

Rugby – Edinburgh v London Welsh, European Rugby Challenge Cup

Edinburgh overcome Welsh challenge



The third round of the European challenge Cup matched up Edinburgh Rugby and London Welsh at BT Murrayfield. Edinburgh, currently top of Pool 4 with two wins from two matches were coming off the back of a final quarter defeat to Zebre. Welsh, however, had not won a match in any competition, so far this season and were looking to capitalise on that defeat.

35 seconds in and it looked as if the visitors' record was to continue as an early penalty gave Tom Heathcote a chance to put the home side three points clear, but the next eight minutes of the game were all Welsh. They attacked the Edinburgh defence from all angles, driving the game into the Edinburgh half, but were kept at bay by the home side until the eighth minute when they were awarded a penalty, which Gordon Ross knocked over to draw the sides level at 3-3.

Edinburgh gradually came back into the game, but were easily held out and gave the ball away too often from mistakes or turnovers. One particularly costly 'turnover' came from Heathcote. His loose pass along the line was intercepted by the wrong winger and Rhys Crane cruised half the length of the pitch to touch down between the posts for the opening try. 8-3 to London Welsh and an easy conversion for Ross soon made it 10-3 with 22 minutes of the half still to play.

Following another attacking period by Edinburgh which failed with another turnover, Heathcote stepped up to put another three points on the board for Edinburgh. London Welsh then

suffered a yellow card from the restart as Ben West went straight through the jumper, leaving the Edinburgh player on the floor. A similar incident had occurred earlier in the match – where the attacking player ‘failed’ to leave the ground – but the referee had deemed that the offending player had been watching the ball. Heathcote, by this time was having a nightmare of a game and missed touch for the second time, putting the visitors back in possession. Ross then put them another three points ahead with a 27th minute penalty and a 13-6 scoreline.

By this time London Welsh were looking, by far the better team and only another penalty on the stroke of half time, gave Edinburgh any chance of closing the gap. Heathcote’s nightmare continued as the penalty was missed and the half time score remained at 13-6.



It was a different Edinburgh side which took to the field for the second half, and straight from the whistle they were hammering away at the visitors, who were defending well, but were being forced back at every tackle. All the hard work was justly rewarded in the 42nd minute as Willem Nel burrowed over from a pile of bodies to score Edinburgh’s first try. Heathcote, on the other hand was forced to watch another kick slide past the upright, but the home side were back in the game at 13-11.

Replacing Heathcote with Greg Tonks seemed to lift the Edinburgh attack to another level and the rest of the match was dominated by the home side, although Sam Hidalgo-Clyne – replacing Grayson Hart at 9 – kept Heathcote’s sad record going with an easy penalty miss just after the hour mark. But it was Tonks who made Edinburgh’s second try in the 65th minute. Despite desperate defending by the visitors, Edinburgh were inside 10 metres when Tonks received the ball in the

centre of the field and, drawing in the defence, sent a neat offload to Neil Cochrane who battered his way over the line for Edinburgh's second try. Hidalgo-Clyne scored the conversion to make it 18-13 to the home side with 14 minutes of the match remaining.



Five minutes later, following another sustained attack, it was the forward's turn to make the try. Man-of-the-Match, Roddy Grant broke through two or three tackles on his way to being pulled up about a metre out. He set the ball back and Rory Sutherland, following up, gathered up the ball and barged over for another try. Again, Hidalgo-Clyne knocked the kick over and the score was pushed out to a much healthier 25-13.

Despite pushing hard for the final few minutes, the bonus-point try eluded them and the match ended with that scoreline and a third successive win for Edinburgh in their pool. The second half showed what Edinburgh are, and should be, capable of given the quality of their squad, but if they play again like they did in the first half of this match, it might be their last win.

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