

ETON MANOR 18 – COLCHESTER 16

Colchester slipped from the top spot to second with a below par performance away to Eton Manor in Redbridge, north London, in a game Colchester will rue many missed chances to win the game.



Colchester press the Eton Manor scrum in a tightly fought game

Player injury and unavailability saw Colchester take eight back row players in their squad of eighteen. Flanker turned prop Pat Duffy joined flanker turned hooker Charlie Thorogod in the front row and acquitted themselves well but found themselves pitted against more experienced players in the Eton Manor pack. Eton Manor edged the scrums and dominated the lineout. Right wing Reece Reed scored two tries and kicked the rest of their points whilst scrumhalf Nick Horton impressed with his carrying and harrying throughout the game.

Early Eton Manor forward pressure earned a penalty as Colchester were penalised for handling in a ruck, Reed converting. Colchester replied immediately, Eton Manor penalised for lying on the ball after the restart, Damien Brambley kicking the points. Reece restored the lead for the hosts after the Colchester forwards were penalised for pulling down a maul.

After ding-dong attacking rugby from both sides, Eton Manor's Horton picked up from a scrum and darted across the pitch, drawing Colchester defenders before finding Reece with a long pass that released he wing to run in the first try of the game to lead 11 – 3 after fifteen minutes.



Liam Pickett carries the attack to Eton Manor

Colchester responded to dominate the second quarter, creating several scoring chances. Skipper Calum Irvine broke to within five metres of the host's tryline before being stopped; a try saving tackle denied wing Jon Vine within stretching distance of the line, and wing Dave Philp was clear only for the move to be brought back for a forward pass. Knock-ons and wayward passing frustrated scoring attempts.

Eton Manor held out and came back to press at the end of the half, Colchester defending stoutly to turn around 11 – 3 at halftime.

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Dan Whiteman spots a gap to break against Eton Manor

Colchester started the second half in determined fashion. Fullback James Crozier drove into the hosts half where the defenders were penalised, Brambley's kick narrowly missed. Colchester kept up the pressure, lock Elliot Castle charging into the Eton Manor twenty-two where desperate defence was penalised. Quick thinking skipper Irvine tapped and ran the penalty, waltzing through the retreating defenders to stretch and place the ball for a try, Brambley converting.

Moving the ball about the field, Colchester pressed again. Jon Vine cut in to his wing to be felled by a dangerous high tackle. Brambley kicked the 40 metre penalty to put Colchester in the lead 11 – 13.



Flanker turned prop Pat Duffy passes to Adam Cook

Having clawed their way back, a lapse in concentration proved costly. The restart kick was taken by Colchester but Eton Manor turned the ball over, spinning the ball wide for Reed to score wide right. The conversion hit the crossbar and fell inside for an 18 – 13 lead with twenty minutes remaining.

Colchester fought to regain the lead as unexpected defeat loomed. pressure leading to a series of penalties.

Brambley kicked one penalty to bring the score to a nail biting close 18 – 16 but was unlucky with a couple of long range kicks that would have won the game but missed narrowly as Eton Manor hung on for the win.

ETON MANOR	18 – 16	COLCHESTER
Reece Reed (2)	<i>Tries</i>	Calum Irvine
Reece Reed (1)	<i>Conversions</i>	Damien Brambley (1)
Reece Reed (2)	<i>Penalties</i>	Damien Brambley (3)