

Rugby – Edinburgh v Agen, European Rugby Challenge Cup

Bonus point win keeps European hopes alive



Edinburgh finally woke up and scored four tries in their latest European Challenge Cup match at BT Murrayfield on Friday night. The match also marked the occasion of Alex and Ben Toolis lining up in the second row – the first time twins had done so in, at least, this country.

The French visitors, SU Agen, were never really at the races and, although they pressed on a couple of occasions, never looked like taking the match. Edinburgh, for their part, had ‘rested’ a few of their International players, causing a few mutters from the pretty sparse – but typical numbered – crowd.

The first 20 minutes, or so, of the match were a bit flat with neither side looking like scoring – a ‘high’ point being the hosts getting within a few metres of the line at one point via a kick through from Chris Dean – until the 18th minute when Greg Tonks opened the scoring by sinking a penalty for an offside inside the five metre zone. 3-0 to Edinburgh, but Tonks boot was to fail him for the rest of the match.

From the restart, the match went back into the fairly dreary contest that had preceded the score until, with 25 minutes gone, the referee – who was to have issues with the scrum all match – awarded Agen a scrum penalty 20 metres out which their No. 10, Francois Bouvier somehow missed. Or as Agen reported it “25’ *mêlée Agenaise dominante et récompensée d’une pénalité. Mais Bouvier manque son coup de pied. 3-0 !!*”

The home side now seemed to decide that enough was enough and began to turn up the heat. A close-in maul on 30 minutes saw

Nicolas Chocou carded, setting up Edinburgh for a period of dominance.



Despite having the man advantage, it took the home side eight minutes to get across the line. A series of ruck and offside penalties went to the sidelines for lineouts, until Tonks took charge of another two minutes from the break, and taking a quick tap, he caught the defence napping, handing the ball to hooker, Stuart McInally who swung a long pass out to No. 8, Magnus Bradbury. He then had the relatively easy job of taking two defenders to five metres to the touch line for a try. Tonks missed the kick, but the score was 8-0 as the teams went into the break.

The first 20 minutes of the second half were very much like the first, and although Edinburgh enjoyed the lions' share of the ball and territory, there was always a handling error at the end of the move to cause concern for the home support.

With the scrum woes continuing – Edinburgh's pack being under real pressure for one of the few times this season – it was No. 20, Mike Coman, who ended the stalemate with a second Edinburgh try.

A break up the left wing from Will Helu drove the match into the Agen 22 and a quick recycle soon had the ball on the opposite wing. Damien Hoyland did his bit in attack, then a couple of phases saw Coman crash over the line for the 60th minute try. Tonks, once again failed to convert, but the 13-0 score line put a bit of daylight between the teams.

With Agen beginning to look a bit jaded, Edinburgh's backs were hammering at them from all angles and putting a great deal of pressure on the opposition's tiring defence. Tonks then partially redeemed himself with the third try, selling a great dummy before diving over, but then blotted his copy book by

missing the kick. Still, 18-0 with 10 minutes to go was looking good, but could the bonus point be at hand?

Yes they could! Another, 'kickable', penalty was won, but Tonks had seen the light and went for the corner, a decision which proved fruitful. Off the lineout, Hamish Watson came round the side of the resultant maul and went over for the bonus point try. Tonks etc, etc..... but 23-0 was to be the winning score.



Hoyland crossed the whitewash a couple of minutes later, but had his 'try' chalked off for a forward pass and, just as the clock ticked over the 80 minutes, an interception from Agen saw the visitors attack the length of the pitch in a last-gasp attempt at a score. That was foiled by Dougie Fife at full-back and. Following his turn over, Edinburgh launched an attack of their own..!! Why?! With the crowd urging them to kick the ball dead, they charged upfield on the offensive. A fifth try? No, as they, in turn were turned over and Agen were once again on the attack. However, thankfully, that came to naught and the match fizzled to a close with a knock on about four minutes after 'full time'.

A fine win for Edinburgh – weathering a late yellow for a scrum infringement only bad enough for a free kick(!) – giving them a chance, if they beat Grenoble next week, to advance to the knock-out rounds. But the scrum will need to get back to form if they are to overcome another French side in their quest.

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