

Rugby – Edinburgh v Zebre, Guinness PR014

Italy's Zebre were the first visitors to BT Murrayfield on Saturday evening as the 2019-20

Guinness PR014 season got under way. With both teams having players

away on World Cup duty, this match would be a test of squad depth as

much as anything.

Six minutes in and it

seemed that Edinburgh had the edge on depth. Winning back ball from

the visitors, the home side won a lineout close in and drove over for

the opening try. Fraser McKenzie claimed the touch down and Jaco van

der Walt followed up with the conversion for 7-0.

Soon after the restart,

Zebre were up in Edinburgh's 22, testing the home defence and running hard at the line. Reward came with a penalty at the breakdown

which No. 10, Francois Brummer slotted home for 7-3.



The pack, as always, played their part in subduing the opposition

Holding Zebre into

their own half from the restart, Edinburgh then came roaring back on

the offensive, driving the visitors deep into their 22 and setting up

a few metres out from the line. Somehow, scrum half, Nic Groom slipped the ball out to Mark Bennett and the centre trotted over to

touch down while almost everyone else was looking the other way.

Bennett looked a bit

guilty as he placed the ball, but the referee saw nothing untoward

and awarded the try. Van der Walt then knocked over the kick for 14-3

with 17 minutes played.

Once again, from the

restart, the receiving side – this time Edinburgh – came under immediate pressure.

Setting up about 10 metres out, Groom went for the box kick, but failed to clear the outstretched arm of Zebre's 8, Giovanni Licata.

As the ball ricocheted back over the line, Licata followed through and dived for the bouncing ball just short of the dead ball line. Referee, George Clancy was unsighted so went 'upstairs' where several angles confirmed the try. With the kick missed it, was 14-8 after 20 minutes of play.

Another Edinburgh try then came up three minutes later. Winning ball in the midfield, it was slung out to Duhan van der Merwe on the wing and the South African 11 broke through a couple of tackles before dropping the ball off the the following Groom. A big dive over the line from the No. 9 and it was 19-8, then 21-8 after van der Walt's conversion.



Jaco van der Walt finished with a 100% kicking rate

The next 10 minutes or

so were fairly even, although Edinburgh applied a bit more pressure

to Zebre territory and the breakthrough came just after the half hour mark.

Once again, the ball

went through the hands, ending up with Bennett. The centre came under

scrutiny, but a neat dummy saw him past the first man. The second man

in line wasn't so easily fooled, but Bennett off-loaded to his fellow

centre, Matt Scott and the No. 12 trotted in for the bonus-point try.

Van der Walt converted again and, with 34 minutes played, it was

28-8.

The remainder of the half was mostly played at the visitor's end of the pitch and Edinburgh won a ruck penalty just on the break which van der Walt slotted home for a half time score of 31-8.

From the restart, Zebre kept possession of the ball for a long period of time, but were unable to make much progress up-field. Their chance to clear came with a penalty for a high tackle by van der Merwe, but this served to open the floodgates of another wave of Edinburgh attacking play.

As the home side battered their way up the centre, the visitors were gradually driven back and it was Bennet who came up with the points again.

Storming down the middle of the pitch, the centre crashed through a couple of tackles before almost losing his balance after the third(-ish). He kept going, though, and his momentum carried him over the line for his second, and Edinburgh's fifth, try and 36-8.

van der Walt once again converted for 38-8 with just under 10 minutes of the second half played.

The usual raft of substitutions then took place over the next period which seemed to

lead to the match getting a bit bogged down, with neither side gaining the upper hand.



On his own for the cameras, Federico Mori scores Zebre's second try

However, the upper hand was gained, briefly, by the visitors just before the 70 minute mark.

Winning a line out just inside the host's half, the ball was passed to sub, Federico Mori in the middle of the pitch. A quick side-step later and he was in the clear, out-sprinting van der Merwe in the run in to dive over behind the posts. The conversion then made it 38-15.

With 10 minutes to go and well clear in the points, the question was would the home side be content to play out the last period?

Eh... No.

On for Groom, Charlie

Shiel made a superb break from his own half to gain many metres into

the visitor's half, leaving player strewn in his wake. Just before

meeting the final defender, the scrum half dropped the ball off to

on-for-the-hat-trick Bennett and the centre had an easy run in for

the try.



Despite dominating proceedings, Edinburgh still had to kick clear on occasion.

Sub, Simon Hickey, then

converted for 45-15 and that was it...

Or, at least, that was

thought to be it, but Edinburgh weren't quite finished.

The seventh, and final

try was scored just before the final whistle with Edinburgh,

once

again, on the attack This time there were very few hands involved as

Hickey sent a pin-point kick across the width of the pitch for Jamie

Farndale to run on to, and run in with, to bring up the 50 points for

the match and a well deserved 50-15 win.

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