

## Selkirk v Heriots

**CONTRASTING emotions at the end of a stirring game. For Heriot's Blues, jubilation as they came away with five points to save their season. For Selkirk, depression as they saved one of their worst performances of the campaign for when it really mattered. They are going to have to settle for fifth spot in the league while conquerors, who had gone into the game last in the Premiership, are safe from relegation.**

Fifth spot means the Borderers miss out on the play-offs and head coach **Scott Wight** signed off on his time Philiphaugh with one he would much rather forget. "We got in their 22 first play of the game but then it was penalty, penalty, penalty, yellow card and they score," he admitted. "Talk about a momentum shift from the word go.

"We never got going, we didn't deserve to win. It was really frustrating. We knew what we needed to do but that is done now. Our home form has been terrible all year, we just can't play here for some reason while we have only been beaten once away.

"It's not about me. It's about the squad, the players and the top four goal everyone had set. It is about Selkirk Rugby Club and the goal to get in the top four. Everyone is just gutted."

For Heriot's, emotions could not have been more different. They needed the result to save themselves and they did it. It had been hard in muddy conditions but when they were up against it, they found a way to win and that's what mattered for head coach **Phil Smith**.

"We played the conditions on the day really well," he pointed out. "We knew field position was crucial and we got there by hook or by crook. Maybe a few decisions went our way, though you can never be sure from the side, but we dominated a lot of the ball and did well with it.

"The line out was a big weapon and at the end we had the confidence to go for the corner and get the maul going to get a bonus point. In the end, it didn't matter but it might have if GHA had kicked another penalty and won at Hawick; then it would have been vital for us.

"It is good because the forwards worked really hard. They don't always get the recognition but they did really well. Everybody contributed across the team and now we can relax."



In muddy conditions and with the stakes so high, it is hard to pinpoint why Selkirk couldn't get their game going, though a lot had to do with the string of penalties against them from referee **Calum Worsley**, with Wight wondering if the sin ratio was really as lopsided as the penalty count made it look.

Part of it, however, was that the official was mainly rewarding the team in possession and when it mattered, that was Heriot's. Apart from a spell in the third quarter, they always struggled for the ball, partly on the back of a misfiring line out.

The opening score came after just five minutes when centre **Robert Kay** burst through some sloppy defence before finding **Rory Carmichael**, the fly-half, in support. He did the simple thing, drawing the final defender before sending the ball out to **Charlie Jupp** for the score, converted by **Graham Wilson**.

Worse still for the visitors, they lost scrum-half **Jack Hamilton** to a sin-bin for a dangerous tackle in the earlier play and it took some brave defence to hold out during that period with a men less as Heriot's pummelled their line.

Even back to 15, however, the mistakes kept coming and the Edinburgh side were able to keep the pressure on. They were close to scores a couple of times before **Charlie Simpson**, the full-back, and **Fraser Stanier**, the wing took them to within inches of the home line.

The forwards took over and when Wilson realised they had done enough to suck in the blindside defence, he put Stanier over for the second try. Wilson couldn't manage that conversion and also missed a later penalty shot, leaving everyone at the ground wondering if a 12-point lead at the break was enough reward for all their pressure.

That debate became even more forceful when a change of shirts and a change at scrum-half during the break seemed to revive Selkirk as an attacking force. Suddenly they were the team pummelling the opposition line while Heriot's were making mistakes and giving away penalties.

It did pay off for the home side as they kicked a penalty to touch, set up a maul and **James Bett** was at the back to touch down for their first try. **Craig Jackson** could not manage they conversion, but they looked set for a comeback.



Heriot's, however, had different ideas as they regrouped. A couple of penalties brought them within range and they set up a line-out maul. Though they were held just short, Selkirk could not stop prop **John Lascelles** powering over for the visitors' third try.

There was still plenty of time left but Heriot's were now in firm control, though they left it desperately late before claiming their bonus point try with the final play of the game. Another flurry of penalties gave them field position and the forwards did the rest with **Danny Dineen**, the hooker, the man to go over from the maul.

For both sides, it is now a case of building for next season. Selkirk will be under new management as **Michael Jafray** takes over from Wight, who is sure he has left the club in a stronger condition than he found it. "The new coaches will bring different things. We are in a better place than when I came in but the credit for that goes to all the management," he said.

For Smith, this season was all about bleeding some of the young players and now that that group knows what it takes to play in the Premiership, he reckons they can kick on again. "We are now in a position to attract the two or three players who are crucial for us to kick on," he said. "We have a ground of young men who now know what it takes to play at this level and if we can just bolt on a couple of others, we can kick on and maybe have a crack next season."

#### Teams –

**Selkirk:** R Cottrell; L Ferguson, C Easson, C Jackson, J Welsh; Aaron McColm (C), J Hamilton; L Pettie (C), J Bett, B Riddell, A Cochrane, C Turnbull, R Nixon, S McClymont, Andrew McColm. Subs: F Easson, C Mackintosh, J Head, C Ward, E McVicar.

**Heriot's Blues:** C Simpson; M Gray, O Quinn, R Kay (C), F Stanier; R Carmichael, G Wilson; M Bouab, D Dineen, J Lascelles, C Jupp, S Johnstone, M Hughes, S Wallace, A Johnston. Subs: I Hill, A Munro, M Keough, R Thomson, C Dineen.

Report by The Offside Line

Photographs by Grant Kinghorn