

Heineken Cup Rugby – Edinburgh v Gloucester

Gloucester too strong for Edinburgh in their Heineken Cup win at Murrayfield



A strong Gloucester side coupled with a mistake ridden Edinburgh, resulted in the Edinburgh fans trudging off into the winter gloom following another trying performance from the home side.

It started brightly enough with Edinburgh on the attack from the start, scoring their first try after only six minutes with a fine passing move out to the left which put Greg Tonks less than 10 metres from the line. Driving through the defenders in his way, Tonks went over in the corner for the opening score. Greg Laidlaw failed with the conversion, but Edinburgh were 5-0 in the lead.

Gloucester are too good a team to be fazed by an early score and they proved that by coming back at Edinburgh not long after the restart. Winning ball from their own scrum, they moved the play upfield, then a neat kick over the defence put full back, Rob Cook, in the clear to run through and score for the visitors. Freddie Burns missed the kick, so it was 5-5 after 11 minutes.

It was from this point that Gloucester started to dominate the match and Burns made up for his miss with a penalty on the fifteen minute mark to take the lead out to 8-5, followed up a few minutes later by another visitors' try. After being held out on the five metre line and then getting possession back from Laidlaw's clearance, another upfield drive by Gloucester had Edinburgh scrambling across to defend, but a neat inside ball from Cook to winger, Martyn Thomas left the No. 14

nothing to do but ghost past the missed tackle of Leonard and fall over the line for the second Gloucester try. Burns made no mistake this time and the score was 15-5 after 18 minutes.

The rest of the half was, again, fairly dominated by Gloucester, with Edinburgh's only scoring chance being a penalty, which Laidlaw just pushed past the post. Burns, however managed to score with Gloucester's award and the half time score was 18-5 to the Cherry-and-Whites.



The second half was only five minutes old when Gloucester No. 11, Jonny May, collected a clearance kick in his own half and set off towards the Edinburgh line. From the other end of the pitch he appeared to waft past an invisible Edinburgh defence before someone thought to do something about it. The 'something' was too late and a wee ball out of the tackle to Thomas put him over in the corner. Burns scored the conversion with an impressive kick from near the sideline and Gloucester's third try took them out to a 23-5 lead.

Maybe they thought 'Job done...', but the next 10 or so minutes were dominated by a rampaging Edinburgh side who hammered away at the Gloucester defence, getting within a metre or so twice, before David Denton was driven over the line from close in. The decision went 'upstairs' but the try was awarded. Laidlaw scored with only his third kick of the match to bring the score to 23-12.

Back with the program, Gloucester carried on where they had been and put Edinburgh under enormous pressure, but the home side held out, until a loose pass was picked up by Laidlaw and the scrum half charged off up the pitch. He passed the responsibility on to Roddy Grant who made more yards, before passing the ball to Denton. He was brought down, but got the ball away to Dougie Fife, now well into the visitors' 22. From the ensuing ruck, referee, Jerome Garces, picked up lock,

James Hudson, for foul play and carded the No. 5 for 10 minutes. Laidlaw went for the sideline and put the home side 5 metres out. In spite of a deal of pressure, the Gloucester defence held out and eventually won the ball back. The final 20 minutes of the match were played out in the middle of the park, with Edinburgh having a bit of ball to play with, but not being allowed it for too long. The match ended with an Edinburgh player being pushed over the sideline with the ball to bring the match to a welcome finish, 23-12 to Gloucester.

Too many mistakes, penalties and a defence occasionally missing in action allowed the visiting team to play where and how they wanted on the pitch and, although Edinburgh had a couple of penetrating attacks – and scored two tries – the result really didn't look in doubt at after the end of the first half. They now must win all three of their remaining matches to even have a chance of qualifying as a 'drop-down' team into the Amlin Cup.

See John Preece's photography [here](#).