

Rugby – Edinburgh Rugby v Newport-Gwent Dragons



Edinburgh's first home match of the season was against one of last season's fellow strugglers, Newport-Gwent Dragons. In spite of a heavy defeat in the first round, the home side were hopeful of getting their first win under their belts.

The first half started well for the Dragons, who were awarded a penalty just two minutes into the match. Duly slotted home by Jason Tovey, the visitors were 3-0 ahead. Ahead for all of three minutes as Edinburgh struck back with one of their own from Harry Leonard to bring the scores level at 3-3.

With the Dragons No. 7, Nic Cudd, being substituted for Toby Faletau, the hosts seemed to gain the upper hand and put the Dragons defence under a bit of pressure. But it was the Dragons who had the next chance to score, but Tovey struck the ball wide, followed a couple of minutes later by Leonard having a shot at goal for Edinburgh, but his attempt fell just short. From the restart Edinburgh got the ball back up into the Dragons half and from a lineout deep in the 22, almost drove the resultant maul over. However, the visitors were deemed to have illegally entered the maul, which led to the referee issuing a warning to the Dragons. Leonard scored with the resultant kick and 20 minutes in, Edinburgh were 6-3 ahead.

It was around now that the home side began to dominate the scrum, folding the Dragons pack up on numerous occasions, forcing the ref to penalise them for illegal scrummaging.



With a few minutes of the half remaining, Greg Tonks received the ball out wide on the left and made ground, before being brought down. Edinburgh swung the ball out to the other side from the ruck of the pitch to attack down the left, where Tonks appeared again and, with Nikki Walker, created a bit of space for the forwards to hammer up the middle. Again the maul was pulled up short, and again illegally, which saw the Dragons Lewis Evans off with a yellow for 10 minutes. With a forward off the field and confident of their superiority, Edinburgh choose to take the scrum option, but it all went a bit awry and the Dragons won the penalty. The half ended a minute or so later, still 6-3 to the hosts.



The break was enlivened by the Edinburgh ground staff charging about the pitch, replacing large swathes of, what had been, pristine, new grass dug up by the feet of the forwards at scrum time. At least it will have another couple of weeks to bed in before the next match.

Edinburgh started the second half where they had left off, pressurising the visitors defence, with young scrum half, Sean Kennedy making a particular nuisance of himself. After being stopped metres short, first on the left wing, then on the right, Tim Visser popped up on the left, and battered his way through a gaggle of defenders to notch up the first try of the

match, and his first of the season. Leonard scored the conversion and the home side were a healthy 13 points to 3 ahead.

The Dragons came back strongly, however and it took them less than five minutes to score an answering try on the 58 minute mark from former Edinburgh scrum half, Richie Rees. Tovey added the two points and the Dragons were now just three behind, 13-10.

With the game finely balanced, neither side could gain much of an upper hand, and play see-sawed back and forth until, with five minutes to go, the Dragons were awarded another penalty. Tovey stepped up and with an easy swing, drew the sides level. Now it was a case of who would blink first. After a wild drop goal attempt by Leonard with seconds left, all the visitors needed to do was bounce their 22 drop out into touch to end the game. However, the ball was kicked straight into touch, without a bounce and the ref awarded Edinburgh an eightieth minute scrum. Again the Edinburgh scrum went into overdrive and completely destroyed the Dragons, giving the referee no option but to award the penalty. Leonard stepped up and slotted home the kick to give the home side a well deserved, but fortunate victory, 16-13.

A win for Edinburgh with a bit of fortune, but a win all the same. The scrum was the stand-out play for the home side, and it was just the pitch cutting up that stopped them pushing the Dragons all over the place at will. The next home match is on the 27th September against another Welsh side, Llanelli Scarlets.

Scrum to the fore again?

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