

Rugby – Connacht 14 Edinburgh Rugby 13

✘ Connacht Strike Late to Sneak Win over Edinburgh

(Photo by John Preece from December 2013 Edinburgh v Connacht)

By Stephen Brunsdon

Alan Solomons' Edinburgh will be wondering how they managed to lose Friday night's encounter with Connacht; but somehow they did (13-14). The visitors, Connacht, struck late with a try to snatch an away win to make it two from two; while the home side were left to rue an opportunity missed at Murrayfield.

The hosts started brightly with flanker Cornal du Preez and Kiwi Phil Burleigh making early breaks through the Irish defence. A first minute Edinburgh scrum delivered an early opportunity for Tom Heathcote to get the home side on the score board. And he duly did; slotting a penalty kick from the Connacht 10 metre line with ease. Heathcote then nailed another kick, this time from nearer the halfway line after just ten minutes to double the lead.

The try scoring opportunities came soon after for Edinburgh, and in all honestly they should have been converted. The first was initiated by a good set piece. Ross Ford powering his way forward set up space in the back line. With the ball spread to Jack Cuthbert, the full back chipped the ball in behind the Connacht defence for winger Nick McLennan to chase; the ball just crossing the dead ball area before the Kiwi could touch down. The second followed just seconds after, this time a deft interchange between Cuthbert and Sam Beard; the home side's attack proving more than a handful for the visitors.

Connacht spent the opening minutes merely trying to retain the ball. They failed to do so on numerous occasions by giving

away needless penalties. Two Darragh Leader missed penalties did not help the Connacht cause either, with the visitors struggling to enter the match proper. Once into the Edinburgh half, Connacht started to look more potent, and they got a penalty as a result which Leader converted. With the visitors gaining more confidence, they equalised shortly before half time; Leader once again slotting a short range penalty.

But it was Edinburgh that dominated the half and ended it with a well deserved try. Through the forwards, the hosts went through a series of pick a go bullocking runs. Spreading from one side to the other, a swooping pass from McLennan found du Preez who cruised over in the corner. Heathcote converted from the touch line to take a 13-6 lead into the tunnel on the stroke of half time.

The second half proved less intense and ultimately less exciting than the opening forty minutes. Yet Edinburgh came out the tunnel in as dominating a fashion as they had entered it. Setting camp in the Connacht 22, scything breaks and deft offloads from forwards and back alike looked promising. But simple handling errors continue to haunt Edinburgh and this week was no different.

Despite Edinburgh territorial advantage, Connacht stayed in touch through another Leader penalty to reduce the deficit to just four points. Worse for Edinburgh was the temporary loss of tighthead prop WP Ne lot the sin bin. The tight grip on the match now seemed to be loosening and the Irish side were within touching distance.

Edinburgh did have a chance to win the game though, with ten minutes remaining. Du Preez picking up from a five metre scrum looked to held up short of the line and, upon examination by the Television Match Official, this was confirmed. Connacht would then have the last – if unexpected – laugh.

A penalty kick to touch set up a powerful rolling maul

marching towards the line. Flanker Willie Faloon barged over to sneak the try and with it the winning score. Leader missed with the conversion out wide and Edinburgh tried to muster one last attack, but the visitors were able to close out the match and edge an unpredictable encounter.

With their second win in a row, Connacht will now go into their next match with Leinster full of confidence. Edinburgh on the other hand will hope to iron out a – at times – patchy performance as they face the Ospreys in Swansea next week.

Scores:

Edinburgh 13 (13)

Try – du Preez

Conv – Heathcote

Pen – Heathcote 2

Connacht 14 (6)

Try – Faloon

Pen – Leader 3