguson, R Cottrell, C Jackson, J Welsh; Aaron McColm (C), J Hamilton; L Pettie (C), J Bett, B Riddell, A Cochrane, C Turnbull, D Nicol, S McClymont, M Job. Subs: C Mackintosh, K Thomson, C Ward, E McVicar, C Easson.

Marr: C Inglis; J Jacobson, S Bickerstaff, C Bickerstaff, J Scott; C Sturgeon (C), G Baird; G Reid, S Clelland, C Miller, D Andrew, C Folan, F Grant, B Jardine, A Smeaton. Subs: C McMillan, A Acton, C Young, N Calder, G Beckwith.

Report from The Offside Line

Photos by Grant Kinghorn and David Nichol