

Important Win for West Ladies

The Women's National League is clearly going to be one of the most contested in Scottish rugby this season so it was vital West of Scotland Ladies collected maximum points from their visit to Broughton Ladies on Sunday. A good performance saw them do just that, their 27-13 victory, scoring five tries in the process, saw the Burnbrae side return with five points.

With some new faces in the line-up and led by the two newly appointed joint captains, Emily Irving and Amanda Watson, West took to the Wardie pitch expecting the usual tough battle with the Edinburgh side. That is exactly what they got from the kick-off. The home side, favoured by a stiffish breeze, dominated from the outset. West simply could not clear their 22. After just five minutes, they found themselves behind. From a scrum about fifteen metres from the visitors' line, centre Helen Lyon found it all too easy to break some weak defence to score. There was more concern almost immediately for West when Irving sustained an arm injury. She was able to continue after the arm was strapped up. Five minutes after going behind, West drew level. After a quickly taken tapped penalty, lock Ciera Campbell went over to record her first try for West.

The game got rather untidy with handling errors on both sides and West falling foul of the referee on several occasions. These penalties gave Broughton attacking opportunities while at the other end, they halted a number of West moves. A "team yellow" did look on the cards and it was scrum half Katie Watson who received it for persistent infringing by the West players. This was after twenty-five minutes. Within a couple of minutes, we had what was probably the turning point of the game. From a line-out a few metres from the West line, the Broughton pack drove and looked sure to score. For phase after phase, they powered forward but were met by a solid red and yellow wall. That superb defence got its reward, they turned the ball over and cleared their lines. Within a couple of minutes, West were ahead and again it was from a tapped penalty. This time it was centre Jade Scott who was on hand to take possession and score. From the restart, hooker Hannah Foster-Rain took the ball and made one of her typical powerful thrusts into opposition territory. Openside Nikki Simpson provided support before No 8 Alex Love (the former Miss Watson) took Simpson's pass to open her account for the season. Down to fourteen players and looking in trouble, West suddenly had a ten points lead before the banished Watson rejoined her colleagues in time for the interval.

Ten points is not a big lead when you have to play uphill in the second half at Wardie. Continuing to concede penalties does not help the cause and withing five minutes, stand off Lorna Murdoch had narrowed the gap to seven with a simple kick from in front of goal. It was West, though, who would score next, after fifty minutes, and it began from an unlikely source, in a most unlikely fashion. Tight head Tash Burge's one handed pass, like Campbell's try, her first in a West shirt, gave possession to left wing, Aimee Watson. Watson had looked sharp throughout and her break made good ground before finding Paterson in support. The joint captain's dummy of the full back gave her just enough time and space to beat the covering defence to touch down with replacement Ash Blair, up in support, "sitting on the ball just to make sure". It also made sure of the try bonus point. Stand off Alexa Smith's successful conversion took West's lead to fourteen points. Within four minutes, the

gap was nineteen points and victory almost secure. For the third time, West took full advantage of a penalty in the Broughton 22. Foster-Rain finished off a powerful drive by the pack to score. West came close on the hour mark to what would have been a fine team try with excellent link play between forwards and backs but the referee decided the final pass was forward. A minute later, winger Watson was held up just short of the Broughton line after an excellent break by Simpson. Broughton did score again through Caroline Billard. Almost on time, they did threaten another break but two fine tackles by Eilidh Power and Amber Johnston put a halt to it.

It is always good to leave Wardie with five points. A good start to the season for the West girls with hard work in training to look forward to.

West of Scotland Ladies: Amber Johnston; Kimberley Toland, Jade Scott, Emily Irving, Aimee Watson; Alex Smith, Katie Watson; Amy McHenry, Hannah Foster-Rain, Natasha Burge; Ciera Campbell, Louise Wilson; Amanda Paterson, Nikki Simpson, Alex Watson.
Replacements: Ashley Blair, Vanessa Reid-Phelps, Lindsey McDiarmid, Caitlin Reilly, Eilidh Power.