

Selkirk v Jedforest - 16.09.23

IN the nuclear industry they talk about neutron flux: today this was a points flux – the full tonne, in fact – in a bizarre match where the losers scored five tries but still lost by 30 points to a Selkirk side that at last found their mojo after a difficult start to the Premiership season.

You had to focus really hard on play to keep track of the tries, such was the pace of scoring that resulted in a rate of more than a point a minute, adding up to an entertaining spectacle. So often it is said of a game that defences were on top: not so at Philiphaugh where this game was all about playing attacking rugby, that certainly was to the liking of the home coach, **Gordon Henderson**, who watched his charges construct some excellent tries.

“We put some really good attacks together and the interplay between backs and forwards was excellent,” reflected Henderson. “We scored some good tries. Our work rate off the ball was better this week.

“Scoring 65 points is hard against any team and Jed defended well at times, but once we went through the phases we scored some good tries. The pleasing thing was that once we got into the right areas we scored.”

The win and especially by such a big margin certainly cheered the Philiphaugh faithful as Henderson acknowledged. He said: “It’s been a hard shift the last couple of weeks. We needed that win today – I said to the lads to take the emotion out of the local derby and to go out there and put a good performance in with high work rate and physicality.”

Selkirk can certainly congratulate themselves on many good aspects of their performance, and notably the desire to use run into space and move the ball rather than deploy bulldozer tactics. In which context No 8 **Andrew McColm** impressed with both his soft hands and his role as a link player.

Behind the scrum, Selkirk’s backline had a fluency which Jed manifestly lacked. The key to this was the centre pairing of **Andrew Grant-Suttie** and veteran **Ross Nixon**, the latter always on hand to offer guidance to young stand-off **Cameron Easson**, who posted a competent performance.



For Jed, there should have been joy at scoring five tries but conceding twice that number rather changed their complexion. Jed’s woes this season have not been helped by having little consistency

in the composition of their back division, affecting not only their attacking capability but more crucially their ability to contain the opposition

Jed's coach, **David Grieve**, was quick to concede this deficiency, saying: "The big problem for us today was our defence. It wasn't good enough, at the end of the day. We gave away some soft tries. It was just too easy for them at times. But it's fixable. Little tweaks here and there".

It was not all gloom for Jed, however. "We scored 35 points so we're not far away. At least it's our first championship point, and last season it took us four games to reach that mark," pointed out Grieve.

The tenor of the match was set in the opening minute when **Callum Anderson** raced in for the opening try to give Selkirk the early lead. An Easson penalty and then a Grant-Suttie try added to Selkirk's points tally but, meanwhile, Jed had shown their attacking prowess with an **Elliot Lauder** close-range effort followed by a touchdown from 17-year-old **Mark Glen** and then a **Clark Skeldon** score, all three converted by **Gary Munro** to put Jed into a 21-15 lead with 25 minutes played.



But then Selkirk scored a gem of a try made by Anderson's ability to pirouette out of the tackle followed by a link up with **Andrew McColm**. Fellow back-row **Scott McClymont** then worked a clever move round the front of a line-out to regain the lead and collect a bonus point for Selkirk before **Aaron McColm** finished off good work by **Josh Welsh** for a 32-21 half time lead.

Youngster **Finlay Wheelans** extended Selkirk's lead just after the break only for Jed to hit back with a Lauder touchdown for the bonus point. Selkirk countered with a try for prop **Jake Millburn** on his debut for the club and when Wheelans ran in for his second score Selkirk hit the half century.



Jed, however, found their way to score in reply, as **Robbie Shirra-Gibb** ran on to the ball at full pace before sprinting to the line, Munro making it five from five with the conversion.

Welsh then added to the Selkirk pile of points, amplified by a rather easy interception score from second row **Andrew McColm** to complete a sumptuous win for the Philiphaugh men.

Teams –

Selkirk: C Anderson; J Welsh, A Grant-Suttie, R Nixon, F Wheelans; C Easson, Aaron McColm; L Pettie, F Easson, J Millburn, A Cochrane, C Ward, D Nichol, S McClymont©, Andrew McColm. Subs: J Bett, C Turnbull, J Turnbull, A Penman, B Cullen.

Jed-Forest: M Glen; L Elder, L Walker, O Cranston, R Shirra-Gibb; G Munro, A Bambrick; R Briggs, J Ferguson, H Meadows, C Skeldon©, B Hope, D Wardrop, J Howe, B Roff. Subs: M Weekley, J Story, J Hynd, E Lauder, S Murdoch.

Report by The Offside Line

Photos by Grant Kinghorn