

Rugby – Edinburgh v Leinster, Guinness PR012

Leinster sink Edinburgh's Champions Cup play-off chances.




Needing a bonus point win, as well as 'advantageous' results in other matches, Edinburgh were up against it in their task to finish, at least, seventh in the Guinness PR012 table and secure a play-off match for qualification to the European Rugby Champions Cup next season, which, ironically, was likely to have been against Gloucester.

However, two tries in the final 10 minutes of the match sealed the host side's fate as the former Heineken Cup holders came back from a point down to seal the win.

Leinster were on it from the start and put Edinburgh's defence under pressure from the whistle. Only a smothering tackle from Tim Visser – yes, Visser – stopped the assault. The home side then had their short period of dominance, but that ended with a penalty which Sam Hidalgo-Clyne saw over for a 3-0 lead after seven minutes.

The next period of play was fairly evenly balanced, but the visitors pressurised Edinburgh into a penalty, but Ian Madigan, playing under advantage, went for a successful drop goal to even the scores at 3-3 with 15 minutes on the clock. However, two minutes later, they were in the lead with a fine try from open play.

Pushing up the centre of the pitch, a neat inside ball from Sean O'Brien put Noel Reid through a big gap and he easily galloped in for the try. Madigan converted and the score was 10-3 for Leinster.

Not to be outdone, Edinburgh then came roaring back with a try of their own. Enjoying several minutes of possession and territory, Edinburgh took the second of two chances at crossing the line. The first was initiated by Tom Heathcote  following an untidy Leinster lineout clearance. Pulling in two defenders, Heathcote slipped the ball out of the tackle than Visser put Dougie Fife in the clear down the line. However, wing, Dave Kearney, just got across and tackled – with few arms evident – Fife into touch right on the corner flag. Lineout specialist, Ben Toolis, then disrupted the Leinster throw in and the ball fell to Hamish Watson. Watson took full advantage of the space left in the defence and romped in to score behind the posts. Hidalgo-Clyne then slotted home the conversion to bring the sides level again at 10-10.

But Leinster are always dangerous and it took the Irish side less than five minutes to regain the lead. Pulling the home side all over the place, another inside ball caught the defence napping but, this time the receiver had company. With only one man to beat, Kearney slipped the ball to Jack Conan and the sub ran in from 20-odd metres to score under the posts. Madigan, once again, scored the kick and 17-10 was the score.

The final few minutes were fairly evenly matched, with both sides showing a bit off attacking flair, but with no further scoring 17-10 was the half time score.

From the restart, Edinburgh pressurised the Leinster defence and forced the visitors back into their own 22, eventually winning a penalty from a scrum, which Hidalgo-Clyne scored to bring the hosts up to within four points.

Then, once again the play switched around and Leinster had a period of dominance. Driving up into the Edinburgh half, a mix of passing and rucking, put them within a few metres of the Edinburgh line. The ball was moved quickly along the line from

left to right and the second last man pulled Visser in off his wing before passing the ball out to Zane Kirchner, giving the South African wing a clear run in. Man-of-the-Match Madigan failed to score the conversion, but they now had a nine point – and crucially, two-score – lead at 22-13.

From the restart, once again, the run of play swapped around and it was the home side's turn to take the initiative and it only took a few minutes for Edinburgh to get back to within a score of the Irish men.



Basically repeating what Leinster had done at the other end, the hosts set up in the Leinster 22 and, from a combination of back and forward play, it was another out-of-the-tackle pass from Heathcote that opened the door. His pass to Fraser McKenzie drew in enough defenders to leave space wide and Visser managed to break through a tackle to dive over for a try in the corner. With a suspicion of him being held in the tackle, referee Nigel Owens went upstairs for TMO confirmation, which confirmed that Visser had merely been upended, so the try stood. Hidalgo-Clyne was on the money with the touch line conversion and the score was now 22-20 to Leinster.

With less the 15 minutes left to play, Edinburgh's scrum won yet another penalty in the opponents 22, which Hidalgo-Clyne slotted home to take the lead at 23-22 into the final period of the game.

And what an unfortunate 10 minutes it proved to be with Leinster scoring those two tries.

The first came off the back of a series of rucks in the left corner – the visitors having got there thanks to Madigan's fine running – with Jordi Murphy crossing the whitewash and the second came with just a couple of minutes left, this time

it was Jimmy Goparth taking advantage of a gap in the line to dive over near the left-hand upright. Madigan scored the second of the attempts at goal, but Leinster were already out of sight and the match finished with Edinburgh running out of space down the line while attacking deep in the Leinster 22.

So a disappointing end to a long and, at times, trying season for Edinburgh, but failing to beat the Dragons the previous week at Rodney parade made a difficult task nigh impossible. Still, with Alan Solomons agreeing another 12 months' extension and some fine young players coming through, next season should be looking a bit brighter.

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