

Rugby – Edinburgh Academy clinch Scottish Schools Cup

✖ Edinburgh Academy won the Brewin Dolphin Under-18 Scottish schools cup with a tense 12-11 victory over George Watson's College at a windswept Murrayfield on Saturday.

Mark Appleson's Academy side went into the final as favourites, having won all 13 of their matches this season. However, they made a nervy start and it was Watson's who looked the better side early on. Indeed straight from kick off, Watson's found themselves on the Academy line. The defence did well to hold the initial drive up over the try line but conceded a penalty following the subsequent scrum which Andrew McMillan converted.

Watson's appeared to adapt to the wet and windy conditions more quickly than their opponents, who made a number of handling errors and struggled to stamp their authority on scrums and line outs. Some astute tactical kicking from Watson's Fraser Mackay and Euan McKean kept their opponents pinned back for lengthy spells. Academy meanwhile struggled to release their backs, with flying winger Freddie Smith finding opportunities to run with the ball hard to come by.

Prior to the game one of Edinburgh Academy's illustrious old boys, Edinburgh and Scotland scrum half Mike Blair, sent the squad a video message. However, it was Watson's skipper Ramsay Young who was winning the battle of the number nines with Scottish under 18 cap Alex Glashan. His sniping runs and quick thinking were causing Accies all sorts of problems. Approaching the half hour mark one such run gave Watson's an excellent attacking position on the Academy five metre line. Academy second row, Chris Thomson, made a massive tackle that not only turned over possession but seemed to give his side a huge lift. Accademy then enjoyed their best spell of the match

with captain and Number 8 Chris Dean prominent. Unfortunately their handling still let them down at important times and they went into the break trailing 0-3.

The turning point of the game came in the first minute of the second half when, following a bright start by the favourites, George Watson's second row Matt Poole was sent to the sin bin. Academy made the most of the ten minute spell where they enjoyed a numerical advantage scoring two tries.

The first try came courtesy of a fine break by stand off Alexander Muir, who drew three tacklers before releasing full back Robbie Orr to touch down. Alex Swan missed the conversion. Minutes later, with Watson's anxiously counting down the seconds to Poole's return from the sidelines, Academy won a line out on the right touchline and spun the ball wide, where Smith at last broke the shackles to score in the corner. After missing a straightforward kick minutes earlier Swan redeemed himself with a conversion from tight on the left touchline to extend the lead to 12-3.

Watson's, who were back to fifteen players made an immediate response and camped on the Academy line for the next five minutes. Some outstanding defence, coupled with Watson's choice to run everything, meant that the gap stayed at nine points. Eventually at the urging of coach Ally Donaldson Watson's chose to kick a penalty and McMillan made the score 12-6.

Then on the hour mark Watson's set up a grandstand finish with their first try. Try hero Smith made a terrible hash of dealing with a bouncing ball in his own 22 and Watson's second row Neil Irvine Hess dived over. McMillan missed the conversion so the score was 12-11 going into the last ten minutes.

It was at this point that the impressive Dean stepped up to the plate and drove his team forward, keeping Watson's on the

back foot and unable to manufacture a point scoring opportunity.

The crowd of 4.800 was treated to a committed display from both sets of players and Watson's can count themselves unlucky to have lost out. The outstanding Dean was Man of the Match but his team mate Thomson who was immense in defence and Watson's Young must have pushed him close.

Edinburgh Academy

15 Robbie Orr

14 Thomas Salisbury

13 Alex Swan

12 Tom Grey

11 Freddie Smith

10 Alexander Muir

9 Alex Glashan

1 Josh Haining

2 Angus Lutton

3 Andrew McWilliam

4 Ronan Seydak

5 Chris Thomson

6 Cameron Simpson

7 Rory Simpson

8 Chris Dean (C)

Substitutes

16 Mack Millar

17 Thomas Mitchell

18 Rory Smith

19 Jamie Spratt

20 Jonty Bredin

21 Callum Peace

22 Scott McWilliam

George Watson's College

15 Fraser McKay

14 Dominic Johnston

- 13 Andrew McMillan
- 12 Jack Broadley
- 11 Chris Macbeth
- 10 Euan McKean
- 9 Ramsay Young (C)

- 1 Michael Gillespie
- 2 Ross Gregor
- 3 Rhys Jack
- 4 Matt Poole
- 5 Neil Irvine Hess
- 6 Matt Horsman
- 7 Nick Hurn
- 8 Will Brown

Substitutes

- 16 James Hassall
- 17 Hamish Campbell
- 18 Andrew Watts
- 19 Henry Lawrence
- 20 James Bedford
- 21 Chris Cash
- 22 Peter Clink

PHOTO Graham Stuart