

Edinburgh v Scarlets, RaboDirect PRO 12, 26th Oct. 2012



Report and Photos – John Preece

A much better performance from a heavily criticised Edinburgh came within two minutes of securing the win in their latest RaboDirect match against league second place side, Llanelli Scarlets. 23 points from the boot of Man-of-the-Match, Harry Leonard, just failing to out-trump the four tries from the Welsh visitors.

Llanelli came close in the first few minutes, but a knocked-on ball stopped them getting too close to score the opener. Getting organised themselves, Edinburgh drove up the field from the restart and a fine display of passing and driving left the ball in the capable hands of Tim Visser who battered his way over from five metres out to score his ninth try of the season under the posts. Leonard slotted home his first kick of the evening and Edinburgh were 7-0 ahead after nine minutes. The Scarlets weren't to be outdone, however, as it took them less than five minutes to even the score. Getting the ball out wide inside the Edinburgh 22, they won a line-out close in and from the ensuing ruck, George North drove over to score the visitors opener. Aled Thomas scored with the kick to draw them level, but only for a few minutes as Leonard took the home side back into the lead with a penalty.

Straight from the restart, the Welsh team got hands on the ball and a break from scrum-half, Gareth Davies, handed the ball to Nick Reynolds who beat Tonks to the line to score their second. Another successful kick and it was 14-10 to Llanelli.

Not to be outdone in the kicking stakes, Leonard took the home team back into the lead with two more penalties before North appeared to don his 'Cloak of Untouchability' and ghosted through a flailing Edinburgh defence to score his second try of the night. It was a marvellous thing to see on the big screen – if you were Welsh – as three successive Edinburgh players completely missed touching, never mind pulling down, the giant winger. 19-16 to Llanelli. Another penalty from the on-form Leonard drew Edinburgh level again, before a final seconds' disaster struck the hosts. Fighting to keep the Scarlets out from close in, Ross Rennie ripped the ball clear, but the ensuing fumbling left the ball in the hands of Davies, who scrambled through to touch down. The referee went 'upstairs' for confirmation – which he received – and the kick put the Scarlets 26-19 ahead at the break.

✘ The second half started well for Edinburgh, coming close on a couple of occasions, but failing to get through the Welsh defence. Again, the boot was to dominate the scoring for the hosts, with Leonard missing his first, fairly long range kick, but scoring with another two to draw Edinburgh to within a point at 25-26, before, late on, the referee carded Llanelli's Davies for a ruck infringement in the 22. Sean Cox, captain on the night, choose to go for the kick rather than the lineout and again, Leonard came up with the goods. 28-26 to Edinburgh with 15 minutes of the match left.

The final period was littered with penalties for each side until, with two minutes to go, a bit of home team ruck mis-handling left Rhys Priestland with a relatively easy shot at goal. Job done and 29-28 to the Scarlets.

And that was it, game over. A better overall performance from Edinburgh, with far fewer handling errors, but loose tackling 'gave away' at least two of the tries. So, still a 'work in progress', but they are building the makings of a very good team and the arrival of South Africa's Izak van der Westhuizen can only help matters. With both Scottish teams having the

'burden' of being National side feeder teams removed, the potential is now there to progress up the order. Only if they can nail the tackles, though...

Web – <http://www.photoboxgallery.com/jlp-photography>