

South Ayrshire tasted defeat for the first time this season as the defending champions were edged out by the City of Edinburgh in a five-set thriller.

The opening set was controlled from start to finish by the visitors at Prestwick Academy. The men from the capital stormed into a 16-7 lead in the first set. South struggled to get to grips with their opponents powerful combinations, but some good serving from Robert MicAllef-Enyaud and hitting from Stuart Edgar and Scott Wilson allowed South a foothold in the game.

But there was simply too big a lead and Edinburgh took the set 25-17. The second set started in similarly disconcerting fashion for the champions.

Edinburgh blitzed the first five points and left South trailing by another lengthy 16-7 mid-set deficit in set two. The hosts battled back. Edgar smashed a spike from the middle of the court and some solid serving from Shaun Sutherland hauled South to within touching distance at 21-18 down.

Big plays from Ross McKelvie, a spike block and serving ace, in quick succession helped South sensationally pull the scores level at 24-24. But they fell tantalisingly short of completing the comeback and Edinburgh won a few marathon rallies at the end of the set to clinch a 2-0 lead 27-25.

South are no strangers to comebacks, coming from behind frequently this season, and began to mount another stirring revival. There was no slow start in set three. The Ayrshire outfit surged to an early 8-3 lead. Edgar thumped a spike down the line to halt a mini-Edinburgh revival to move the scores to 15-12.

Big plays from Kevin Lawrie inched South further clear and the hosts were on the board with a comfortable 25-16 success in set three.

The national title-holders were starting to hit their stride. A block at the net from Edgar, a stinging serve from Wilson and a reflex spike at the net from MicAllef-Enyaud helped South move to a 9-4 lead in the fourth set. They never looked back.

Sutherland and McKelvie chipped in with powerful hits of their own and retrieving work of Liam Fleming and the setting of MicAllef-Enyaud gave South the platform to attack with crushing accuracy – and win the set 25-18 to serve up a decider.

Edinburgh quickly regrouped and despite two big hits from Edgar inched into a 5-4 lead in the race to 15. The big points and fine margins were going the way of the visitors and after a few intense points, the visitors increased their advantage to 12-9.

Two big points from Edgar on-serve threatened Edinburgh's resolve but the visitors held their nerve to complete the victory later than they would have anticipated by sealing the decisive set 15-11 in a pulsating match that was an excellent showcase of volleyball.