


Rugby – Edinburgh v Connacht

Edinburgh score three tries in the last eight minutes to take a bonus point win.




Connacht were the visitors to Murrayfield on a chilly Friday night in the latest round of the final RaboDirect PRO12 season. With both teams lying at the bottom end of the table, a win either way would boost their chances of a top six finish.

Getting an early break, Connacht were deep in the Edinburgh half right from the start, but the hosts managed to clear the ball upfield. The return kick from Dan Parks caught several Connacht players offside, so giving Greg Laidlaw the first chance of points in the match. Scoring the first of many kicks on the night, Laidlaw gave the home side an early 3-0 lead. A couple of minutes later it was the visitors turn to score when Dan Parks dropped a goal from outside the Edinburgh 22. Eleven minutes on the clock, 3-3. And it was the visitors who took the lead on the 15 minute mark when Robbie Henshaw followed up on a fine passing move, initiated by a kick from Parks, and went over for the opening try of the night. Parks scored the conversion and it was 8-3 to the Irish side.

The next 15 minutes of the match were played largely up the middle, but Edinburgh threw away a chance for their first try with a fumble when on an overlap move, followed up a few minutes later by another 'miss' when Ross Rennie was stopped, literally, the width of his arm away from a try. Laidlaw had, in the meantime managed to net another couple of penalties to draw the home side up to within a point at 10-9 and Parks hit  the post with a penalty for the visitors. And it was looking as if that would be the half time score when Edinburgh were awarded a penalty in the last minute. Laidlaw

confirmed with the referee that they would be able to take the lineout, then went for the line. The ball went in on the 40 minute mark and Edinburgh pressed hard at the Connacht try line, but were held out as the play switched back and forth within the five-metre area. Collecting the ball just to the left of the posts, Harry Leonard passed the ball out to Ben Atiga, who instantly passed it back inside to the rapidly approaching Dougie Fife. With a lot of momentum on his side, Fife crashed through two defenders to reach out and ground the ball in the 42nd minute for Edinburgh's first try (pictured). Laidlaw then bisected the posts and the teams went off for the break with Edinburgh 16-10 ahead.

Connacht almost pulled a try back within minutes of the restart when Henshaw ran round the outside of the home defence, with a clear run to the line, only to be pulled down inside the 22 by a flying Dougie Fife. Edinburgh followed this up with a 'nearly' of their own when, again, Rennie was stopped short of the line, although this time by nearly half a metre.

By the half way point, Laidlaw had scored another two penalties and Parks had, unbelievably, hit the post again to give the Edinburgh men a 22-10 lead. Connacht had also had a nearly try of their own, but a dropped ball from a cross-kick was touched down by Edinburgh. Then that final eight minutes loomed. First up was Cornell du Preez with his try in the right hand corner. Fife was instrumental in getting the ball to the South African, who charged over for his second try in so many weeks. Laidlaw scored his sixth kick of the match and Edinburgh were 29-10 to the good. Five minutes later, Connacht turned over ruck ball and passed the ball into the centre. Next ball was out to Sam Beard to give the sub a chance to clear. But, the No. 22 was left clutching fresh air as Nick  De Luca came out of nowhere to intercept and fall over the line for the third Edinburgh try. Again Laidlaw saw the kick over and it was suddenly 36-10. And they thought it was all

over... Well, it wasn't. Greg Tonks ran the restart kick back upfield and got another attack on the go. De Luca ended up with the ball in the 22 and drawing in the last man, passed the ball to the following Willem Nel, who did his best 'winger' impression and outran everyone to dive over for the bonus point try. Laidlaw finished off the match with another successful kick and the Edinburgh crowd went home happy, with the 43-10 win well and truly in the bag.

So, it was only Connacht, was it not..? No, not really as the men from Ireland are not the 'easy game' anymore, having given a couple of big teams, including Clermont Auvergne, a fright over the last couple of seasons in the Heineken Cup. They were just blown away by an impressive second half from the hosts which, hopefully, they can keep going.

Hopefully.....

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