

Harsh Lesson for West Youngsters

Boroughmuir 63 West of Scotland 21

At full-strength, facing Boroughmuir at Meggatland would have been a tough battle for West of Scotland. It would prove to be a step beyond that for a side that was missing so many experienced forwards. Three of this year's U-18 side and three of last year's were in the pack. They included Elliot Weir making his debut and Calum Beckers starting for the first time. Every one of them gave their all, with a scoreline that certainly did not reflect their performance. Two three-try bursts, one in a ten minute period just after the interval and another in the last five minutes of the match gave a somewhat unfair reflection of matters.

West kicked-off in blustery conditions with the slight advantage of what was more a crosswind rather than diagonal. The early scrums were an indication that the home side would have an advantage in that aspect of the game and, indeed, it was from a West feed ten metres from their own line that Boroughmuir went ahead in the fourth minute. They drove the West pack backwards with scrum-half Jack Hamilton picking up the loose ball to score. Stand-off Iain Martin converted, his first in a superb display of goal-kicking.



Boroughmuir dominated the opening quarter but the West defence was solid. As an attacking force, though, they were almost non-existent. Callum McCormack's break to the Boroughmuir 22 was the only time the home line had been threatened. Possession, though, was turned over. After twenty-three minutes Boroughmuir extended their lead in a manner not dissimilar to their first try. It was their own feed on this occasion but

the result was the same. They drove the West pack back to their own line before blindside Greg Alexander picked up to score with ease. Martin added the extras.

West then had their best spell of the game. On the half-hour, quick ball from a scrum fifteen metres out saw them go left with space created for McCormack to round his man and score. Lewis Howick's successful conversion brought West within a score of their opponents. Five minutes later, the sides were level. Gareth Hopkins' grubber kick was hacked on by Howick with the full-back winning the chase to touch down. He was again successful from the tee.

Almost on half-time, Boroughmuir moved in front again. West seemed to be most unfortunate to be penalised for a high tackle close to their own line. The hosts elected to take the scrum. Quick ball saw Hamilton release Martin before left wing Lewis Veitch came

off his wing to take the pass and score. Martin's kick made it Boroughmuir 21 West of Scotland 14 at the interval. There was no question the home side deserved to lead.

The opening minutes of the second period were fairly evenly balanced. The game, though, was won and lost in a ten minutes spell from the fiftieth minute. Full-back Patrick Atkinson was the man who decided matters with a hat-trick of tries, all converted by Martin. Atkinson's took Hamilton's pass from a ruck on the West line to record his first try before breaking some disappointing West tackling to score again. His hat-trick was a fine team try, excellent support play between backs and forwards before Atkinson went over in the corner.



With six minutes left, Donald Morrison's try from a tap penalty gave West hope of a try bonus, Howick again converting. It was Boroughmuir, though, who were sparked back into action with three converted tries in the final five minutes. Veitch collected loose ball in the West 22 and crossed with ease before openside Strath Mackenzie ran through a tiring defence to add his name to the scoresheet. The scoring was rounded off by Mackenzie after more good support play. Martin's conversion was his ninth successful kick from nine attempts. A remarkable display of goal-kicking in far from ideal conditions. West's Howick had kicked all three of his chances from the tee.

A fixture fulfilled, good experience of adult rugby for the youngsters. With Scotland playing France at Murrayfield on Saturday, it will be 18 February before West play again. They will travel to Cupar to face Howe of Fife.