

Hawick v Selkirk 28.10.23

A QUARTET of tries late in the second half at Mansfield Park gave Hawick a bonus point win over their Border rivals, Selkirk, in a derby match that produced few points before the break and which threatened to go the way of the visitors just after the interval.

But, aided by two yellow cards shown to Selkirk players, **James Bett** and **Ben Pickles**, and boosted by the appearance off the bench of **Lee Armstrong** and **Dalton Redpath**, Hawick showed their pedigree in the last twelve minutes with effective handling rugby that earned the Greens the bonus point with a try to spare and, as it turned out, a return to the top of the Premiership table.



Before their New Zealand style flourish towards the end of the game, Hawick were hauled out of a deficit situation by three penalty goals from **Kirk Ford**, the full-back also showing his extensive skillset in playing a key part in the plethora of points scored by the Greens in their crushing finish.

Hawick's coach, **Matty Douglas**, admitted that the visiting team had posed his side problems for much of the game. "To about 60 minutes, Selkirk frustrated us," he said. "They stayed in the fight very well and we just didn't take our chances. We made a couple of changes [in the second half] and I thought the rugby we played in the last 15 minutes was unbelievable. That's what we're about – but can we do that for longer periods in the game?"

Speaking about the impact of his subs, Douglas commented: "Lee Armstrong made a difference when he came on. He takes the ball to the line and his footwork is so good. He brings **Andrew Mitchell** into the game. For the 30 minutes he played I thought he was

outstanding. And then to have Dalton [Redpath] come on and give us stability in the line-out was what we needed.



“Selkirk frustrated us but I always thought we had an extra gear to go to. And some of the tries in the last 15 minutes were quality. But we had to dig in.”

The fact that Hawick were contained for much of the match gave some satisfaction to the visitors' coach, **Gordon Henderson**. “The game-plan was about keeping possession, kicking intelligently and frustrating Hawick,” he revealed.

“We made two crucial errors in the second half and they scored 14 points when we were down to 13 men. Also our set-piece, especially the line-out, didn't function well until we made changes in the second half. But Hawick are a good side. They've been together for a long time and it's very hard for a side to come here.”

Hawick made it look as though it would be business as usual at Mansfield Park when taking the lead through a close-range try by **Connor Sutherland**, converted by Ford but thereafter in the opening quarter Selkirk dominated territory but were unable to convert this advantage into points until scrum-half **Hugo Alderson** kicked a 45 metre penalty kick.



The Greens were then dealt a blow early in the second half when Selkirk wing **Ben Pickles** followed up his own high kick from near his own line to regain possession and send **Andrew Grant-Suttie** on course for a spectacular try to give the visitors the lead for the first and, as it proved, only time in the game.

Hawick reacted by turning the screw especially at scrum time, the pressure resulting in three penalty goals by Ford to put the Greens two scores clear.

Then with Selkirk down a player, Armstrong showed his skill in midfield to help create a try for wing **Morgan Tait**. Shortly afterwards, Pickles joined Bett in the sin-bin, making progress easier for Hawick who grabbed a third try when Ford finished off crisp handling from a tap penalty.

With the clock running down towards full-time, Hawick needed a further try for the bonus point and it was Mitchell who duly obliged after Armstrong had cut open the Selkirk defence with clever footwork.

And that appeared to be job done, only for the Greens to satisfy further their appetite for the running game with a final handling move that ended with Tait completing his brace and Hawick feeling a lot better about themselves than was apparent at earlier stages in the match.



Teams –

Hawick: K Ford; M Tait, C Welsh, A Mitchell, O Gray; K Brunton, G Welsh; S Muir©, F Renwick, N Little, H Donaldson, C Sutherland, S Graham, C Renwick, J Linton. Subs: R Anderson, T Hope, D Redpath, D Lightfoot, L Armstrong.

Selkirk: C Anderson; B Pickles, A Grant-Suttie, R Nixon, J Welsh; Aaron McColm, H Alderson; L Pettie, B Riddell, Z Szwagrzak, C Turnbull, A Cochrane, L Cassidy, S McClymont©, Andrew McColm. Subs: F Easson, J Millburn, S Clark, J Bett, B Cullen.

Report by The Offside Line

Photos by Grant Kinghorn