

Edinburgh v Munster



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With the East Stand at Murrayfield a sea of red, you would have thought it was a Munster home match as Edinburgh fans seem to have forgotten to turn up. Or something... With Edinburgh looking to secure their first points in this season's Heineken Cup and Munster looking to qualify for the quarter-finals, it was always going to be a difficult match, with neither team looking to loose.

Munster opened the scoring with a penalty from Ronan O'Gara after two minutes following a bit of fumbled play from the Edinburgh backs, and it was looking like a bit of same-old, same-old. However, once they had found their feet, the home side weathered the initial attack and went on their own offensive. Parking themselves in the Munster half for a good ten minutes, the Edinburgh forwards rolled closer and closer to the line only for a bit of desperate defending to keep them at bay.

Getting the ball back down the pitch, a bit of a kick exchange saw the visitor's backs take the ball upfield again to win another penalty for O'Gara's boot to take the score to 6-0. Three minutes later, O'Gara had his fourth attempt in the bag (he missed one – "He's human!", came a shout from the crowd) and Munster were 9-0 ahead with ten minutes to go. Greg Laidlaw pulled one back for Edinburgh, but O'Gara matched it just before half time to leave the score 12-3 at the break.

A fraught five opening minutes for Edinburgh ended, luckily with a piece of daft obstructive play from Munster's Dave Kilcoyne, which saw him 'binned' for ten minutes. Following another frustrating period of kicking, Dave Denton gathered a kick from O'Gary inside his own 22 and then, with no Munster players within 30 metres, managed to throw a forward pass to Greg Tonks! From the scrum on the five metre line, Munster scrum half, Conor Murray, chipped the ball over the defence for Keith Earls to run onto. However, Laidlaw got their first and, in a clumsy attempt to gather the ball, managed to bat it back over the dead ball line. The referee went up to the TMO, had his suspicions confirmed and Laidlaw was off the park for 10 minutes for contravening the 'you can't chuck the ball over the line' rule. As the try wasn't a dead-cert, the referee awarded the Irish side a scrum on the five metre line.

A huge effort from the Munster pack saw Edinburgh fold up in complete disarray and the ref had no option but to go under the sticks for the penalty try. With O'Gara's conversion, the score now went out to 19-3 with still 25 minutes to go.



And go it did. Edinburgh held out wave upon wave of Munster attacks from all over the field until, on the 62 minute mark, Murray dived over from close range after a ruck on the home try line. The secure boot of O'Gara secured the conversion and it was 26-3 and looking extremely bad for Edinburgh. The next five or six minutes saw a bit of end to end play, only enlivened by the obligatory forward's punch-up, when a high tackle on Denton saw Edinburgh gain a bit of territory. A battling run from Matt Scott gave the forwards the chance to get up to the line, and from the ruck, Stuart McInally passed the ball inside to Laidlaw, who dropped the ball into the hands of Dougie Fife, who then had a clear run in to score Edinburgh's first try of the campaign, never mind the match. Laidlaw scored the conversion and Edinburgh were now only 16

points behind at 26-10.

With only seven minutes left, Munster maybe took their foot off the gas a bit and the home side managed to score another try, again through Fife, although he had to work a bit harder this time, shrugging off a couple of tackles on his way through to the line. Kick scored and the score was a much more respectable 26-17. Which, a few minutes later, was the final tally.

A win for Munster and a typically battling last ten minutes from Edinburgh left the home crowd a bit disgruntled with their team's current form. Four wins from 18 games this season isn't really a record to write home about. On last season's Heineken Cup form, where they were semi-finalists, the question has to be – Where did it all go right..?