

West of Scotland 16, Lasswade 41.

Not for the first time this season, it was a depleted West of Scotland side that took the field. A complete front row was missing due to injury or unavailability. The visitors were Lasswade, a side very much in the promotion chase.

With the main pitch at Burnbrae having suffered like almost all others throughout the country from the heavy rain, the match was switched to the 4G surface. West kicked-off with good underfoot conditions but in rain. The near motionless treetops confirmed the absence of any wind that would give either side an advantage.



West started well, with the visitors unable to leave their 22. West moved into the lead in the fifth minute, Dru Nicholson converting a penalty from twenty metres, the ball striking the left post on its way over. The penalty had been awarded when the Lasswade front row stood up in a scrum. The West pack would continue to give their opponents an uncomfortable afternoon in the set piece. 3-0 West.

The match was evenly contested for the next ten minutes or so until Lasswade were awarded a penalty just inside the West half. Stephen Hunter took a quick tap and with the West defence having switched off, no doubt expecting a kick to touch, he made good ground before feeding his supporting scrum half Russell Gladstone. He had the simple task of touching the ball down to give his side the lead. The lead was increased to four points with Matthew Smith's conversion. 3-7 Lasswade. Two minutes later, West came back to within a point after Nicholson converted his second penalty kick of the afternoon, from about the same distance after offside against the visitors. 6-7 Lasswade.

It didn't take long for Lasswade to move further ahead again with the best try of the afternoon. A scrum inside the West 22 saw the impressive Blair Smith time and angle his run perfectly to go over under the posts. An easy conversion for his namesake Matthew. 6-14 Lasswade.

West continued to battle and were rewarded just short of the half hour mark when Lasswade went over at a ruck, about thirty-five metres out. Nicholson put over his third penalty of the afternoon. 9-14 Lasswade.

As in the first meeting of the sides earlier in the season, the Lasswade backs looked sharp but their forwards got the next try, driving into the West 22 before hooker Darren Tiffney claimed the score. For the third time, Matthew Smith ensured full reward. 9-21 Lasswade. A few minutes later, on the half-time whistle, the visitors secured their try bonus point and almost certainly the win when again following a tap penalty in the West 22, they scored. Dale Robertson was the man who got the try this time. Matthew Smith made it four out of four with the conversion. Half-time and Lasswade led 9-28.

Nineteen points behind, West's hopes were more or less ended when the wind got up, in Lasswade's favour. They did, though, make an excellent start to the second half. Lasswade lost possession just inside their own half. The ball was kicked ahead by the alert Martin Wallace. He was first to the ball just short of the visitors' line. From the ruck, Scott Cochrane picked up to go over in the corner. Nicholson slotted his best kick of the day to make it 16-28 Lasswade.

With only two scores in it, West battled hard until just before the hour mark when Lasswade were awarded a penalty about thirty-five metres out. With the try bonus point already gained but the match still to be won, they took the sensible decision to kick for goal. Matthew Smith duly converted to put his side three scores ahead at 16-31.

With seven minutes to go, Lasswade's replacement wing Lucas Orsi, on his debut, made the game finally secure with a fine try in the corner. Another successful conversion. 16-38 Lasswade. In the last minute, Matthew Smith brought his points tally for the afternoon to sixteen with a successful penalty. No Side, West of Scotland 16 Lasswade 41.

A deserved win by a good Lasswade side that will be in the promotion hunt until the end of the season. A battling performance by West, particularly when facing the elements in the second half.

Next Saturday, West visit Carrick, a vital match. On Sunday, West of Scotland Ladies will be at Poynder Park, Kelso for the second time this season hoping to repeat December's promotion decider victory, this time in the National Plate,

