

Edinburgh v Treviso, RaboDirect PR012



Report and Photos by John Preece

Edinburgh came away from their latest encounter at Murrayfield wondering where it had all gone wrong. Fielding what was, on paper, a strong starting line-up, The Edinburgh side were well beaten by their Italian visitors, the final score of 27-22 to Treviso doing them a fair injustice,

It started well for Edinburgh with two penalties in the first five minutes, but only one going over from Greg Laidlaw, to give the lead to the home team and it looked as if a favourable result was on the cards. But the visitors came back strongly and pushed Edinburgh hard, keeping them pinned back in their own half for long periods. Around the half-hour point, a series of penalties, taken as scrums, on the Edinburgh five metre line forced the referee to give Willem Nel his marching orders from the front row. Another couple of failed scrums and the referee was again left with no choice and awarded the visitors a penalty try under the posts – a decision that would come back to bite him later on – and the easy conversion was popped over by Alberto di Bernardo.

From the kick off a short game of 'tennis' ensued between the backs, from 22 to 22, to see who would blink first and run the ball. Treviso took the bait and after five or so minutes of to-ing and fro-ing, a mistake by the visitors was pounced on by David Denton, who got the ball out on the wing to Tim Visser near the half-way line. The Dutch 'Scotsman' (or Scots Dutchman?) took off down the line and beating off and jumping over a succession of tackles, ran in to score his eighth try of the season under the posts. With Laidlaw scoring with the

kick, Edinburgh retook the lead.



Or, at least, they did for a short period. Another penalty from di Bernardo drew the sides level and on the cusp of half time, Laidlaw dropped a pass and Treviso's No. 8, Robert Barbiero gathered the ball to charge in for the visitor's second try, Matt Scott just failing to stop Barbieri crossing the line. Another easy kick for di Bernardo took the Italian side into the break 17-10 ahead.

With Edinburgh starting the second half as they had finished the first – pinned in their own half – Treviso went further ahead from another penalty, before, 14 minutes in, an attempted clearance kick was charged down and Barbieri crossed the line for his second try on the night. Yet another successful di Bernardo conversion stretched the score out to 27-10 in favour of the visiting side.

At this point a bit of a cabinet reshuffle took place among the forwards and Edinburgh seemed to awaken from their game-long slumber. Two minutes was all it took for them to secure possession, pass the ball around a bit, to leave Lee Jones with a not inconsiderable gallop to score his first try of the season. Laidlaw missed the conversion, but Edinburgh were back in the game 27-15.

The momentum had shifted and Edinburgh put the Italian side under extreme pressure deep in their 22. A succession of scrum penalties lead to a yellow card for Lorenzo Cittadini and this is where it all went wrong for the referee. Seven penalties came the Edinburgh way in the space of about ten minutes, five of which were taken on the five-metre line as scrums. On two occasions, the Edinburgh scrum blew apart their opposition and were marching towards the line, only for the referee to inexplicably blow up for the next penalty. The question could

be asked of how, after the scrum fell over a couple of times, were the Italians awarded a penalty try, when Edinburgh clearly had the ascendancy and were pushing the Italians all over the place, was just another penalty awarded?

The sixth scrum of the 'sequence' just went all wrong. Feeling somewhat aggrieved, the host side put in an almighty effort, only to see the scrum deemed to have gone through 90 degrees and the ball awarded to Treviso. A whole lot of effort for no reward.

Reward of a fashion did, however, come two minutes from time when, after a series of Edinburgh attacks and desperate Treviso clearances, a wide passing move got Dougie Fife (Main photo) through a gap in the defence to touch down between the posts. Laidlaw saw this kick over and a bonus point, at least, was in the bag.

The visitors, quite rightly, took an age to kick off, but even with time up, there was no holding back a, finally, rampant Edinburgh. Retaining possession through the forwards, they fought their way up from their 22 and stuck the ball in the hands of (choose your own descriptive) Visser, who launched himself up the side line. Evading another couple of tackles and with only one man to beat, he choose to kick over, but the last defender was too quick and touched the ball down in the goal area to bring the game to a nail-biting finish.

27-22 was a lot closer than it should have been given the relative performances and although Edinburgh struggled at times, they nearly pulled it out of the bag, but they are going to have to play for more than 20 minutes of a match if they are going to lift themselves up from the depths of the league this season.

Still, Heineken Cup rugby next match (K.O. at 1:35pm on Saturday 13 Oct.) and we all remember how that went last season. Don't we?