

Heineken Cup – Edinburgh v Munster

Edinburgh defy odds to take the win over Munster at Murrayfield




Possibly the only two people outside the Edinburgh camp who thought they were in with a chance against former Champions, Munster, were the two match-day mascots – one of whom gave Edinburgh a 100-10 win. Considering how the hosts had been playing this season, it was likely the ‘out-campers’ would be proven correct.

However, the guys who mattered started the game off with their opening try after just five minutes of the match. After the usual exchange of kicks, Edinburgh gained possession of the ball in the Munster half and, being held out on the right, quickly passed the ball out to the wide left where all Matt Scott had to do was carry a couple of opponents across the line for the opener. Man-of-the-Match and Birthday Boy, Greg Laidlaw, in his first game back following injury, rattled the ball off the post to convert and give the Edinburgh side a 7-0 lead. Edinburgh then went back on the attack from the restart and soon won a penalty which Laidlaw again converted to give the hosts a 10-0 lead after eleven minutes of play.


The Munster men then seemed to waken up and they pushed deep into the Edinburgh half, winning a penalty of their own which Ian Keatley slotted home to open their account. Five minutes later they were on the offensive – and scoring trail – again. This time, quick ball from a ruck left them with a man over and Casey Laulala barged through the tackle of Nick De Luca to dot down next to the posts. Keatley scored from the tee and the match was all square, 10-10. All square for almost a

minute, at least as Munster were penalised straight from the kick off for holding on in the tackle. Laidlaw stepped up and, again rattled the same post for the same result and Edinburgh crept ahead at the end of the first quarter, 13-10.

The next five minutes were all Munster, the visitors tore up the field and pinned Edinburgh back on their line and, following a scrum free kick, Mike Sherry barged through for the visitors second try. Keatley scored the conversion and Munster were 17-13 in the lead with 15 minutes of the half  left. Again, less than a minute passed following their score before Munster were penalised in their own 22. Another foul at the breakdown gave Edinburgh a 'free ball' which Laidlaw launched high into the visitor's goal area. Tim Visser just failed to gather the high ball, but the penalty had been awarded, so Laidlaw stepped up for his fourth kick of the match and, giving the post a wide berth, slotted the ball home to take the score to 17-16 against the hosts. The remainder of the half was fairly even, with both sides gaining and losing possession and territory. Apart from Laidlaw scoring another penalty, the match was enlivened further by Edinburgh winning turnover ball from a ruck and Laidlaw passing the ball straight into the head of referee, JP Doyle. Funny, but it broke up a promising attack as the match had to be restarted from a scrum. The half ended with Munster knocking on from a ruck near the Edinburgh line and the home side in the lead 19-17.

During the break, the ground staff were again called upon to replace and repair large swathes of the Murrayfield turf, which looks lovely and pristine pre-match, but is being dug up good style whenever a scrum is called. Only time will sort that out, though.

The second half was a much more territorial affair, with both sides probing for position and possession – although Dimitri Basilaia did perform a try saving tackle on Keatley after a couple of minutes. Munster managed to pull out a lead with 25

minutes on the clock with a couple of penalties from Keatley, taking the score to 23-19. And then the try of the match. A flying De Luca managed to put off sub, Hanrahan's, attempted clearance kick, which landed in the hands of Grant Gilchrist. He then passed the ball in a basketball overarm throw to Visser, who powered away from the diving tackles of a couple  of defenders to score Edinburgh's second try – and his seventh in Europe – of the afternoon. Then followed a long, minutely scrutinised TMO period when Irish(!) ref, Doyle, asked for the initial charge down to be checked in slow motion from a variety of angles and, failing to find foul play, then did the same with Gilchrist's pass. Meanwhile, Laidlaw was waiting with the ball for the decision and at this point, Munster decided that they could pressurise the officials and walked up to the 22, ready for the, 'expected', drop-out which they were 'sure' was coming. Eventually, the correct decision was arrived at, Laidlaw scored the conversion and the hosts took a narrow 26-23 lead with just under ten minutes left.

Ten minutes during which Munster decided to turn up the wick and really hammer away at Edinburgh. Unfortunately for them, their wick was almost immediately snuffed out when wing, Simon Zebo, went down with what looked like a fairly innocuous bit of cramp, but turned out to be a fairly serious ankle injury. This took the wind out of their sails and Laidlaw finished off with another couple of penalties – one of which hit the cross bar – to round out the match 29-23 to Edinburgh.

A good opening win for Edinburgh who took advantage of Munster's many errors and fouls to win a fairly unspectacular match, but a win is a win and hopefully, the way is now open for them to pick up their season and play as the quality of the squad suggests they are capable of.

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