

Kelso v Selkirk 07.10.23

SELKIRK produced a gritty display to come back from a 12-point half-time deficit, misfiring line-out and blunt attack to stun Kelso in the final minute and give themselves a welcome leap away from the foot of the table.

Kelso had looked for all the world as the team in command in the first half, and when player-coach **Bruce McNeil** scored their third try at the end of the first half the large Poynder support enjoyed the half-time drinks with big smiles. When an early second half chance for **Robbie Tweedie** went a-begging, when the winger found himself in a 25-metre foot race to the line with Selkirk prop **Zen Szwagrzak**, only for his kick ahead to go off at a right angle into touch, they still laughed, clearly expecting more chances to come.

But they didn't, and instead the big left foot of Selkirk full-back **Callum Anderson** and inaccurate Kelso play served to pen the home side in their own half for most of the second half and hand the visitors the opportunity to steal it with a last-gasp try from man-of-the-match Anderson converted



by **Aaron McColm.**

Selkirk captain **Scott McClymont** admitted: "I think the pressure was on after the Musselburgh game, which we felt we let slip last week. It is still early in the season to have a big game, but we knew this one was because we needed a win to get us clear of Jed at the bottom.

"The first half wasn't good for us, so we said at half-time it was about digging in in the second half, winning the individual battles and playing the game in their half, and we did that, and got a reward.

"We're a lot of Selkirk boys and it's great to be part of, but even greater when you're winning, and that was a big win. We're looking forward now to Heriot's Blues back at Philiphaugh."

The Kelso skipper **Andy Tait** wore a stunned look at the finish and admitted it was a very depressed home dressing room.

"We felt in full control in the first half especially, but we just didn't take our chances," he said. "One more score would have sealed the game, and we just didn't go and get it. Credit to Selkirk they put us under pressure with their kicking in the second half, and they worked hard, but we

then went a bit away from the game-plan and a few errors let them into the game, so we're frustrated with ourselves.

"We knew Selkirk, and that even if we got that bonus point try, they're a team that never go away, and it showed today as they managed to steal it at the death. That's a key difference to playing in the Premiership and National One – at this level if you're not set early and in your shape you're punished. It's fine margins, and teams exploit errors at this level, but we have a lot of young lads and we will learn from this and come back stronger."

These sides came into this derby off the back of disappointing defeats, away to Marr and home to Musselburgh, respectively, and so desperate for the points that would draw them into mid-table, away from the reaches of a relegation battle.

Kelso took a firm grip of the game in the first 20 minutes, tight-head **Terry Logan** giving the home scrum a solid anchor and the home line-out providing sure ball from middle and the tail. **Dwain Patterson** is an impressive rugby player and, back at stand-off after recent outings at full-back, his ability to kick long distances and exploit space gave the Selkirk defence the runaround throughout the half.

It was Patterson who opened the scoring after just five minutes when, from a concerted period of attack in the visitors' 22 he spotted a gap and darted through from 15 metres out. He converted and the hosts looked to have scored again three minutes later when rangy openside **Murray Woodcock** showed his pace to chase Tait's chip to the Selkirk line, but referee **Michael Todd** decided Selkirk defender just got there first.

Kelso stole several Selkirk line-outs early on, but when lock Turnbull claimed a throw after 24 minutes he showed how dangerous the Souters can be, exploiting Kelso infringements to build a good attack and the lock diving over, McColm converting to level the scores.



Kelso continued to dominate but their play was becoming more ragged and it took a bit of individual brilliance from young full-back **Archie Barbour**, who sprinted away on the left chipped the last defender and won the race to touch down, Patterson converting to restore the seven-point lead on the half-hour mark.

Kelso finished the half strongly with strong lineout play and Patterson kicks to touch for penalties, and made it count when McNeil dotted down after a maul to the visitors' line, Patterson's conversion from wide right just drifting wide ,for a 19-7 lead.

A key moment came early in the second half when Kelso's bright start seemed set to land a bonus point try, and probably seal the game, when Barbour's kick was chased down by Tweedie but his sclafted kick into touch – the ball was bouncing awkwardly and it was very wet, to be fair – killed that chance.

From that point on, Selkirk grew into the game with full-back Anderson sending towering kicks deep into the home half, with Aaron McColm and centre **Andrew Grant-Suttie** making good breaks to ask questions of the home defence, earning their reward when Turnbull scored.



Selkirk continued to dominate, and though Kelso's defence stood firm for the most part, the loss of Tweedie to a yellow card capped a growing penalty count, and the visitors stole it at the death through Anderson, after fine running by **Josh Welsh**. McColm adding the winning points with a cool conversion.



A huge roar and pitch invasion from the Selkirk support and groans loud enough to wake the dead from the Kelso faithful summed up the joy and heartache of another engrossing Border derby.

Kelso: A Barbour; H Tweedie, J Thompson, F Robson, R Tweedie; D Patterson, A Tait; G Shiells, C Marshall, T Logan, C Brown, K Melbourne, L Tait, M Woodcock, B McNeil. **Subs:** E Knox, J Glendinning, M Hastie.

Selkirk: C Anderson; B Pickles, J Welsh, A Grant-Suttie, F Wheelans; R Nixon, Aaron McColm; L Pettie, B Riddell, Z Szwagrzak, A Cochrane, C Turnbull, J Turnbull, S McClymon, Andrew McColm. **Subs:** F Easson, J Millburn, C Ward, B Cullen, R Legge

Report by The Offside Line
Photos by Grant Kinghorn