

It's Last Gasp West!

In a remarkable last four minutes at the North Inch, West of Scotland overturned an eight points deficit to secure their fourth successive league win and take them into second place in the table. Aaron Purewal's try and Owen Hourston's successful conversion had narrowed the gap to one point. With the match almost at an end and Perthshire camped on the visitors' line, it looked as though the Burnbrae men would have to settle for the losing bonus point for finishing within seven points of the home side. West, somehow, turned the ball over. From their own line, it seemed every man in a West shirt handled the ball and made ground before Drew Reddie was left to sprint in from twenty metres. Hourston's successful kick was followed by the referee's whistle for no side. It sparked such a contrast in emotions on and off the park. The jubilation of the West players and their travelling support, the despair and disbelief of the home team and fans.



West kicked off in perfect overhead conditions, the going good to soft. Within three minutes they found themselves seven points behind. A fairly aimless cross-kick bounced perfectly for left wing Jay Pettie to kick ahead. He followed up to score, leaving a simple conversion for Calum Bruce. Combined work by forwards and backs saw West draw within two points in the sixteenth minute. West took possession from a line-out five metres from the Perthshire line. Quick ball saw centre Iestyn Humphreys score.

It was a fast-paced game of contrasting styles with West looking to use their backs, their opponents favouring the forwards. It was loose-head prop Kyle Mackinnon who increased the home side's advantage just before half-time. Five metres line-out, catch and drive, full over line. All very simple, all very difficult to defend. Bruce's conversion made it 14-5 to Perthshire at half-time.

West got off to the worst possible start to the second half with a try that will give the coaching staff nightmares. Right wing Ross Goodson broke through a number of weak attempts at tackles to score in the corner. West's response was immediate. After a superb break by Grady Slater, supported by John Vasconcelos and Marc Zoma, Perthshire were penalised ten metres from their line. Skipper Scott Cochrane took a tap and fast hands saw winger Callum McCormack score. Five minutes later, veteran full back Alex Fiskien looked sure to narrow the gap even further but instead of carrying on to the line, he looked to offload to a supporting runner and the chance was lost. A minute later West did score, Rory Cuthbertson timing and angling his run perfectly to take the ball and go over from a scrum close to the home line. It was now 19-17 to Perthshire, a lead they soon increased with another score that would have infuriated the West coaches. Pettie kicked into the West half. It landed between two West players and sat up perfectly for the Perthshire man. He was brought down just short of the West line but from the subsequent ruck, Angus Walker went over.

The pace of the game did not let up. On the hour mark, the West forwards turned the ball over on the home 22 and Fisken came into the line to score. Nicholson converted. All square at 24 all. A Bruce penalty followed by Pettie's second try of the game quickly gave Perthshire an eight points lead with just over ten minutes to go. They looked to be closing out the game until that remarkable last four minutes. It was a victory West probably just deserved as they played the better rugby but their hosts certainly deserved their two bonus points.



On Saturday, the top two in the league clash when Lasswade visit Burnbrae. Kick-off is three o'clock.

West of Scotland: Alexander Fisken; Callum McCormack, Iestyn Humphreys, Rory Cuthbertson, Aaron Purewal; Dru Nicholson, Jamie Carruth; Andrew Love, Connor Moran-Smith, Jordan Mitchell, Scott Cochrane (C), Craig Simpson, Marc Zoma, Donald Morrison, John Vasconcelos.

Replacements: Gareth Craig, Drew Reddit, Owen Hourston, Grady Slater.