

Rugby League – Edinburgh Eagles v Ashton Bears, Coral Challenge Cup – Rd. 1

*Edinburgh Eagles welcomed North West Counties League club, Ashton Bears, to Edinburgh for their Challenge Cup 1st Round tie at the weekend. The Eagles were confident they could go one better than their appearance in 2019 with a game against a side who had never played in the competition before, and who were bringing with them a coachload of supporters to brave the long trek North.



The Eagles battled hard from the off.

There was a last minute change of plans when the original

pitch at Royal High School was deemed unplayable, meaning a change of venue to the 3G University of Edinburgh surface and this proved to suit the visitors better as they ran in 11 – with seven converted – tries. Despite this, the scoreline was not reflective of a hard fought and competitive game enjoyed by a large crowd in stormy weather conditions.

The match started brightly with both sides enjoying possession, although handling errors prevented any scoring until the 5th minute when Ashton opened the scoring with the first of their tries through Daniel Buick to give an early 0-6 lead after a successful kick by Ben Tootill.



The Eagles couldn't squeeze much closer to the line in the first half

The Eagles were not deterred by this early setback and both sides enjoyed good periods of possession, with good defence by both teams preventing any further scoring. Until, that is, the 30th minute when Ashton extended their lead to 0-12 following another converted try.

They then quickly capitalised on this score with another two tries before half time to make the score 0-22 to Ashton, Tootill missing his first kick of the afternoon after Ormshaw scored Ashton's fourth try – and the first of his four tries in the match.

To win the match, it seemed the Eagles would need another of their, obligatory, 2nd half fightbacks which was a feature of big matches in 2019.



On the day, Ashton were just the better side

However, the second half started badly for the Eagles when they conceded another try just after kick off to take the score to 0-28 and it was then becoming clear this was not going to be the Eagles day.

It would not be until Ashton scored another two converted tries to extend the lead to 0-40 that the Eagles finally got the score their hard work had merited when, in the 53rd minute, Terry Logan finished off good work by the forwards to narrow the score, after a successful Lewis Clarke conversion,

to 6-40.

Ashton scored next to restore their 40 point lead, however player/president, Barry McGuffog, lead his team from the front with a memorable try to peg back the score to 10-46 in the 60th minute and, for a while, it looked like the Eagles had found their confidence and rhythm as they camped in the Ashton half to press for another try to narrow the deficit and make the scoreline more indicative of the match.



No holds barred....

This momentum was stopped when Robertson was sent to the sin bin in the 65th minute and Ashton responded with 3 tries in the final 10 minutes to leave the final score as Eagles 10 – Ashton Bears 58.

Ultimately, Ashton won as they were the fitter, more experienced team and, although their win was well deserved, the scoreline does not tell the tale of the hard fought nature of this entertaining match played by two hardworking teams.

This was reflected in Club President/ Player Barry McGuffog in

his match address just after the final whistle to his Eagles players when he reminded them playing in the Challenge Cup is a bonus for the club and provides an opportunity to measure progress against the benchmark of a Rugby League heartlands club – for 30 minutes of the first half both teams were evenly matched until Ashton were allowed to take control of the game.



Barry McGuffog got his boots back on for this one. The Eagles will now start preparing their defence of the North East Rugby League Championship crown starting in May. If you are interested in getting involved with the Eagles in any capacity, please get in contact or follow their social media for regular updates.

**Despite the match being played a week, or so ago, the ER downtime meant that timely publication was not possible. However, we thought that a Scottish Rugby League side being invited to play in, possibly, the biggest tournament in the World worthy of inclusion.*

Match report courtesy of the [Eagles' Andrew McPhail](#)