

Rugby – Edinburgh v Dragons, European Challenge Cup


Edinburgh slaughter Dragons to make Scottish rugby history



BT Murrayfield hosted one of the European Rugby Challenge Cup semi-finals on Friday night with Wales' Newport-Gwent Dragons the visiting side.

The Dragons were coming off the back of a PRO12 win against Leinster, so were fairly confident of taking the win. Edinburgh, on the other hand, had been hammered by Munster the previous week, but were still talking up their chances of success. Neither team had made a European Rugby final before so, to use the old adage, it was all to play for.

And play they did. Both sides put on a superb display of rugby in front of 8,231 supporters – with a fair number from Glasgow in support – but Edinburgh proved too strong for the visitors, running in five tries to the Dragons' one.

Dragons took an early lead with a Dorian Jones' penalty after three minutes, but Edinburgh were soon on the attack and, 10 minutes in, Sam Hidalgo-Clyne levelled the score at 3-3. Although the visitors gained possession from the restart,  the home side soon turned them over and set off upfield once again. A couple of line-outs in the Dragons' 22 gave the Edinburgh men good possession and Dougie Fife carried to within a few yards of the line. A quick recycle saw the ball into the centre and Stuart McInally – playing in his 'old' flanker role – battled his way through a couple of tackles and

dived over for the first try. Hidalgo-Clyne then kicked the conversion and Edinburgh were 10-3 ahead after 15 minutes.

Once again the Dragons came back with the ball from the restart and from a line out attacked the Edinburgh 22. They were turned over in front of the posts, but it was done illegally and Jones sent his second penalty of the night over for 10-6.

The home side then switched on the power and two successive penalty kicks to touch had the teams set up in the Dragons 22. Hidalgo-Clyne put in a sniping run up the centre and the subsequent ruck saw the ball out to the wing for Tim Visser to gallop home for the second try. Hidalgo-Clyne missed this kick so the score stayed at 15-6 with just over 15 minutes of the half still to play.

During the next 10 minutes or so the score went up to 18-9 following an exchange of penalties – Jones going ‘in off’ for the visitors points – but Edinburgh were clearly in the ascendancy and another penalty in overtime saw the score at 21-9 at the break.



Dragons came out strongly in the second half and put a bit of pressure on the Edinburgh defence, pressure which told as , three minutes into the half the scored their try, prop, Dan Way, launching himself over from a metre or so out. Jones converted to bring the Dragons up to within a score at 21-16.

Dragons then lost their second player to yellow for infringing at the breakdown, inside the 22 following a superb combination of Phil Burleigh and Visser which saw Edinburgh take the ball deep into Dragons' territory.

The five metre scrum went the way of the Dragons, but, in attempting to clear, Jason Tovey had his kick charged down by Ben Toolis. Toolis was the quickest to react and chased the

bouncing ball into the goal area and touched down less than a metre from the dead ball line for Edinburgh third. Hidalgo-Clyne sent the ball over for the conversion and Edinburgh were in a healthy 28-16 lead. A couple of minutes later, the scrum half added to Edinburgh's tally with another three-pointer to take the home score to over 30 at 31-16.

✘ Edinburgh's tails were now well and truly up and the Dragons had no answer to the home side's play. This was especially noticeable in the set pieces where the Edinburgh scrum was much the stronger and the lineout managed to steal the ball from the visitors on several occasions.

With 15 minutes left, Hidalgo-Clyne added insult to injury when he picked up loose ball in the Dragons' half and sprinted through unopposed for the fourth try, He also converted and the score was now an unassailable 38-16.

Less than three minutes later, the backs were on the scoreboard again. Following yet another turnover, Sam Beard carried deep into Dragons' territory, before releasing Fife round the outside for the fifth try on the night. Another conversion from Hidalgo-Clyne cemented the scrum half's position at the top of the tournament's individual points table and put the icing on a very dominant performance from the home side.

Despite losing their third man to yellow, the Dragons put up a stiff fight in the dying minutes, but they were held out and the home side celebrated at the final whistle to be the first Scottish team to qualify for a European Rugby Final of any sort.

Final score Edinburgh Rugby 45 Newport-Gwent Dragons 16.

Images from the match will appear [here](#) early next week.