

Rugby – Edinburgh v Ulster, Guinness PR012



13 Man Ulster hold on for narrow win.

With both teams depleted by International call-ups, Friday night's match at BT Murrayfield was a hard one to call. Ulster were still able to field a good few 'names', but Edinburgh's line up was far from being a selection of no-hopers.

It was Edinburgh who were to take an early lead with a Phil Burleigh try after eight minutes of play. Ulster had had the majority of early possession, but Fife chased down a clearing kick from Edinburgh's Grayson Hart, and beat Allen Michael in the air to keep the ball for the home side. A couple of passes later, Roddy Grant got the ball to Burleigh who charged over for the try. Tom Heathcote – who was to have a poor match with the boot – missed the conversion, so the score stayed at 5-0 to Edinburgh.

It was to be a relatively short-lived lead as Ulster were on the case straight from the restart. Driving the ball upfield with an open, running game, the visitors were soon up to within a couple of metres of the line. Quick recycling from a close in ruck left a gap in the defence for Ruan Pienaar to dive over for Ulster's opening score. He then converted to put Ulster into a two-point lead at 7-5.

For the next 15, or so, minutes, the match turned into a bit of a midfield battle, with Edinburgh gaining the upper hand due to Ulster indiscipline. Four penalty awards in this period, gave Heathcote the opportunity to pull the home side well clear, but he missed the first and third – hitting the post with that one – of these, so the match entered the final 10 minutes of the half with Edinburgh holding on to a narrow

four point lead.

With just over five minutes left, a scrum infringement gave Pienaar the chance to narrow the lead to one point, but an immediate penalty from the restart, restored Edinburgh's four point lead and the sides went into the break with the score at 14-10.




A few minutes into the second half, Heathcote had another kick at goal, only to see another one drift past the uprights, something that Pienaar didn't experience as his 48th minute effort bisected the posts to, once again, bring the match to a one-pointer at 14-13.

Then, in the 51st minute, Ulster scored their second try of the match. Making his second, unforced, error of the opening ten minutes, Jack Cuthbert cleared the ball straight into touch, giving Ulster a lineout deep in Edinburgh's half. Quick ball caught the home side napping and centre, Darren Cave was put through a huge gap by Ian Humphries, to dive over under the posts. Pienaar scored the simple conversion and Ulster had regained the lead for the first time since their 13th minute try. 20-14 to the 'Irishmen'.

Cuthbert then partially redeemed himself with blazing gallop up the centre of the park from the restart. Gaining about 40 metres before being brought down, the resultant ruck resulted in another penalty for Heathcote to see sailing past the posts as the stand-off continued with his nightmarish return to the starting line up.

As the game approached the final quarter, the match was being played in Edinburgh's half. Another ruck setup then turned bad for Ulster. Centre, Stuart McCloskey, piled in to clear Hamish Watson off the ball, but grabbed the Edinburgh player around

the legs and turned him completely upside down. It wasn't a vicious upending, but referee, Leighton Hodges, handed out a straight red card and Ulster were down to 14. This should have given Edinburgh a, more than, fighting chance, but they fluffed the lineout and Ulster cleared. 

Heathcote found a bit of form a few minutes later with a successful kick to pull Edinburgh up to within a score at 20-17, but missed his sixth kick on 68 minutes to put a wee cloud over his starting place. Inside the final 10 minutes, Ulster lost another player – yellow this time around – and were down to 13, but two 'not straight' lineout throws from replacement hooker, Grant Shiells, did nothing to aid the cause and, so, Ulster managed to hold on for the narrowest of wins.

Edinburgh had their chances, but with Heathcote putting in a rare, disastrous kicking performance, they were never quite able to stretch clear. Ulster, on the other hand, were guided through a difficult match by the class act that is Ruan Pienaar and held on for a edgy win.

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