

Rugby – Edinburgh Rugby v Saracens Heineken Cup Round 1



Report and Photos – John Preece

6,543 spectators turned up at Murrayfield to watch Edinburgh turn in one of their worst performances for a long time. Considering it was a 'first team' pick, they were played off the park by a Saracens team who did nothing extraordinary, but were able to capitalise on a catalogue of mistakes and penalties by a home side that looked, at times, as if they had only met that morning. Indeed, if either of the touchline officials had been up with the play, they could have received the wide 'passes' and scooted in to score at least a couple of tries. Yes, it was that bad at times...

The first ten minutes of the match were fairly even, with neither side taking much in the way of a risk, but with Edinburgh having a slight territorial advantage. That all stopped, however, when Saracens won a scrum from a lineout knock-on. Putting pressure on the host's line in front of the posts, the defence was sucked in and, when the ball went out wide to Joel Tomkins he had a clear run in. A successful conversion – one of many successes – from Charlie Hodgson and the score was 7-0 to the visitors.

Edinburgh used the next ten minutes well, but couldn't break through to generate any real threat and it was another penalty which saw Hodgson stretch the score to 10-0 on the 23rd minute.

The rest of the half was a bit of a non-affair for the Edinburgh side, giving away penalties and the ball on several occasions and allowing Hodgson another couple of easy-ish

kicks at goal to bring the half to a close 16-0 in favour of Saracens. One movement gave the crowd hope when Lee Jones came close to gathering a kick over the defence, but he knocked-on and the scrum lead to a penalty, etc, etc.

Despite Greg Laidlaw and Tim Visser retiring hurt at the interval, the second half started brightly – as had the first – three minutes in when Richie Rees intercepted a loose pass and split the Sarries' defence to sprint through towards the line. He was run down ten metres out by two forwards – one the hooker – who ended up contesting the ball unfairly. The hooker, Schalk Brits, spotted his own infringement early and was halfway to the dugout as soon as the referee blew up, but was called back so that he could be told why he was yellow carded. Edinburgh lost the ball from the resultant scrum and the period ended with another penalty from Hodgson.

☒ And that was that, as far as Edinburgh were concerned.

Saracens ran in four more tries, one from just-on-the-field Owen Farrel, one from Chris Ashton, a TMO-awarded one in the corner from Alex Goode and the final one from a charged down kick by Charlie Hodgson with four minutes to go. Those and successful penalties and conversions from the boot of Hodgson – with 25 points, why was he not Man-of-the-Match (that went to Steve Borthwick)? – ensured a thoroughly miserable day for the Edinburgh side and their supporters, with the final score 45-0 to Saracens.

The occasional flash of inspiration from Edinburgh's big-name players was just a bit too occasional to worry the visitors who were well deserved winners.

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