

GLoucester Rugby

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2006

GLoucester Storm To Derby Victory

GLoucester Rugby 30 Bath Rugby 12

They may not have qualified for the knockout stages of the EDF Energy Cup, but any Gloucester victory over Bath is worth celebrating and there were plenty of encouraging signs for head coach Dean Ryan in his side's bonus point performance.

With qualification to the knockout stages of the competition all but a distant dream, Ryan saw his much-changed side still able to produce a performance of substance and shape that was not much different to how they approach the Guinness Premiership or Heineken Cup.

They were simply more organised and structured than Bath, who despite keeping the ball wonderfully well at times, lacked the direction to go with their mountain of possession and paid a heavy price.

It was a significant result for the home side, particularly as a springboard back into Europe and a month of activity in December that will stretch the bounds of endurance to the limit.

There were some eye-catching performances – from the powerful direction provided by Mike Tindall in midfield, the game-shaping qualities of Willie Walker at stand-off, the powerful defence of Mark Foster to the presence and work rate of Adam Balding and Jonathan Pendlebury up front – Gloucester were more than the better side from the moment they crunched into their first scrummage.

Bath, wonderfully served by prop Laurence Ovens in the loose, Chev Walker and Chris Malone, gave as good as they got at times in the broken play, but were slowly dismantled up front in the set scrum and eventually subdued in the contact area.

When Ryan was able to drip the likes of James Simpson-Daniel and Alex Brown into the action in the second half, Gloucester looked more than a good side.

He was also able to hand Karl Pryce a competitive debut and although he didn't see much of the ball, has a lovely set of skills and was instrumental in setting up a second half try for James Merriman with a brilliant inside pass to hint at a bright future.

Gloucester were off and going after six minutes. They squeezed Bath into the far corner and drove powerfully from a series of line-outs before hammering again at scrum-time. Gloucester were totally on top and it was no surprise when referee Dave Pearson awarded a penalty try when the visitors were penalised for dragging down a scrum.

But Bath had nothing to lose and played like it. To their credit, they kept the ball well and ran hard through plenty of phases to keep the Gloucester defence honest.

However, Gloucester went further ahead after 18 minutes with a second try to emphasise the difference between the two teams. Tindall bludgeoned possession into centre field after a snappy change from Haydn Thomas and Walker, James Merriman took the ball on and when they came to the right again, Thomas put Balding in to score from short range to make it 14-0.

To their credit, Bath hit back with a score of their own when loosehead prop Daniel Parkes burrowed over from a driving line-out.

A Walker penalty on the stroke of half-time made the score 17-5 to Gloucester at the interval. The game was virtually up for Bath at this stage and 12 minutes into the second half, Gloucester scored a brilliant team try.

Bath poured pressure into a series of rucks but when Gloucester turned the ball over, Walker shaped to clear but dropped his shoulder to speed through a gap to find Olly Morgan on the charge.

Suddenly, Gloucester were on the attack and over their 22 with Bath in retreat. Morgan drew the cover before finding Pryce and the winger showed brilliant awareness to send a flat inside pass into the hands of Merriman who burnt up the ground to score.

It was by some distance the moment of the match and showed just how dangerous Gloucester could be when they play heads up rugby from deep.

However, the scoring was still not done and it was Bath who were rewarded with the next try. Michael Stephenson ran back a kick through midfield, linked with the rangy strides of Jonny Faamatuianu and centre Tom Cheeseman had tracked the break to take the scoring pass and make it 22-12.

Walker then landed a 70th minute penalty before scoring the game's final try. Tindall crashed a set move up the middle and when replacement Rory Lawson arrived, Walker stepped through the defence to dive over and complete a very satisfying evening's work for Gloucester.

Gloucester Team

15. Olly Morgan 14. Karl Pryce 13. Jack Adams 12. Mike Tindall
11. Mark Foster 10. Willie Walker 9. Haydn Thomas 1. Patrice Collazo
2. Rob Elloway 3. Carlos Nieto 4. Will James 5. Jonathan Pendlebury
6. Jake Boer 7. James Merriman 8. Adam Balding

16. Ross McMillan 17. Jack Forster 18. Adam Eustace 19. Alex Brown
20. Rory Lawson 21. Brad Davies 22. James Simpson-Daniel

Bath Rugby Team

15. Michael Stephenson 14. Ian Davey 13. Chev Walker 12. Tom Cheeseman
11. David Bory 10. Chris Malone 9. Pietro Travagli 1. Dan Parkes
2. Dave Ward 3. Laurence Ovens 4. Dan Smith 5. Rob Fidler
6. Hottie Louw 7. Jonny Fa'amatuainu 8. Chris Goodman

16. Chris Brooker 17. David Barnes 18. Jack Bentall 19. Jamie Miller
20. Andy Williams 21. Jack Cuthbert 22. Michael Mangeolles

HT: 17 - 5

Attendance: 7,453

JC