

## **Ayr Ladies 19 West of Scotland Ladies 53**

It is doubtful if the West Ladies could have had a tougher introduction to National League rugby. Ayr Ladies had played the 2019/20 season in the Premiership but had elected to drop down a division. West, though, travelled to Millbrae in their usual high confidence.

Ayr took the lead after only ninety seconds, impressive outside centre Robyn Gibson breaking with pace after good work by her forwards. Catherine Shennan added the conversion. West were quickly back in it with Eilidh Power scoring in the corner. Their joy lasted but two minutes as Ayr winger Wilson got her side's second try of the evening. It went unconverted but Shennan was successful a few minutes later when Gibson got her second try.

With less than a quarter of an hour played and West 5-19 behind, it looked bleak for the visitors. Another Ayr try would give them a bonus point and possibly seal the match. But these thoughts were not in the minds of the Burnbrae side. For the next fifteen minutes, the West forwards battled hard and gradually won the ascendancy over their opponents. Just before the half-hour mark, Alex Watson got her first score of the evening. The gap was down to nine points and West were right back in the game. A minute from the interval, the pack drove to the Ayr line and Niamh Farrell did what all good tight head props do in such circumstances, she got the ball over the line and down. The referee's whistle blew with the score Ayr 19 West of Scotland 15. It was a scoreline no one could have envisaged after fifteen minutes.

The second half was one of total domination by the West pack, providing plenty of ball for their speedy backs. Ayr could not deal with the pace and superior fitness of the West girls once the visitors went ahead. No 8 Erin Foley got the try to do just that, Emily Irving adding the extra points. Power then completed her hat-trick with two scores in quick succession, the second of which was converted by Irving. West now, remarkably, led by 34-19 and it was clear there was no way back for Ayr. All they could hope for was a fourth try and a bonus point. At no time did they look like getting it. In fact, matters only got worse for the home side. Having been penalised on a number of occasions for high tackles, it was inevitable the next one would see a yellow card. It duly arrived with open side Hazel McMillan sent to the sin bin.

West took full advantage of their opponents being a player down. Three tries were scored in the last five minutes by Alexa Smith, Watson, a solo run from about forty-five metres, and Ellie Williamson. The first two were converted by Irving. The referee blew for no side with a scoreline of Ayr Ladies 19 West of Scotland Ladies 53.

The reaction of players and coaching staff at the end of the game showed just how important this victory was. After two games of the new season, West have the maximum ten points, Kelso having failed to fulfil last week's fixture with West. Their next game is a week on Sunday, 19 September. Annan Ladies will visit Burnbrae. As well as league points being at stake, the West girls will be looking for revenge over the only side to defeat them in the 2019/20 season. Please do come along and support West Ladies. They are always entertaining!