

St Patrick's Silverstream go back to back in First XV competition



Neyla Masima scores his first of three tries

St Patrick's College, Silverstream have become the first team since Wellington College in 2009 to successfully defend the Premier 1 championship - edging St Pat's Town 29-22 in a bruising and gripping decider at Jerry Collins Stadium this afternoon.

The match was a total contrast to their previous meeting a month ago which Silverstream won 52-10.

Town was brutal in the opening exchanges, rattling Silverstream into frequent mistakes and claiming a 10-0 lead.

First five-eighth Luke Walmsley kicked a penalty from 35-metres to open the scoring before centre Emin Kaya dramatically snatched an intercept and dashed 85-metres to put Town up 10-0. Silverstream captain Luke Mannix had turned down a penalty in a kickable position.

Town found space often down the blindside and wing Sanele Aukusitino and openside Sam Donaldson, from an overthrown lineout, also went close, following some strong phase play and a thrust at the line by tighthead prop Jeremiah Tuiatua. If any of these chances were grasped Town would have been 15-0 up.

Town's lack of discipline would prove to be an Achilles heel and Silverstream profited in the 18th minute when lock Neyla Masima rumbled over from a lineout drive. This instead closed the gap to 10-5.

Three minutes before halftime, Masima would acrobatically reach out for his second try as the Silverstream forwards applied the muscle and outstretched Town.

Masima was named Player of the Match. He was essentially Silverstream's only target in the lineouts and he would claim a personal hat-trick with about 25 minutes remaining.

Unlike the traditional fixture Town rallied, employing their own lineout to meaning affect, driving over to reduce the gap to 19-15.

With 10 minutes left, Silverstream's head prefect Iona Apineru scored a try following a 20-metre break by Masima and fast hands by prop Chris Hemi. A conversion and a penalty to Sam Clarke appeared to have settled the contest at 29-15.

However Town hooker Seamus Rowberry pushed through the midfield and set up a try for reserve halfback Devon Oliver-Bell with about five minutes to spare.

Oliver-Bell, who replaced the lively Setefano Paese, would have another dramatic moment in the dying stages. Spotting wide open space, Oliver-Bell kicked ahead and appeared to be impeded by tired Silverstream defence when in sole pursuit of the ball.

The game ended with a double knock on near halfway.

Masima played a final for the ages, but was well supported in the loose by Mitch Southall, Mannix and Apineru. Props Luke Chisholm and Hemi were a hive of industry and the experience of Riley Forbes off the bench and Sam Clarke at ten were pivotal in Silverstream's success.

Town saved their best until last and have a second life in the Hurricanes Regional qualifying series next Saturday, travelling to Napier to tackle Boys' High School. Sanasco Crichton, Seamus Rowberry, Jeremiah Tuiatua, Dominic Bell, Josh Mallon and Sam Donaldson were the picks of a gutsy forward effort.

Silverstream have won 22 Premiership games in a row and will clash with Hastings Boys' High School in a Hurricanes Regional semi-final next Saturday.

By Adam Julian