

Likely West Ladies Will Miss Out

It looks like is not going to be successive promotions for West of Scotland Ladies. Despite a superb season, defeat to Stewartry Sirens at Castle Douglas on Sunday takes it out of the Burnbrae side's own hands. Stewartry will travel to Inverurie to face Garioch in the play-off for promotion to the Premiership if they take at least two points their remaining game, at home to Ayr. Ironically, West gave the previously unbeaten Garioch their first defeat of the season last week.

The journey to the south west had seen rain, hail, sleet and snow so it was no surprise to find a very heavy playing surface at Greenlaw. The West line-up was missing some familiar faces. These included their two very promising, first choice locks Erinn Foley and Ellie Williamson. Both were taking part in the Scotland Futures trials at Murrayfield. The versatile and ever reliant Anna Campbell took one of the second row berths with Amanda Paterson moving forward. Hannah Foster-Rain took the No 6 shirt.

West had the advantage of the strong wind at kick-off. It was imperative the Burnbrae side got points on the board in the first half. They began the game looking as if they would do exactly that. The forwards were providing good possession, the backs' handling was good in the appalling conditions. It seemed West had got due reward for their efforts in the tenth minute when left wing Aimee Watson went over in the corner. The referee, though, ruled the ball had been held up. Two minutes later, he made the same decision after hooker Rachel Morrison had got over the line after a forward drive.

West dominated for the opening twenty minutes but just could not get points on the scoreboard. The home pack began to come into the game without threatening the West line. It took a piece of individual skill from Stewartry's Chloe Johnstone to see the first points scored, running in from forty metres. Lisa Ritchie converted. The stand off would have an impressive afternoon with the boot in what were dreadful conditions for kickers. Half-time came with that goal separating the sides.

West knew it would be a real battle in the second half, facing the wind and a side who were not unused to the conditions. Within seven minutes, their task had become one of Sisyphean proportions when Clare Manson got her side's second try of the afternoon, Ritchie again converting. On the hour mark, West's fate was sealed when replacement Jenny Yates scored. The West girls, every member of the squad, fought until the end of the eighty minutes. Stewartry would score two further tries before the end through Yates and the impressive Ritchie. The latter converted both of these scores to give a final score of Stewartry Sirens 33 West of Scotland Ladies 0.

Full marks to the players on both sides and the referee and touch judges for their efforts in the Stygian gloom of Greenlaw. Much praise to West's physio Bex Francis who had a great deal of work to do, covering for both teams as Stewartry lost their own physio to injury early in the match.

West of Scotland: Eilidh Power; Rachael Millar, Jade Scott, Emily Irving, Aimee Watson; Alexa Smith, Caitlin Reilly; Amy McHenry; Rachel Morrison, Natasha Burge, Anna Campbell,

Amanda Paterson; Hannah Foster-Rain, Fiona Gassner, Alex Watson. Replacements: Pamela Duffy, Ashley Blair, Errin Hendry-Giles, Katherine Wilson, Bex Francis. Touch judge: Emma Lochhead.