

First Defeat for West Ladies

West of Scotland Ladies fell to their first defeat of the season at Garioch on Sunday. The Aberdeenshire side's 35-10 victory was fully deserved and took them to the top of the National League table, four points clear of West.

With a number of regulars missing, it was always going to be a tough battle for the visitors. They got off to the worst possible start, losing flanker Fi Gassner to a head knock after only two minutes. Anna Campbell was her replacement. Almost immediately, Garioch got their first try of the afternoon, quickly followed by a second in the seventh minute. Both tries were converted.

These early blows would have finished the afternoon for most teams but West are a resilient lot. They knuckled down and were rewarded when skipper Amanda Paterson battled her way over the Garioch line in the fifteenth minute. It was a more even game now with the pack dominating the set scrum. After twenty-six minutes, though, Garioch moved further ahead when they got their third try after what looked like a knock-on. In such close contact, it is impossible for a referee to see everything. Again the conversion followed and Garioch took a 21-5 lead into half-time.

West's ill-luck continued ten minutes into the second half when strong running centre Bex Francis sustained a serious ankle injury and was forced to leave the game. This meant a rejigging of the back line with Aimee Watson moving to full back and Jade Scott to outside centre. It was clearly going to be a backs to the wall fight for the Milngavie side but they defended brilliantly until their hosts secured their try bonus point with just ten minutes left. They scored again five minutes later, again with a hint of a knock-on. Both tries were converted. West got their reward for eighty minutes of sheer graft when Pamela Duffy scored in the corner in the last move of the game.

West were well beaten on the day but coach Lindsey Smith must have been happy with the commitment shown by the squad. Some of them have seen little action this season but they gave their all. Next Sunday, West are away from home again. It is a much shorter trip this time, to Edinburgh to face Broughton on the Wardie slope.

This was the first post-pandemic bus trip. It was no different from those that had gone before. With one exception. No more screams from the coach of, "Will you all shut up. I have to finish this essay for the morning." She is now a Master of all she surveys.

Team: Jade Scott; Hayley Murray, Bex Francis, Rachael Millar, Emma McFarlane; Alexa Smith, Katharine Wilson; Natasha Burge, Hannah Foster-Rain, Erin Hendry-Giles; Ellie Williamson, Ciera Campbell; Amanda Paterson (C), Fiona Gassner, Erin Foley.

Replacements: Pamela Duffy, Ashley Blair, Anna Campbell, Aimee Watson, Emily Irving.