

# Rugby – Edinburgh win against Ulster



## *Edinburgh v Ulster RaboDirect PR012 22 March 2013*

Edinburgh's biggest PR012 crowd of the year – apart from the 1872 Cup match – turned out on a freezing Friday night to watch, what was probably, Edinburgh's best performance of the season. Given little chance of success in the run-up to the match, fewer mistakes and an apparent increase in intensity saw the home side take the match 14-8. New management? Or was it down to the rare occasion of Edinburgh starting from the North end of the stadium?

With most of the International contingent benched or, in Greg Laidlaw's case, water carriers, it was down to the slightly lesser lights of the team to do the business. Ulster were on the offensive straight from the whistle and worked their way deep into the Edinburgh half and it was only by good defence and a couple of turn-overs that they were kept out. When the home side secured a bit of possession, the tables turned and with 15 minutes played, Edinburgh were awarded a penalty. Piers Francis stepped up for the kick and, given his early season record, the supporters didn't hold out much hope of an opener. However, his time away from the pressure of the Pro game with Heriots seems to have turned the stand-off around and the ball bisected the posts to put Edinburgh 3-0 ahead.



The next 15, or so, minutes was a period of back and forth play, with Edinburgh probably having the upper hand and it was the home side who were looking the more likely to score. 30 minutes in and that's just what they did. With the forwards hammering away at the Ulster defence, a ruck infringement in front of the posts gave Francis the opportunity to take the

score to 6-0, which he duly slotted. The remainder of the half was fairly evenly matched, but a penalty award on the stroke of half time gave the Irish side their first shot at goal. Paddy Jackson, who had a nightmare with the boot in his International debut against Scotland, stepped up and scored with the kick to take the half-time score to 6-3.

The second half started much the same as the first with Ulster driving the Edinburgh defence backwards. Less than five minutes into the half and Ulster were awarded another penalty. Jackson stepped up again and it was like his Ireland debut all over again. The ball went nowhere near the posts, and the score remained at 6-3. Two minutes later and Jackson had another chance, which he also struck wide. With Ulster maintaining their territorial dominance, a third chance for Jackson came up just before 13 minutes had been played. However, by this time the crowd were on Jackson's case and he hit his third attempt wide of the mark as well.

This gave the home side a bit of a lift and it was they who went on the attack. Keeping Ulster pinned back, the forwards again rumbled the ball into the 22, before play switched left. Netani Talei burst through several tackles before being brought down a few metres out. He laid the ball back neatly to Stuart McInally who forced himself over the line for a home side try. Francis missed the conversion, but Edinburgh were ahead 11-3 with 25 minutes to go. From the restart it was back to square one with the visitors forcing play back towards the Edinburgh line. Nick Williams nearly sneaked over from a line out and a pick-and-drive play under the posts was foiled by an Edinburgh turn-over.

With 15 minutes to go, it Ulster pressure told and it was their turn to score a try. Moving the Edinburgh defence back and forward, gave them an overlap on the right and, in spite of the attentions of a couple of defenders, Andrew Trimble went over in the corner. With the ball handed to Jackson for the kick, the home supporters were none too sympathetic to his

chance of scoring. Sure enough, Jackson's second nightmare continued and the ball went wide. With the visitors heads down, the home side dominated the rest of the match. Francis nearly went over for a try, but the ball was knocked loose, before he had another chance to score from the tee with five minutes left. Job done, 14-8 to Edinburgh and the first win for the side since the beginning of December.

So, is this the turn-around the the faithful have been awaiting? It's probably a bit early to tell – one swallow not making a summer, and all that – but there seemed to be a bit more grit and determination in the Edinburgh performance that has been missing for a while, so maybe the new, interim, management team have shaken the box a bit to see what is hidden inside.

Photo and Report – John Preece.

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