

Rugby – Edinburgh ‘A’ v Ontario Blues

Edinburgh ‘A’ take third win in as many games



41-15! Sounds like an easy stroll for Edinburgh’s ‘A’ side, but the reality wasn’t quite as clear-cut...

The Ontario Blues have won four straight national titles, lifting the Championship’s MacTier Cup annually from 2011-14. Eight Blues players and two coaches were named in the Canadian national side competing in the IRB Americas Rugby Championship throughout October, while five were named in Canada’s national men’s sevens side which took part in the Gold Coast Sevens in the HSBC Sevens World Series earlier this month.

Their latest match was at a very swirly, windy Meggetland, in front of a fairly decent crowd, against an, essentially, scratch Edinburgh A team consisting of a mixture of full professionals, returning injured players and a selection from the BT Premiership.

Edinburgh were first out of the blocks with a try down the left after about seven minutes. Taking the play to the right, the attack swept back and No. 11, Tom Brown, dived over for the opener. Grayson Hart scored the conversion and it was 7-0. A couple of minutes later it was the forwards turn, Heriot’s No. 8, Jason Hill crashing through a defender to touch down on the other wing. The kick was missed but it was 12-0 after 10-or-so minutes.

With the Canadians beginning to find their feet, they put together a fine period of play, but and it was to plague the visitors all night, a mistake in handling gave the ball back to the home side. Chris Auld, taking a ‘break’ from his London Scottish loan period, broke up the centre of the field and set up the next wave of attacks which culminated in Edinburgh’s No. 5, Jack Turley – also Heriots – getting pulled down a couple of metres short. From the recycle, Edinburgh set up again, but

their 'close thing' on the right ended with a knock-on and the ball being cleared.

Ontario were beginning to get back into the game by now and were putting the Edinburgh defence under a great deal of pressure. The visiting side exhibited superb handling skill, for the most part and were quick to take advantage of penalty awards. But, it was another hand over which gave the home side their third try. Getting nowhere, a box kick landed with the defence and the backs tore through the forward line. Setting up a ruck, Turley broke clear and sprinted half the length of the field, supported by No. 7, Gala's Gary Graham. With one man to beat, Turley handed the ball to Graham who dotted down behind the posts. Hart scored with the kick to put Edinburgh 19-0 ahead and looking good for the win.



But the Blues came back again and just before the break, No. 7 Alistair Clark barrelled over from a ruck to score. With the kick missed, it was 19-5 at half time.

Less than a minute into the second half, a charged down kick gave Edinburgh the space to launch again at the line and an outside pass to Brown, put the wing through for a touch down in the corner and a 24-5 scoreline.

The Canadian side then turned up the wick and for the next 15 minutes put a great deal of pressure onto the Edinburgh defence, gradually moving the ball closer to the line, only superb tackling keeping them out. However, it was another error which gave the initiative back to Edinburgh and a break out from Auld was followed up and ended with Turley scoring the fifth try in the right corner, Hart scored the kick and Edinburgh were 31-5 in the lead. A couple of minutes later Callum Anderson went over for a 36-5 lead.

Back on the attack, Ontario scored their second try, again from a ruck/maul situation, with Lucas Rumball coming up with the ball. However, the sideline boys were a bit tardy with the tee, forcing the kicker to drop-kick the conversion. He missed and the score was 36-10. Then came

the stand-out touch down as Edinburgh again forced the Blues back and, winning lineout ball, launched up field with No. 3, Simon Berghan, leading the charge. A few metres out, the huge prop then sold the most outrageous dummy to the full back and dived over for his try for 41-10.



And that should have been that, but the never-say-die visitors went on the rampage and were rewarded with a third try right on the final whistle, Pau Culinie being the scorer this time. With the kick missed – it was an awful night for the boot – the referee blew for time with the home side taking a deserved 41-15 win.

Well, more or less deserved.... Once Ontario got going, they showed a great deal of flare and ability and were just lacking that final, killer punch that the best sides have. They had a great deal of possession and territory in the second half, but gave the ball up a bit too easily at times. Yes, it was a 41-15 score, but was far from a 41-15 game.

Images from the match – in spite of the appalling lights – will appear [here](#) over the next few days.