

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2005**

**PACK POWER SEES OFF SARACENS**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 19 SARACENS 8**

They grabbed Sarries by the unmentionables and gave them an almighty squeeze throughout the contest.

When the outstanding Mark Cornwell was not pilfering line-out ball, he was smashing through Kyran Bracken, when Phil Vickery was not directing operations he was turning his opposite number inside out at the scrum, while Adam Balding and Peter Buxton were the epitome of the effort.

Gloucester had been second best in two games at London Irish and Leicester but here the character, spirit and enthusiasm shone through from the start - aided by the return of Vickery and the experience of Cornwell.

The pair provided the composure and it helped hooker Rob Elloway immensely. He got through a tremendous amount of work, as did Olly Morgan and Anthony Allen, the young kids in the Gloucester backline who get better and better with every passing week.

The home side were ahead after five minutes when Ludovic Mercier snapped over a drop-goal after Andy Hazell had won back possession on the floor from a line-out.

But Saracens, who were always up against it in the forwards, were on terms after 16 minutes with a Glen Jackson penalty. Gloucester were under pressure when Adam Eustace hurled back a pass that flew over Mercier's head and the home side were penalised for killing the ball in front of the sticks.

However, Saracens were always under pressure at the scrum and after they lost the ball forward, Gloucester grabbed their first try. Mark Foster, back in the side on the wing, cut through past both wingers and lock Simon Raiwalui and had enough of an angle to beat full-back Dan Scarbrough for a brilliant try.

It established an 8-3 lead and it was soon to be 11-3 when Mercier added another penalty after 33 minutes.

Saracens had offered little in terms of an attacking threat but from their first real attacking position, found themselves 16-3 down.

Mercier was able to read Jackson's pass beautifully and intercept his pass before heading on a 60 metre break downfield.

With the cover converging, the number 10 was aware enough to see James Bailey, steaming up on his outside shoulder, to take the tackle but give the scoring pass to the winger.

It was a special moment for Bailey – the England sevens specialist – and it created a lead Gloucester were never to lose.

The second half failed to live up to the raucous, raging power of the first but Gloucester stuck to their task excellently and gritted their teeth. Mercier landed a 44th minute penalty to take the score to 19-3 and virtual safety.

Buxton and Balding never ceased in carrying ball or knocking men back in the tackle area and the line-out and not even a try for Saracens could inspire a comeback.

Kevin Sorrell made a break through midfield, and from the ruck Hugh Vyvyan recycled possession and hooker Matt Cairns scored.

“I thought we managed to bring an energy and enthusiasm to our game that was vital,” said Gloucester's head coach Dean Ryan.

“The young lads – Olly Morgan and Anthony Allen, Mark Cornwell and Phil Vickery – were outstanding. It was a crucial victory and I am delighted for everyone involved.”

HT: 16 - 3

Attendance: 10,516

Referee: Sean Davey

JC