

Rugby League – Edinburgh Eagles v Wallsend Eagles, North-east RL Cup Final

Eagles lose to Eagles at Falcons



Last Saturday, on another warm and sunny day at Kingston Park – home of Newcastle Falcons – Edinburgh Eagles met current North East Rugby League champions, Wallsend Eagles, in the final of North East RL Cup.

This is the first time Edinburgh have competed in this competition, defeating Gateshead Storm, Jarrow Vikings and Catterick Crusaders on route to the final, and they contributed to a match worthy of a final in any sporting competition, but ultimately came up short in a 36-28 defeat with the match still finely poised with five minutes to play.

Edinburgh travelled with their band of dedicated supporters who made themselves heard above the largely partisan crowd and

the Eagles scored the first of 5 tries in the 4th minute when Mark Robertson raced in on the left wing to take a 4-0 lead after the conversion was missed.

As the match developed, it was clear this would be yet another physical encounter with both sides attacking but unable to score as respective defences held firm until the 16th minute when Mikey Mair made a break to bring Eagles back into attack near the Wallsend try line. Wallsend couldn't hold out and Jonny Quinn was able to collect a pass to run in under the posts to extend the Eagles lead to 10-0 after a Fergus Simpson conversion.

Wallsend now realised they were not going to have things their own way and the crowd must have thought they were at Wimbledon as first Wallsend would work through their tackles to advance to the Edinburgh line only to be held up and then Eagles would advance back to the Wallsend line also to be held up.

This pattern continued until the 32nd minute when the Edinburgh defence was finally breached – Wallsend scored 2 tries in quick succession to take a 12-10 lead after successful conversions. Craig Robertson responded with a converted try for Eagles to restore the Edinburgh lead only for Wallsend to immediately score a 3rd try to give them a 18-16 half time lead.



After the half time break, the scoreboard operator was straight back into action, as Edinburgh immediately went back on the offensive as firstly Craig Robertson scored and then Lucas Reid scored with the try of the game, running the length of the field to score under posts to restore the Eagles lead to 10 points after successful Fergus Simpson kicks (28-18).

The first half pattern would again be repeated with aggressive defence and heat causing mistakes on both sides and it was inevitable perhaps that the experienced Wallsend side would use this experience to their advantage as they kept up to pressure on Edinburgh to score 2 tries on 58 and 62 minutes to even the scores after one of the conversion attempt was converted.

As the game entered the final quarter in the balance, Wallsend were in control and the Eagles cause was not helped by the sin binning of Nick Hanmer which allowed Wallsend to keep up the pressure and the game remained in the balance as it entered the final 10 minutes. Wallsend forced a goal line drop out and Eagles were able to regain possession but soon gave away a penalty. From the resulting set of six, Wallsend forced their way over on the left wing to give themselves a 4 point cushion as the big screen at Kingston Park was showing England walked onto the pitch in Russia for their World Cup quarter final.

This seemed to motivate the Eagles players who knew a converted try would be enough to win the game with only 5 minutes left and they stepped up the game taking the ball into the Wallsend half but were unable to score and restore their lead. With time now running out Wallsend took advantage of the tired Eagles defence to score another try to put a little gloss on the score at 36-28 and after the kick off, Edinburgh frustration finally boiled over when a fight on the half way line saw 2 Eagles players and 1 Wallsend player red-carded although any animosity was quickly forgotten as both set of players warmly embraced at the final whistle knowing they had

taken part in a match which the watching spectators had thoroughly enjoyed.



Coach Barry McGuffog said afterwards; “Congratulations to Wallsend, they played to their strengths and got the result. I think it’s fair to say that we’re a little disappointed as we feel we could, and possibly should, have taken the game. Twice we were ten points up but allowed ourselves to be sucked in to a type of game that doesn’t suit us and we surrendered that lead but, hey-ho, some you win some you lose. We’ll learn from today and move on. I’m proud of the lads though as we’ve come so far since last season and had you offered me the Scottish title and a cup final in April, then I’d have taken it. We now need to build on this season for next year.”

Understandably delayed match report courtesy of Edinburgh Eagles’ Andrew McPhail.

Images from the match can be [viewed here](#).