

Rugby – Edinburgh Rugby v Newport-Gwent Dragons, Guinness PR012

Edinburgh Slay Dragons to Take Crucial Pro12 Victory



Report by Stephen Brunsdon, images by John Preece.


Edinburgh secured only their second Guinness Pro12 victory of the season by beating Newport Gwent Dragons 24-10 at BT Murrayfield on Saturday. But despite this much needed result, the home side will ultimately be disappointed in a performance that should have yielded a bonus point through two disallowed tries. A scrappy first half in front of another sparse crowd picked up in the second as Edinburgh opened the floodgates and ran clear of their Welsh opponents.



Edinburgh's habitual poor start to matches in this year's Guinness Pro12 continued when trying to run the ball out their own half in the opening minute. Centre Sam Beard could not be blamed for dropping an average pass from Tom Heathcote and putting his side immediately on the back foot. The first half was all about discipline, or lack of. Both sides failed to gather any momentum or rhythm and would each give away needless penalties. The scrum in particular was a mess and as was the case against Ulster last weekend, Edinburgh struggled initially. John Andress was sin binned alongside Boris Stankovich after another collapsed scrum; each side getting on the nerves of both referee Peter Fitzgibbons and the BT Murrayfield faithful.

Edinburgh had try scoring chances though and at the centre of each was the ubiquitous Tim Visser. The Flying Dutchman should have opened the scoring after latching onto a kick through by

flanker Hamish Watson. But Visser couldn't control the awkwardly bouncing ball in the dead ball area and knocked on. From then on, Edinburgh looked to be the more settled outfit and produced much more running rugby; at times unnecessarily so. Handling errors were all too common as the home side seemed nervous when getting into good territorial positions.

Despite losing influential number eight Cornell du Preez to a potentially season ending injury, Edinburgh got even closer to a try. A skewed clearance kick from Dragons scrum half Jonathan Evens found only Visser. The Winger then breezed through the Welsh defence, sidestepping here and there before beautifully feeding Watson who was dragged down short of the line. The flanker then slid over the line, only for the try to be disallowed after being held up. Edinburgh did finally open the score five minutes from the break through a Tom Heathcote penalty. The home side then doubled their lead three minutes later; again Heathcote slotting the kick. 

Into the second half, the Dragons began to gain some momentum and were able to enter the match proper. Pressurising the Edinburgh defence deep in the 22, the visitors managed to build phases; something they had failed to do in the opening forty minutes.

They breached the Edinburgh whitewash though, four minutes into the second period. Despite good hands from the hosts, the Dragons turned the ball over and through Evans, Edinburgh were then chasing the ball back in their own half. The visitors then went through a series of pick and go phases. Full back Matthew Pewtner then found his way through the non-existent home defence and touched down almost unopposed under the sticks. Jason Tovey converted to take the Welsh into the lead 7-6.

If Edinburgh heads were down, it didn't show as they fought back well. Heathcote slotted a forty sixth minute penalty to move the hosts back in the lead before a well taken try from

Visser extended the lead further. Man of the match Watson won a turnover deep in Edinburgh territory and Heathcote hacked the ball down field. Lee Byrne covered for the Dragons but his clearing kick was charged by the chasing Visser; the Dutch winger picking up to race round for the score. Heathcote converted to make the lead 16-7.

O'Brien missed a penalty two minutes later which would have given the Dragons some hope, but Edinburgh went for the jugular. The lead became commanding as Dougie Fife – on his return from injury – went over in the far corner to make it 21-7. From a penalty lineout, the Edinburgh forwards rolled their way towards the Welsh line before going through a series of pick and go phases. Sweeping the ball out to the backs, Andries Strauss floated a beautiful miss pass for Fife to go in untouched in the corner. From then on the Dragons faced an increasingly tall mountain to climb, and despite having more territory and possession in the final quarter, could only managed a further three points through the boot of O'Brien. Edinburgh used the final play of the match to attempt to build an attack, in pursuit of another try.

✘ And they almost did just that. A sumptuous break from Heathcote took the fly half up to the 22m before setting up Beard. The Kiwi centre was hauled down just short of the line and despite offloading to captain Coman, the home side were denied a try due to an offside. Ultimately, it would be a second victory of the season for Edinburgh; something that for the BT Murrayfield faithful to be cherished. But Coach Alan Solomons will be disappointed with the lack of a bonus point and discipline from his side. The Guinness Pro12 now takes a two week break from action as the European Champions Cup and Challenge Cup commences next week. Edinburgh begin their campaign with a uphill task against Bordeaux Bègles on 17th October before returning to face Lyon at BT Murrayfield the following week (24th October).

Result

Edinburgh 24 (6)

Tries: Visser, Fife

Con: Heathcote

Pens: Heathcote 4

Newport Gwent Dragons 10 (0)

Try: Pewtner

Con: Tovey

Pen: O'Brien

Images from the match will appear [here](#) over the next few days