

## It's promotion for West of Scotland Ladies

### Kelso Ladies 10 West of Scotland Ladies 35.

A perfect league campaign has seen West of Scotland Ladies achieve their target for the season of promotion to the National Division. They had already been crowned West Division champions, winning every match with a try bonus point in a division that saw them face the ladies of Ardrossan Academicals, Biggar, Greenock Wanderers, Hamilton and Wigtownshire. An early season win at Greenock was a huge confidence booster having been well beaten in a cup match at Fort Matilda last season. Although they went behind early on, they quickly hit back and a fine performance saw a comfortable victory, running in a number of tries in the process. This set the pattern for the season with free-flowing rugby being responsible for a number of substantial victories.



Last week, in pouring rain, the West girls faced the North Division champions, Shetland, in the play-off semi-final. The visitors had had a fourteen hours ferry trip followed by a coach journey from Aberdeen. They battled gamely but West made light of the dreadful conditions and ran out comfortable winners.

East Division champions Kelso defeated Glasgow University in the other semi-final, the University girls having finished bottom of the National Division. The Borderers drew home advantage for the play-off final so West Ladies headed south to Poynder Park on Sunday.

The pitch was soft but overhead conditions were fine, dry and no more than a gentle breeze blowing. West had a number of fans in support, giving full backing throughout.

It was clear from the start that the home side's greater size would give them an advantage. Could the lighter but pacier West girls defend well enough to keep the match close until their undoubted superior fitness took over?

An early try gave West a boost but Kelso quickly hit back with two tries of their own. All three tries were unconverted. For most of the rest of the half, it was strong West defence versus the powerful Kelso forwards. The Burnbrae wall was not breached again and with a few minutes to go to half-time, the home side led 10-5. West were awarded a penalty in the home 22, almost directly in front of the posts. No matter where a penalty is awarded, the West girls usually run it. This, though, was a winner takes all match. Prosaic rather than poetic was the order of the day. The penalty was kicked and at half-time, West trailed by two points.

Not long into the second half, West moved into an 11-10 lead after another successful kick at goal. The Kelso forwards continued to drive but it became clear they were tiring. West

began to win more clean ball and began to make more breaks than tackles. An unconverted try put them 16-10 ahead, a good position but Kelso only a converted try from moving ahead. More excellent West defence weakened the strength and resolve of the hosts and West began to dominate. Three late tries, two of them converted, saw West deserved but certainly not comfortable winners. The 10-35 scoreline was rather unfair on a hard-working Kelso side. No matter the margin, though, the outcome was the same. West of Scotland Ladies will play in the National Division next season.



The Ladies, having achieved their goal of promotion, can now look forward to cup rugby after the festive season. The cup draws have still to be made.