

Rugby – Edinburgh v Southern Kings, Guinness PRO14

The first match of 2020 at BT Murrayfield saw South African side, Isuzu Southern Kings, take the field to face an Edinburgh Rugby side flying high in the Guinness PRO14's Conference 'B'. With only one win, so far, this season, the visitors would be hoping to kick start the New Year with a second in the capital.

Early on in the match, that hope was looking up. Edinburgh had the first, serious, line break a few minutes in when a kick slotted through saw Duhan van der Merwe just beaten to the ball in the opposition 22, but it was the visitors who, probably had the upper hand.

As they gradually worked their way into Edinburgh's half, they looked more and more likely to be the first on the score board and, 10 minutes in, that proved to be the case.

With a path through seemingly blocked, a superbly weighted kick over the top from stand-off, JT Jackson, was chased and pounced on by their No. 11, Erich Cronje for the opening score. Cronje's boot deserted him for the conversion, but, 10 minutes in, the 'underdogs' were 0-5 ahead.



The errant elbow that reduced the Kings to 14 men

They were maybe 0-5

ahead, but they were soon down to 14 men. As the Kings were preparing

to return a high ball, Edinburgh's John Barclay flew in to tackle

Pieter Scholtz on the edge of the 22. Scholtz stuck his arm up to

defend himself but, in doing so, he struck Barclay in the throat with his elbow.

Play carried on, but at

the next stoppage, referee, Joy Neville, had a wee message in her ear

to check back. The replay of the incident did Scholtz no favours and,

while it probably wasn't malicious, an elbow to the throat, or above,

is a straight red, so the visitors were now down to 14 men with only

13 minutes played.



The Kings tackled hard all game
Edinburgh kicked to
their penalty to the line and, in the simplest of roll-overs,
they
rolled over the Kings' pack to thrust Mike Willemse in for the
try.
Jaco van der Walt, then followed up with a successful
conversion for
7-5 after 14 minutes.

With their tails up, it
wasn't long before the home side manufactured another chance.
Starting at the back, the ball was moved quickly forward and
Matt
Scott made a decisive break to put himself, Barclay and Duhan
van der
Merwe in a three-on-two in the visitor's half.

As he was tackled,
Scott off-loaded to Barclay who had nothing else to do, but...
drop
the ball.

Five, or so, minutes later, the Kings were ahead again. A penalty for not rolling away was duly despatched by Jackson for 7-8 after 26 minutes.

Three minutes later, it was back to an Edinburgh lead. A long running and passing move from the opposition 10 metre line made space on the outside for Edinburgh, for which, van der Merwe needed no further invitation to take advantage of. A gallop down the line, avoiding a diving tackle on the way, saw the big winger over in the corner for 12-8.



JT Jackson pulled one back for the visitors just before the break

Two minutes later, a copy-cat move, this time driven by the other wing, Eroni Sau, saw Matt Scott crash over in the same corner for 17-8. With van der Walt's conversion, the 19-8 score against 14 men should have

seen
Edinburgh into half time.

The South African side,
however, were having none of it. For the last few minutes of
the
half, the put enormous pressure on the Edinburgh defence and
received
their just reward on 39 minutes when they made enough space to
put
Jackson over in the corner for 19-13 going into the break.

The Southern Kings made
a reasonable start to the second half, but, within five
minutes,
their 14 man side were being pulled all over the place by
Edinburgh.



Eroni Sau scoring try number 6

Starting from deep in
their own half, another running-passing play found the home
side with
a huge overlap down the right and James Johnstone finished off
the
move with an easy score. Van der Walt then slotted home the

conversion for 26-13 and a try bonus point.

Over the next 15 minutes, Edinburgh seem to let their enthusiasm run away with them as they let a further two tries slip from their grasp through simple errors, but that was nothing compared to the King's woes.

Another front row injury with just over 25 minutes left saw them down to 13 men and the onset of 'non-contested' scrums, but their night was pretty much over with the player deficit. A penalty try for the home side soon did nothing for their hopes.



Dave Cherry doing his best 'Sau' impression

Edinburgh took full advantage and in the final 12 minutes, they scored another four tries through Eroni Sau, Dave Cherry, Charlie Shiel and Mark Bennett to seal an emphatic 61-13 victory which at half time, looked a distinct

possibility.

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