

So Close for West

West Ladies were still missing a number of familiar faces as they lined up to face Ayr Ladies on a dismal Sunday afternoon at Burnbrae. The opening stages saw home full-back Eilidh Power put in two typically crunching tackles. The first saw Ayr No 8 Joanne Jones halted in her tracks when one-on-one with Power. This was followed almost immediately with left wing Lauren Finnie carried well into touch to end another try-scoring opportunity. The West injury jinx took only ten minutes to kick-in with stand-off Alexa Smith having to leave the park after taking a blow to the face. The versatile Caitlin Reilly replaced her. It took until the mid-point of the half before the first points were scored. It was West who would go ahead. A quickly taken tap penalty five metres from the Ayr line saw the pack drive with open-side Hannah Foster-Rain going over. It took Ayr fifteen minutes to draw level. Not for the first time, West were penalised for offside. Stand-off Lauren McBride was quick to react and touched down. Catherine Shennan's successful conversion put the Millbrae side ahead. It looked as if they would hold that advantage at the break but in the last move of the half, Power was on hand to finish off a fine passing move and give West a 10-7 lead.

Four minutes after the restart, Foster-Rain's second try extended West's lead. A feature of the West performance was the number of times hooker Rachel Morrison intercepted Ayr ball. This time, she gathered and made forty metres. Her open-side was in support to take the ball and score. Four minutes later, West were in a strong position when No 8 Alex Love touched down after good support play and driving by the forwards.

Ayr were soon back into the game with Robynn Gibson scoring from a five metres scrum. West still led 22-12. It was soon 22-19. Just past the hour mark, after another offside penalty against West, Ayr recycled possession before Jones crossed the line. Shennan's conversion closed the gap further. Ayr eventually went ahead with just eight minutes left, Caitlin McNamara picking up and driving over from a five metres scrum. Shennan was again successful with the conversion to leave a final score of West of Scotland Ladies 22 Ayr Ladies 26.

It was a disappointing defeat for the Burnbrae side, particularly after having led for so long. The consolations were the try bonus and losing bonus points and seeing some players return after injury. On Sunday, Broughton visit Burnbrae with a two o'clock kick-off.

West: Eilidh Power; Tiia Stevenson-Cook, Jade Scott, Emily Irving (C), Rowan Todd; Alexa Smith, Katherine Wilson; Natasha Burge, Rachel Morrison, Vanessa Reid-Phelps; Ciera Campbell, Amy McHenry; Amanda Paterson (C), Hannah Foster-Rain, Alex Love.
Replacements: Shona Garry, Ashley Blair, Louise Skilling, Caitlin Reilly, Aimee Watson.