

EDINBURGH

VS DRAGONS RFC

SATURDAY 17 SEPTEMBER, 7.35PM
BKT UNITED RUGBY CHAMPIONSHIP



150 



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CHAMPIONSHIP





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DOUGLAS STRUTH WELCOME

Good evening, and welcome back to DAM Health Stadium for tonight's BKT United Rugby Championship opening round clash against Dragons RFC.

I'd like to start this evening by offering everyone at Edinburgh Rugby's sincere condolences to the Royal Family at this time of national mourning. Her Majesty The Queen's dedication and service was without equal during her reign, she has left an indelible mark on this country, touching the lives of so many.

The game will be marked with a moment's silence before the game, with players and on-field staff wearing black armbands as a show of respect for Queen Elizabeth II.

Tonight we host Dragons RFC at DAM Health Stadium for the first time. Last season's reverse fixture was a thriller at Rodney Parade – perhaps most memorable from a Scottish perspective for Emiliano Boffelli's quickfire first try for the club.

There is a lot to be excited about as we head into our second season at DAM Health Stadium. Last season had so many enthralling moments in our new home, with an atmosphere that we have never been able to experience before. I believe we will be able to build on that first year, with some exciting additions joining our playing squad in the off season.



We welcome four new players into our squad this season, Sam Skinner, Wes Goosen, Nick Auterac, and Jamie Jack. Sam is set to make his debut from the bench tonight – the Scotland international lock/back-rower having joined from Exeter Chiefs. Loosehead props Nick and Jamie also join us from south of the border, from Northampton Saints and Amphill Rugby. We'll have to wait a little bit to see Wes in action, however from what we've seen in training I'm sure the former Hurricanes man will have you out of your seats.

This week we were also able to announce our captains for the season. Jamie Ritchie will co-captain the club alongside Grant Gilchrist for the 22/23 campaign. Both players have shown exemplary leadership qualities in their time at the club, and I'm excited to see them represent the club going forward.

As both have said this week, we are blessed to have a strong leadership group at the club, with both of our captains being well supported by players such as Stuart McNally, Henry Pyrgos, Blair Kinghorn and much more.

I'm excited to have our fans back for tonight's game, and can't wait for the first step of this season's rugby journey.

Enjoy the game!

Douglas Struth

Edinburgh Rugby Managing Director

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EDINBURGH

DRAGONS RFC

HENRY IMMELMAN

15

ANGUS O'BRIEN

DARCY GRAHAM

14

RIO DYER

MARK BENNETT

13

SIO TOMKINSON

CHRIS DEAN

12

JACK DIXON

DAMIEN HOYLAND

11

JARED ROSSER

CHARLIE SAVALA

10

JJ HANRAHAN

BEN VELLACOTT

9

RHODRI WILLIAMS

BOAN VENTER

1

AKI SEIULI

DAVE CHERRY

2

BRADLEY ROBERTS

ANGUS WILLIAMS

3

LLOYD FAIRBROTHER

MARSHALL SYKES

4

BEN CARTER

GLEN YOUNG

5

WILL ROWLANDS (C)

JAMIE RITCHIE (C)

6

SEAN LONSDALE

LUKE CROSBIE

7

BEN FRY

VILIAME MATA

8

ROSS MORIARTY

16. STUART MCINALLY 17. PIERRE SCHOEMAN

18. WP NEL 19. SAM SKINNER (DEBUT)

20. NICK HAINING 21. HENRY PYRGOS

22. BLAIR KINGHORN 23. JAMES LANG

16. ELLIOT DEE 17. JOSH REYNOLDS

18. CHRIS COLEMAN 19. JOE DAVIES

20. TAINE BASHAM 21. LEWIS JONES

22. WILL REED 23. JORDAN WILLIAMS

PRESS PASS

WITH MIKE BLAIR

ON TWO CAPTAINS

It's something we've done previously and it's proved to be a success. That's the history behind it; the more philosophical reason behind it is we believe it's a big job, and sharing the responsibility of it will allow each of them to focus on the team but on their own games as well. Share the responsibility, share ideas.

ON VICE-CAPTAINCY

Last season we spread the vice-captaincy around a bit. We had Ben Vellacott in a couple of games, we had Henry Pyrgos, James Lang, Mark Bennett, Dave Cherry, Luke Crosbie. We've got to try and bring up that level of leadership throughout the squad, so giving guys experience. Yes, it's just two initials beside your name, but I think it gives those guys added responsibility. We're trying to upskill those guys, give them experiences so if our captains aren't playing we've got someone who can step up really well.

ON WHO SPEAKS TO THE REF

I've spoken to both of them about that and I'd like to give Jamie experience. He captained a game for us last season - Zebre away - and Gilco has obviously done that a lot as well. It's a decision we'll make nearer the time.



ON JAMIE RITCHIE

When I spoke to the players about it on Monday I felt that those two guys epitomised what we wanted Edinburgh Rugby players to be. Training on field they're the most consistent, committed players that we've got. You can't help but play for them because of what they do on the pitch and the places they put their heads where other people might not.

So that level of inspiring the team was a big thing. It's something that Jamie wants to do as well. With leadership people don't always want to have their head above the parapet, but it's something that he wants to do. He wants to get better at it, he wants to challenge himself, he sees it as an important role in the team and one that he can do as well.

I want to mention Stuart McNally as well, because although he won't have an official title, I see him as being part of that group of three. He's an outstanding man, he was brilliant for us last season with on-field stuff and off-field stuff as well, in particular around connecting with the young players and being someone to speak to about experiences, issues.

I've spoken to the players and to Stuart about it all. Although he's not been named as a co-captain - I felt we couldn't have a co-co-captain - he'll be very much part of that leadership team as well.



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2022/23 CAPTAINS



Scotland internationalists Grant Gilchrist and Jamie Ritchie were this week unveiled as Edinburgh Rugby's co-captains for the 22/23 season.

Back-row Ritchie, 26, is named co-captain for the very first time in his Edinburgh career and joins Gilchrist, 32, in a joint leadership role, with the experienced lock and club centurion appointed co-captain for the third consecutive season and fourth overall (2016, 2020, 2021, 2022).

The pair are two of Edinburgh's longest tenured stars, with Gilchrist (175 Edinburgh appearances) entering his 12th season in the

capital and Ritchie (85 Edinburgh appearances) his ninth, while both have previously been named in captaincy roles at international level during their respective Scotland careers.

Gilchrist (55 caps) was named Scotland captain during the recent Summer Tour to South America,



while Ritchie (32 caps) was chosen to captain Scotland for the 2021 Summer Tests in Georgia and Romania – with both games cancelled due to the impact of the covid pandemic – but the back-row did co-captain his country alongside Ali Price in last Autumn's Test match against Tonga.

Both players have been at the club their entire careers and now gear up to co-captain their boyhood team on the eve of BKT URC season kick-off.

Gilchrist said: "I'm really proud to have been named co-captain alongside Jamie this year. It's hard for me to put into words what Edinburgh Rugby means to me.

"It's been such a big part of my life. Living in Edinburgh with my family, we have such a connection to the people and the city – so to be named as co-captain is such an honour.

The lock continued: "I look at the list of captains who've come before me in both the amateur and pro eras and there are so many guys there that I look up to.

"Building that connection with our past is something that I'm really passionate about it and motivates me to play – it's such a great feeling to be up there as co-captain." Former Howe of Fife RFC, Madras College and Strathallan School standout Ritchie has been one of the club's most consistent performers since signing a senior deal



straight out of high school aged just 17-years-old.

The former Scotland U20 captain came off the bench to make his senior team debut in Dublin against Leinster in October 2014 and has never looked back.

The back-row was named in Gregor Townsend's Scotland squad for the 2018 Summer Tour to Canada, USA and Argentina and made his international debut at the Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton.

Ritchie was one of Scotland's standout performers during the 2019 Six Nations campaign and that form continued into Rugby World Cup 2019, where an impressive showing in defeat to Japan rubber-stamped his status as one of

World Rugby's up-and-coming stars.

Ritchie then committed his long-term future to the club in January 2021.

Ritchie said: "I'm extremely proud to be named as co-captain. Edinburgh Rugby is a club that means so much to me. It's been a massive part of my entire adult life, as I've been here since I was 17 years old.

"I'm hugely excited to be working with Gilco [Grant Gilchrist]. We have a great relationship. We share lifts into training in the morning and he's been here for my entire time at the club.

"His experience will be invaluable for me to learn from. He's a real Edinburgh Rugby legend and I'm massively excited to be named co-captain alongside him.



“It’s a true honour to be selected as captain with Gilco and I’m absolutely buzzing to get going.”

Head Coach Mike Blair – who captained the club in both 2009 and 2010 – added: “We’re delighted to appoint Grant and Jamie as our 22/23 co-captains – they both epitomise what it means to play for Edinburgh Rugby.

“They are two of the most consistent and committed players we have at the club, while they command respect across the dressing room because of the way they lead by example.

“I’d like to also mention Stuart [McInally] alongside our co-captains. Although he doesn’t have an official captaincy title this season, he will continue to play a significant role in our leadership group – he’s an outstanding player and man.

“It’s a massive season for the club as we celebrate our 150th anniversary and our proud heritage has so often been exemplified by the captains that have never wavered in their pride to play for Edinburgh.”





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LAST TIME OUT

Edinburgh were edged out 29-26 in Treviso this evening as Benetton grabbed a last-gasp winner in an open and physical pre-season friendly. Mike Blair's side held a 10-12 half-time lead thanks to tries from Chris Dean and Ben Muncaster, however the hosts fought back after the break.

Holding a numerical advantage, with Sam Skinner and Jamie Ritchie both sent to the bin, Benetton took a 22-12 lead heading into the final 20 minutes following two quickfire scores.

Despite a courageous comeback, which saw Jack Blain and Nick Haining cross the whitewash to give Edinburgh a late advantage, Benetton struck in the 80th minute with a go-ahead penalty try.

Edinburgh finished the game with 14 men as Bill Mata – making his comeback after 9 months out through injury – was shown a late yellow card.

Both sides showed the upmost respect to the passing of Her Majesty the Queen with a pre-match minute's silence as a further mark of respect, the Edinburgh squad and management wore black armbands throughout the contest to acknowledge the sad passing.

The match began at a ferocious pace with both sides testing each other's back-three positioning with an array of box kicks and fast-paced chases.

Edinburgh had the first half-chances of the match. The first – after Benetton looked to move it wide at pace – came as Matt Currie intercepted before being dragged down in the hosts' 22m.

The second came after an outside break from Ben Muncaster who burst down the far touchline before offloading to the supporting Ben Vellacott. The scrum-half looked to be racing in the corner, but the ball slipped just out of his grasp.

Edinburgh started to turn the screw and following a string of Benetton penalties, Mike Blair's side broke the deadlock with 14 minutes on the clock.

From a well secured lineout drive on the Benetton 22m, the ball was move to the right before Vellacott broke back down the blindside.

After juking a man, the scrum-half offloaded to the supported to Chris Dean who had the easy task of dotting down in the corner [0-5]. Jaco van der Walt would miss the resulting touchline conversion.

Benetton would strike back almost immediately after 16 minutes, and it came from a penalty conceded straight from the restart.

With a strong lineout drive secured, hooker Gianmarco Lucchesi broke free, parried a would-be defender and powered over from only metres out to level the match [5-5].

There was little between the two sides in the ten minutes that followed the Benetton leveller, however two flashes of defence brilliance from Jamie Ritchie – who looked back to his best at the breakdown – were a particular highlight for the capital side who looked to capitalise on Italian sloppiness at the breakdown.

Moving into the final ten minutes of the half, Edinburgh kept their foot on the gas and with Benetton committing an array of breakdown penalties, lock Federico Ruzza was eventually sent to the bin.

Mike Blair's side soon capitalised on their numerical advantage. With the pack gaining ground, the ball was moved swiftly to Muncaster who twisted his way over the whitewash on 29 minutes. Van der Walt added the extras. [5-12]

With their tails up, Edinburgh moved the ball with confidence. Matt Currie hit an explosive line in the 14 channel and could have offloaded for another score. With Marin missing the resulting conversion, Edinburgh held a 10-12 lead at the break.

You could hardly tell it was pre-season as both sides started the match with continued intensity. Muncaster and Ritchie battled for every loose ball, while Currie did well to guard his wide channel.

Benetton turned the screw up front however and soon Ritchie and summer signing Skinner were both sent to the bin for repeat infringements at the breakdown with the hosts knocking at the door.

The Italians took the lead shortly after on 50 minutes. A slick handling move freed up the spare man and winger Eduardo Padovani finished. Marin converted to make it 17-12.

Benetton added another only minutes later following a sloppy Edinburgh lineout on their own 22m.

With numbers out wide, the ball was shipped to replacement winger Onisi Ratave who touched down in the corner. [22-12]

Edinburgh response was emphatic however, and after Benetton saw their replacement tighthead sent to the bin for a clumsy breakdown penalty, Blain touched down out wide with a powerful and accurate finish.

With replacement 10 Savala nailing the touchline conversion it was 22-19.

Edinburgh were now in a confident mood and with replacement scrum-half Henry Pyrgos pulling the string, the capital pack were providing front foot ball. And it would be a forward who gave Edinburgh a deserved lead at Stadio Monigo.

With the big men creeping towards the Benetton whitewash with a series of pick-and-goes, replacement Nick Haining went himself for a quickfire score under the sticks. [22-24].

Savala once again converted to make it a four-point game with only minutes remaining.

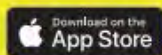
Benetton, however, so often strike late at home and the hosts worked the ball up field, before winning a penalty on half-way which was nudged into the corner.

With the Italian's pack gaining momentum, and the clock in the red, the referee awarded the penalty try – as replacement Mata was shown a yellow card - giving Benetton a last-gasp victory in Treviso.



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1.) Which members of your club are visiting us today?

Mainly our P5 group with some from our girls squad too.

2.) You'll be watching Edinburgh Rugby in action this evening, which players will your squad be keeping their eyes on, and do they have a favourite?

Hamish Watson. Some of us saw him play last year and really like him. Also Jamie Ritchie who is captain. It's a shame Emiliano Boffelli isn't playing as he is a great player.

3.) What does rugby mean to your club, players and also your local community?

we have a really good team spirit and like how rugby brings us together. It's lots of fun too. Haddington is a great rugby club to be a part of.

4.) Finally, what is your club's goal in season 2022-23 and what events/tournaments will they be looking forward to?

we have already played in the North Berwick tournament this season where we were runners up. We always look forward to our own tournament and also visiting other clubs for matches throughout the season.





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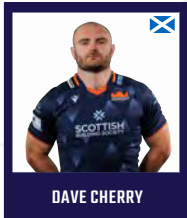
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EDINBURGH RUGBY

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BLAIR KINGHORN



MESU KUNAVULA



JAMES LANG



BILL MATA



ADAM MCBURNEY



STUART MCINALLY



BEN MUNCASTER



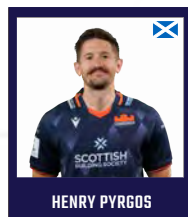
WP NEL



FREDDIE OWSLEY



PIERCE PHILLIPS



HENRY PYRGOS



JAMIE RITCHIE



CHARLIE SAVALA



PIERRE SCHOEMAN



CHARLIE SHIEL



SAM SKINNER



MARSHALL SYKES



JACO VAN DER WALT



BEN VELLACOTT



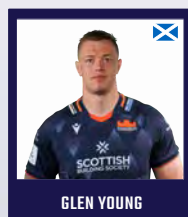
BOAN VENTER



HAMISH WATSON



ANGUS WILLIAMS



GLEN YOUNG

EDINBURGH RUGBY

ACADEMY 2022/23



RUDI BROWN



JAMIE CAMPBELL



ROBBIE DEANS



FINN DOUGLAS



BEN EVANS



DAN GAMBLE



PATRICK HARRISON



JAKE HENRY



MIKE JONES



LIAM MCCONNELL



HARRI MORRIS



HARRY PATERSON



MATT RUSSELL



CAMERON SCOTT



NATHAN SWEENEY

PLAYER TRY TRACKS

Lee-Roy Atalifo	Four String Love	Rosie Sagaitu
Nick Auterac	Surfing Bird	The Trashmen
Mark Bennett	You're Welcome	Dwayne Johnson
Jack Blain	Saturday Night (radio mix)	Whigfield
Emiliano Boffelli	Narco	Blasterjaxx & Timmy Trumpet
Connor Boyle	Batman Theme Song	Neil Hefti & his Orchestra and Chorus
Dave Cherry	Boys are back in town	Thin Lizzy
Harrison Courtney	Bohemian Rhapsody	Queen
Luke Crosbie	B.O.T.A (Baddest of them all)	Eliza Ross, Interplanetary Criminal
Matt Currie	Samba de Janeiro	Bellini
Luan De Bruin	Paradise City	Guns N Roses
Chris Dean	Born to be Wild	Bruce Springsteen
Grant Gilchrist	Rocking all over the World	Status Quo
Wes Goosen	The Greatest	SIX60
Darcy Graham	Yabba Dabba Doo / CanCan	[Custom]
Nick Haining	Live it Up	Mental as Anything
Jamie Hodgson	Underdog	Kasabian
Bruce Houston	Right Here, Right Now	Fatboy Slim
Damien Hoyland	Walking on the Waves	Skippinish
Cammy Hutchison	Toxic	Britney Spears
Henry Immelman	WWE: Stone Cold Steve Austin	Jim Johnston
Jamie Jack	Can't Stop	Red Hot Chili Peppers
Blair Kinghorn	Teach me how to Dougie	Cali Swag District
Mesu Kunavula		
James Lang	Edamame	bbno\$
Bill Mata	Ukulele	Blad P2a ft. Khazin
Adam McBurney	Tell Me Ma	Sham Rock
Stuart McNally	Don't Stop me Now	Queen
Ben Muncaster	Crazy Frog	Axel F
WP Nel	Umfaan	Klipwerf Orkes
Freddie Owsley	Like a G6	Far East movement
Pierce Phillips	Man I feel like a woman	Shania Twain
Henry Pyrgos	Light it Up	Major Lazer
Jamie Ritchie	Edge of Seventeen	Stevie Nicks
Charlie Savala	Down Under	Men at Work
Pierre Schoeman	The Greatest Show	The Greatest Showman Ensemble
Charlie Shiel	Yes Sir I Can Boogie	Baccara
Sam Skinner	California Dreamin'	The Mamas & the Papas
Marshall Sykes	Candy Shop	50 Cent
Jaco van der Walt	Seven Nation Army	White Stripes
Ben Vellacott	Can't be Touched	Roy Jones
Boan Venter	WWE: The Game (Triple H)	Jim Johnston
Hamish Watson	This is the One	Stone Roses
Angus Williams	Back in Black	ACDC
Glen Young	We like to Party	Vengaboys

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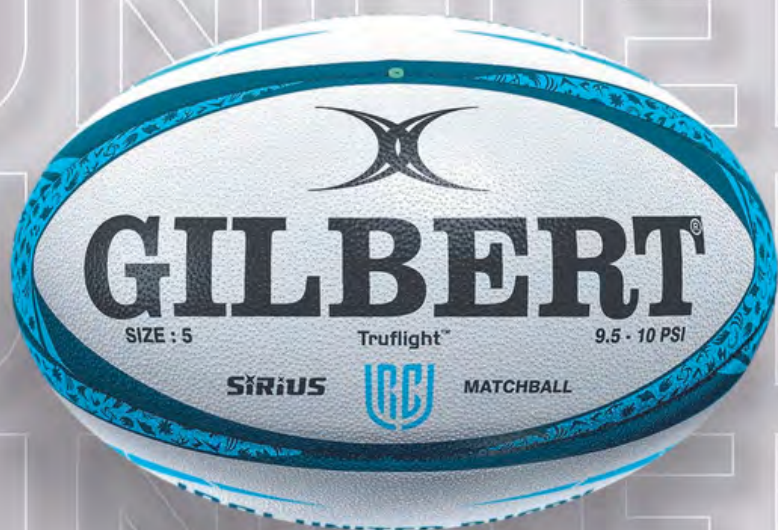
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FRESH FACES

Meet some of our new players for the 2022/23 season!



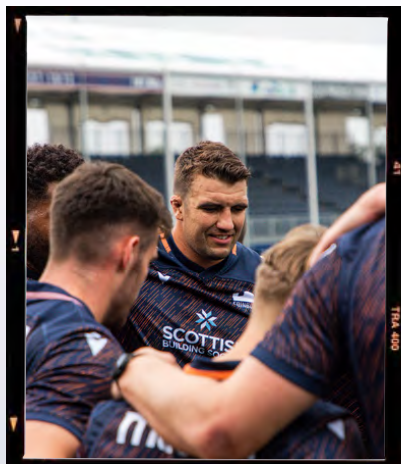
WES GOOSEN

POSITION: BACK-THREE

PREVIOUS CLUBS: WELLINGTON, HURRICANES

BIRTHPLACE: EAST LONDON, SA

NATIONAL HONOURS: NEW ZEALAND U20



SAM SKINNER

POSITION: LOCK/BACK ROW

PREVIOUS CLUBS: EXETER CHIEFS

BIRTHPLACE: EXETER

NATIONAL HONOURS: SCOTLAND (22 CAPS)



NICK AUTERAC

POSITION: LOOSEHEAD PROP

PREVIOUS CLUBS: SARACENS, BATH,
HARLEQUINS, NORTHAMPTON SAINTS

BIRTHPLACE: WESTMINSTER (SQ)

NATIONAL HONOURS: ENGLAND U20



JAMIE JACK

POSITION: LOOSEHEAD PROP

PREVIOUS CLUBS: NOTTINGHAM, AMPHILL

BIRTHPLACE: COVENTRY



BRUCE HOUSTON

POSITION: FLY-HALF

PREVIOUS CLUBS: ULSTER, HERIOT'S

BIRTHPLACE: BALLYMENA (SQ)

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ACADEMY IN PROFILE

HARRY PATERSON | FB/WING

I've lived in Edinburgh my whole life, and been a fan of the club in one way or another the whole time.

I started playing at Accies when I was six. Enjoyed it when I started getting good at it, and enjoyed the team environment.

I'm a rangy player... I can picture it but can't put it into words... I guess I'm fairly elusive, bit of ducking and diving. I prefer fullback, you get more ball, kick more, control the game more.

The thing I look forward to most is the unique interactions with so many people at the club.

I've enjoyed playing for Watsonians, as a team we won the Super6 Sprint series, but we want to win the full competition. Individually it's about getting game time to help me try and break into the Edinburgh team.

Away from rugby, mostly through Damo, I've come to enjoy coffee. I enjoy fantasy as well, Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones, Harry Potter. Big into music, Classic FM hits the spot in the morning. Bit of Alexander Armstrong in the morning gets the day off to a good start.

I dedicated a significant amount of time learning all of the states of America and can recount them all in under two and a half minutes.



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