

# GLOUCESTER RUGBY

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2007

PACK POWER EARNS EUROPEAN VICTORY

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 19 LEINSTER 13

GLOUCESTER may have already departed the rarefied heights of the Heineken Cup this season but they kissed goodbye to the 2007 vintage with a wonderfully determined performance to see off Leinster at Kingsholm.

It will hurt the Gloucester masses no end they will take no further part in the competition but it is no mean feat to tear an Irish pack almost limb from limb as they did on occasions here.

If it is possible to create a victory in the image of its chief creator, Gloucester could not have done more had they pulled on Dean Ryan masks and spent 80 minutes snarling at anything in blue.

They were murderous in the tight, controlled in the latter phases and closed the game out with the sort of control they lacked in previous games that have got away from them in the last couple of weeks.

Their magnificent skipper Marco Bortolami won the man of the match award but it could have been anyone of the home-town forwards. From the technically excellent Mefin Davies, through the power of Carlos Nieto and bone-jarring carrying of Adam Balding and Peter Buxton, there was always someone in red ready to make a telling contribution.

Leinster, no slouches themselves thanks to the grafting trio of Stephen Keogh, Keith Gleeson and Jamie Heaslip, gave it everything they had at the breakdown and were always a handful when Felipe Contepomi had possession, but they were hunted with a vigorous intent that never ceased and in the end they cracked.

The tone was set early when Gloucester drove a fifth minute line-out infield before Balding, Hazell and then Iain Balshaw on an arching run stressed the Leinster defence. With a ferocious and testing wind at their backs, Gloucester needed to score when on top and after a series of close-range drives were halted Leinster lost their skipper Brian O'Driscoll to the sinbin for killing the ball.

And the try came seven minutes later. Gloucester again hammered forward from a line-out and with the line in sight, Leinster hauled the maul down and referee Nigel Owens awarded a penalty try.

It was just what the game needed but when Gloucester lost scrum-half Pete Richards to the cooler for an offence at the breakdown, Leinster cranked up the heat for the first time. Although Bortolami got up brilliantly to win the line-out, with no scrum-half, Gloucester conceded a five-metre scrum and Contepomi broke on an angled run to shoot towards the posts but Willie Walker somehow got back to make the try-saving tackle.

But Gloucester's lead last little more than 10 minutes. Leinster as an attacking threat had been kept in check but when Keogh bundled menacingly up the middle from Chris Whitaker's pass, he ate up a huge amount of ground, linked with number eight Heaslip and when he went to ground, O'Driscoll picked up and scored under the sticks.

Contepomi's conversion made it 7-7 and the game then went without a point until the 57th minute, despite Gloucester's continued domination of the scrum, where Nieto, Nick Wood and then Christian Califano set to work, Leinster's slick excellence with ball in hand was always a danger.

When Gloucester were penalised for not rolling away, Contepomi kicked the penalty to hand Leinster a 10-7 lead and give another opportunity to the wonderful away supporters to sing their songs.

However, in the last 20 minutes Gloucester simply wore out Leinster's front five and with Mike Tindall adding a midfield physicality and defensive awareness, the home side produced two more tries to earn a famous victory.

Tindall was heavily involved in the 65th minute move that sent Balshaw on a break and then James Bailey had a sniff that got him close to the line. But Gloucester were within striking distance and when Bortolami got up to claim the line-out, Califano was driven over for the score.

Gloucester then threw on Olivier Azam and Will James and they simply thudded and bloodied their way forward with Buxton and Balding at its heart. It was a classic manoeuvre and crucial to sealing the contest.

When another Leinster scrum disappeared into its own nether regions after 74 minutes, Rory Lawson and Tindall set in motion another crucial attack and then Lamb switched the angle of the attack to the openside, sending Balshaw on his way before Mark Foster chipped over Rob Kearney, got in front of the Leinster defender and won the race to the ball.

The television official took an age to award the try but award it he did and Lamb landed a touchline conversion to take Gloucester 19-10 in front and crucially more than a converted try ahead.

It was the defining score and from the re-start, Gloucester just kept the ball, crashing into the contact area and driving Leinster back to keep the ball through 30, draining phases.

Under the circumstances it was a brutal exercise in sealing the contest and although Contepomi landed an 89th minute penalty, Gloucester were worthy winners on a wonderfully expressive night at Kingsholm.

#### Gloucester Team

15. Iain Balshaw 14. James Bailey 13. Jack Adams 12. Mike Tindall  
11. Mark Foster 10. Willie Walker 9. Peter Richards 1. Nick Wood  
2. Mefin Davies 3. Carlos Nieto 4. Marco Bortolami 5. Alex Brown  
6. Peter Buxton 7. Andy Hazell 8. Adam Balding

16. Olivier Azam 17. Christian Califano 18. Will James 19. Jake Boer  
20. Rory Lawson 21. Ryan Lamb 22. Rudi Keil

Leinster Team

15. Girvan Dempsey 14. Shane Horgan 13. Brian O'Driscoll 12. Gordon D'Arcy 11. Denis Hickie 10. Felipe Contepomi 9. Chris Whitaker 1. Stan Wright 2. Bernard Jackman 3. Will Green 4. Trevor Hogan 5. Malcolm O'Kelly 6. Stephen Keogh 7. Keith Gleeson 8. Jamie Heaslip

16. Brian Blaney 17. Reggie Corrigan 18. Owen Finegan 19. Cameron Jowitt 20. Guy Easterby 21. Christian Warner 22. Rob Kearney

HT: 7 - 7

Attendance: 12,500

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