

American Football/Gridiron – Wolves valiant effort falls just short



QB Jamie Morrison looks for gaps to run through.

The Edinburgh Wolves suffered another late defeat as part of their first season in the Premiership. This tough loss will hurt a little but more as they were massive underdogs and managed to keep the 3rd ranked Tamworth Phoenix within reach right until the end.

Head Coach Don Edmonston said, “I couldn’t be prouder of the lads, they took on the 3rd best team in the country and gave them a game.” Edinburgh, who were, touted as being four score underdogs by most media outlets and while this result may still be a loss the rest of the division will have taken note and be prepared for a tough trip up north.

The game took place Saturday at Meggetland with a swirling and blustery wind working against the normal air raid style offense that Edinburgh offer was hampered somewhat as Quarterback Jamie Morrison had passes float agonisingly long in the final few minutes. As so often the quoted by commentators in the NFL this is a game of inches and a few inches shorter on some passes would have seen Edinburgh leading going into the final few moments.

The game started well for Edinburgh as they moved the ball in a small and managed style with a drive that took 15 plays, moving the ball 78yards, before being finished by Jamie Morrison as he broke a run to the right of the line and ran

unchallenged into the end zone. With the extra point missed the score was 6-0 to the Wolves.

Tamworth Phoenix, keen to show why they are ranked so highly and they replied instantly as they moved the play downfield quickly, with their second offensive play of the game only stopped from being a touchdown by Cassian Graham's last ditch tackled after Phoenix Running Back Elliot Walters broke through. The great field position and a couple more plays had Tamworth knocking on the door and after a pair of blocked running plays Deji Ali finally broke through the stout Wolves defense. The added extra point gave Tamworth a slender 7-6 lead as the referees called an end to the first quarter.

A couple more drives went by as defense on both side of the ball stepped up before Tamworth put together a long drive with a mix of passing and running the ball. A run by Elliot Walters put Phoenix in another strong position with 1st and goal. A couple of plays later and Tamworth Wide Receiver Marcus Boswell hauled a pass in at the back of the end zone. Tamworth added the extra point and stretched the lead to 14-6.

Looking out of sorts on offense Edinburgh seemed to be struggling to move the ball, and after a great punt pinned Tamworth on their 2-yard line the hope was that a good defensive stand could put the Wolves in great field position. But again Tamworth's excellent control of the ball and a couple of good passing plays deep down field allowed them back into scoring position. Now in a rhythm with the ball a pass to the back of the end zone this time hauled in by Ben Burslam. The Edinburgh special teams managed to block the extra point after significant penetration at the line, but the Wolves were trailing 20-6 looking at a long way back into the game.

Inside the final two minutes of the first half, Edinburgh's offense took control of the ball and with the hurry up offense started to move the ball quickly. Some quick slant passes put

the Wolves in an excellent position, and Calum Davidson finished with a run to the outside and dives for the corner, an added extra point closed the gap to 20-13 at halftime.

The second half started with neither team managing to move the ball as defences stepped up with Edinburgh managing to recover a fumble forced inside their own 5-yard line on one drive and forcing Tamworth quarterback Patrick Daley into evasive manoeuvres before he threw the ball away.

The first points of the second half came when another Wolves drive looked like it was about to stall. An intelligent and creative play where Edinburgh sold the run, the Phoenix defence bit and Dave Orr made a straight run over the top, a quick short pass and Orr was free a run into the end zone and added extra point had the game tied 20-20.

Tamworth came out all guns firing but to no avail, as after a solid drive the Wolves defence stepped up and the drive ended on the 1-yard line when Cassian Graham, an outstanding performer on the day, knocked a pass down in the end zone. With the game finely balanced Edinburgh thought they had escaped when Tamworth had a touchdown ruled out for holding and the referees brought the play back. Just four plays later Tamworth's Elliot Walters broke through the middle of the Wolves defensive line and the Phoenix added the extra point to give them the final score of the game. At 27-20 and with a mounting list of exhausted players Edinburgh came close with some long passes that fell inches outside of the receivers hands, and Tamworth took a knee to end the game.

With four games completed this season Edinburgh sit with a 1-2-1 record (1 win, 2 losses and 1 tie) they will feel that could easily have been 4-0. Another brave performance from the Wolves that will have players and coaches ready and excited for next Saturday's important encounter with Lancashire Wolverines.