

## **Enniskillen Ladies 17, Belfast Harlequins 24**

In Enniskillen's fifth match of the season they welcomed Belfast Harlequins a very windy Mullaghmeen.

After last week's disappointing performance, 'Skins knew they needed a confident start to this match and it began with Enniskillen kicking into the strong wind and they immediately put the pressure on the 'Quins pack. 'Skins solid defence forced errors and ensured play was kept deep inside the Harlequins half for the first 10 minutes providing 'Skins with the confidence boost they were looking for.

The hard work paid off when Enniskillen were rewarded with a penalty in front of the posts which out-half Caoimhe Morris converted with ease to put the first 3 points on the board. However, during this phase of play Skins lost impressive prop Catherine Mallon to a broken nose forcing a reshuffle at front row. 'Skins took this change in their stride and the scrums continued to impress and still managed to turn over the 'Quins scrum on 2 occasions.

The restart saw some great defensive and attacking play from both sides. 'Quins aggressiveness in the ruck began to take its toll and provided their scrumhalf Zoe Templeton with clean ball and she spun it out to the backs with Nikki Caughey taking full advantage of a gap in the 'Skins defence to dive in for 'Quins first points. Caughey converted her try with 7 minutes of the first half remaining.

From the restart Skins defended impressively to leave the score 3 - 7 at the break.

The second half disappointingly saw a very different Enniskillen team take to the field and the talented Harlequins back line easily took advantage of the non-existent defence, punishing the 'Skins girls with 3 tries and 1 conversion in the space of 10 minutes, leaving Enniskillen on the wrong side of a 3 - 24 score line.

However, to their credit, 'Skins managed to regroup and find the intensity they were playing with in the first 40 minutes and they set the pace for the remainder of the game. The exceptional Gemma McCutcheon put pressure on the 'Quins pack and 'Skins began to play the rugby they are capable of, once again keeping 'Quins pegged into their own "22". Strong running from forwards Aisling Maguire and Collette McMorrow created space for McCutcheon to pick and drive over the line for her much deserved first senior try. Morris converted to narrow the gap to 10 - 24, thus giving 'Skins a glimmer of opportunity to force themselves back into this encounter.

Immediately the 'Skins girls showed their determination in defence and the pressure was showing in the 'Quins side as their discipline continued to lapse, resulting in a Skins penalty and Sorcha Chipperfield being sent to the sin bin for the remaining 6 minutes of the game. Superb kicking from Morris brought play back to near the 'Quins try line and consistent crash balls from the 'Skins pack created space for winger Alexa Grudging to cross in the corner. Morris who had a fantastic all round game kicked the difficult conversion to put 'Skins a converted try away from snatching a draw with only a few minutes left on the clock.

The girls did not give up and a terrific kick from prop Maguire unfortunately just sneaked the wrong side of the corner flag and play was brought back to the halfway mark. 'Skins did manage to steal possession back but unfortunately the clock was against them and the final whistle was blown.

The Enniskillen girls were disappointed as this was yet another game that they blew the opportunity to take the points, however this relatively inexperienced side will be keen to take the many positives from this match into their next fixture and keep continuing to improve.

Special thanks to Terry McCartney for filling in as referee at late notice.

The Enniskillen girls continue their league campaign with another tough fixture away to Cill Dara on November 27<sup>th</sup>.

Training continues each week on Tuesdays and Fridays at 6.30pm at Enniskillen Rugby Club. Ladies of any age and skill are encouraged to join. For more information please contact Noreen on 07853008860 or find us on Facebook.