

# Rugby – Edinburgh v Benetton, Guinness PR014

*Edinburgh squeak home for the win*



Italy's Benetton were the visitors to BT Murrayfield for the Guinness PR014's fifth round match in Conference 'B'. Edinburgh were coming off the back of a confidence sapping loss away to Leinster the previous week, so had a lot to prove to the faithful.

That confidence was dented a touch more right from the start as, within a minute of Tommaso Allan's kick-off, Edinburgh were penalised at a ruck and Allan knocked over the kick for 3-0.

However, a bit of a juggle from the restart saw Edinburgh regather the ball to set up the first bit of real attacking play of the match. Pushing hard at the visitors' defence, the hosts were soon within five metres of the line, but the referee, Nigel Owens, saw nothing doing and pulled the game back for an Edinburgh penalty to give Simon Hickey a sixth minute chance to equalise for 3-3.

For the following quarter of an hour, Edinburgh were easily

the dominant side and just failed to score their first try when Matt Scott was deemed to have performed a 'double movement' in act of scoring, but things were looking good for the home side.

His, and Edinburgh's, reward came in the 19<sup>th</sup> minute when he fired through a gap in the opposition defence to dive over next to the upright. Hickey then slotted the kick home and it was 10-3.

Within a couple of minutes of the restart, it was 17-3. An Edinburgh scrum out on the left touch line saw the ball slung to Hickey, who drifted across to the centre of the pitch, pulling the defence with him. He then released the ball to Duhan van der Merwe and the South African wing just sailed through a hole in the line to go in under the posts, with Hickey again converting to extend the lead to 14 points.

By this time, Benetton had started to get their game together and enjoyed a period of possession and territory which was rewarded with their first try of the match. With the pack hammering away at the Edinburgh try line, the defence was drawn over, leaving a gap out wide on Edinburgh's right. The ball was then moved quickly through the hands to Luca Sperandio, who dived over in the corner as van der Merwe looked on from afar. Allan missed the conversion, so 17-8 it



remained.

As the game entered the final five minutes of the half, neither side had managed to gain much of a foothold, but that all changed when Chris Dean teamed up with Blair Kinghorn to create a two-on-one, with Kinghorn trotting in for the third try of the evening. Hickey, once again, bisected the uprights and it was 24-8 with less than five minutes to go to the break.

With Edinburgh being penalised at a breakdown, Allan put Benetton deep in the home 22 and the forwards went to work from the line out. A good many rucks and mauls later, Cherif Traore burrowed over on the 40<sup>th</sup> minute to pull the visitors five points closer. Allan then made it closer still with his conversion bringing the half time score to 24-15.

Nine minutes of pressure in the second half lead to Edinburgh's, converted, bonus-point try to extend their tally to 31. Play had swung back and forth inside the visitors' 22, with forwards and backs playing their part, but it was a back line move which, near enough, mirrored that of Benetton's first try, Dougie Fife ending the play and scoring in the corner.

From here, Edinburgh came under increasing pressure from the Italian side and a further three tries from the visitors must have had a few finger nails under attack on the sidelines.

A couple of minutes after Edinburgh's try, Sperandio scored again. And, again, he had an empty space in front of him on his way to the line. Allan missed the conversion, but the gap was closing in at 31-20.

The home side then went looking for their fifth try, but the next score was to be Benetton's. And, once again, it was Sperandio scoring in his favoured right corner. This one, however, was not so clear cut and a long – very long – TMO consultation decided that he had not put a foot in touch, so the try stood. He wasn't doing his kicker, Allan any favours,

though, and another conversion was missed to leave the score at 31-25.

With the match held up for another long period while Fraser McKenzie was attended to by the medical staff, Benetton were the side who seemed to keep their concentration better and a 70<sup>th</sup> minute yellow for Grant Gilchrist gave Allan the opportunity to stick the ball in the corner to set up another attacking position.



And, two minutes later, the position paid off as Marco Barbini forced the ball over the line from close in to take the score, with the conversion to come, worryingly close at 31-30. Sighs of relief all round were the order of the day as a hushed stadium watched his attempt drift past the front of the posts, keeping Edinburgh in the narrowest of leads.

But that was the end of the points scoring for the night. The match ended with a penalty to Edinburgh and a spot of confusion over the kick to touch, leading to another TMO decision which, thankfully, drew a veil over, what was, a fortunate win.

Despite scoring five tries to four, Tommaso Allan's place kicking had, effectively, won the game for the home side and

probably giving Edinburgh's head coach, Richard Cockerill much to say in the changing room after the match.

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