GLOUCESTER RUGBY

TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2006

THIRLBY'S TRY SEALS A TEAM WIN

BRISTOL UTD. 14 GLOUCESTER UTD. 18

ROB THIRLBY'S second half try sealed a Gloucester's victory in the Guinness A League against Bristol last night.

Gloucester won 18-14 on a typically cold night at Clifton RFC. A strong wind swept across the pitch, line-out work was difficult and turnovers frequent in a fractious game which threatened to spill over at times in the second half.

Gloucester outside half Ryan Lamb opened the scoring with a penalty after 10 minutes but Bristol hit back with a try six minutes later.

Geraint Lewis broke from the base of a scrum and offloaded to Ulia Ulia who was tackled. The ball was recycled to Danny Gray who took advantage of the long in-goal areas at Clifton and weighted a grubber kick nicely for Sean Marsden to touch down. Gray converted for a 7-3 lead.

Lamb then missed a penalty after 28 minutes and then scrum-half James Donovan almost scored after a nice break and chip and chase. However, Greg Nicholls beat him to the touchline.

However, Gloucester were back in front two minutes later. Bristol lost control of a line-out five metres from their own line and skipper Mark Cornwell scored from close range. Lamb converted to make the score 7-10.

Former Bristol flanker Ben Gerry was yellow carded after 38 minutes for persistent infringement but Bristol couldn't take advantage and Gloucester maintained their lead.

Bristol made changes at half-time with Neil Clark replacing Saul Nelson and Andy Reay coming on for Manu Contepomi.

But Gloucester were quickest off the mark and Lamb missed a penalty after 45 minutes but was on target after 49 minutes to stretch their lead to 7-13.

When tempers started to fray, Jon Pritchard was yellow carded for a high tackle and Neil Clark escaped with a warning.

As the game entered the final 10 minutes, Bristol re-took the lead and threatened to win the match. From a set scrum, Gray made a nice break and offloaded to Mark Denney, who took a nice angle to score. Gray converted for a 14-13 lead.

However, Gloucester hit back when Brad Davies made a break from a tap penalty and threw out a long pass for Rob Thirlby to score wide out. Lamb's conversion was off target but Gloucester had the lead at 14-18.

Bristol's final roll of the dice was to introduce Tom Fidler and Sam Brown, and Brown almost inspired a long breakaway but was caught as he waited for support and Gloucester could celebrate a priceless victory.

JC