

Rugby – Edinburgh v Lions, BTK United Rugby Championship

Coming off the back of two defeats to local opposition in South Africa, Edinburgh welcomed the Emirates Lions to the DAM Health Stadium for the Round 4 match in the BKT United Rugby Championship.

The first 20 minutes were fairly eventful with the visitors having two chances from the boot of Gianni Lombard and Edinburgh's Emiliano Boffelli almost getting clear down the left after collecting a Henry Immelman clearance.

However, the first points of the match came the way of the home side just as the clock reached the 20-minute mark.

Kicking a penalty to touch, the lineout ball was won by Grant Gilchrist and a maul set up. The pack then heaved their way up to, and over, the line with the ball being grounded for the try by No. 8, Bill Mata, and a 5-0 lead.



Bill Mata opened the scoring from a driving maul on the 20-minute mark. © 2022 J.L. Preece

Blair Kinghorn missed the conversion, so it remained at 5-0 to Edinburgh after 20 minutes.

Lombard missed another penalty attempt, but both sides were defending well and the game was, very much, an end-to-end affair.

The breakthrough for the Lions came in the 36th minute as the Lions pressurised the Edinburgh line with a series of rucks across the front to the home goal area.

Eventually, Edinburgh ran out of bodies and the Lions' No. 15, Andries Coetzee, found a gap to dive through for the five points. Lombard then came closer with the conversion, but still hit the post, so it was 5-0 with a couple of minutes left in the half.

With the home crowd looking for more points, just over 10 minutes into the second half, wing, Darcy Gaham obliged with a try in the corner.



Darcy Graham scored Edinburgh's second try of the match to regain the lead © 2022 J.L. Preece

The running move leading up to the try left space down the right wing and Boffelli's final pass finding Graham in the clear. Boffelli then stepped up to slot home the touchline conversion for 12-5 after 53 minutes.

As the sides regrouped, it was the Lions who regrouped first. A fairly simple cross-field move just inside their own half made sufficient space for outside centre, Henco van Wyk (*top image – JLP*) to dart through a gap and beat all-comers to the line, dotting down behind the posts for 12-10.

Lombard made no mistake this time and, with a successful conversion took the score to 12-12 with 13 minutes of the second half played.

With 20 minutes of the second half played, Edinburgh were, once more, in the lead.

Another lineout deep inside the Lions' 22 saw the hosts set up a driving maul and, what appeared to be, everyone in the team joined in to drive through and put Ben Muncaster over for the points. With Boffelli adding the extras it was 19-12 to

Edinburgh.



Lions' Francke Horn found a gap in the line to run in his try.

© 2022 J.L. Preece

Five minutes later it was, once again, all square.

Another off-the-top-of-a-lineout-try was scored by No. 8, Francke Horn. A couple of probing runs at the line had created some gaps, one being big enough for the lock to glide through and score for the visitors. Lombard then converted for 19-19 with less than 15 minutes left to play.

In what was turning out to be a very 'scorey' looking 20 minutes, Edinburgh once again won a penalty lineout close in and, once again, drove over the line. However, this time, the ball was 'held up' allowing the Lions to clear from a goal line dropout.



Gianni Lombard found his kicking boots in the second half to get the Lions over the line. © 2022 J.L. Preece

As the draw was looking likely, a loose ball was hacked through by the Lions' centre Marius Louw. Graham managed to get across to clear up in front of the posts, but he was left with little option, other than to hold on as the opposition piled into the resultant ruck.

Penalty awarded and scored! Lombard knocked the ball over to take the Lions into a narrow lead of 22-19 which they held onto to see the match out, handing the Edinburgh side their third defeat in a row to South African sides in this years' Championship.