

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, 24 MARCH, 2007**

**JAKE'S TRY HELPS GLOUCESTER TOP**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 24 NEWCASTLE FALCONS 18**

Jake Boer's scriptwriter penned an unforgettable final chapter in the South African's last Kingsholm appearance with a crucial try as Gloucester jumped to the top of the Guinness Premiership following a thriller against Newcastle.

The flanker was on hand after 53 minutes on a straight-line attack from deep to take James Forrester's scoring pass after expert approach play from Ryan Lamb.

It was the score that engineered a slender advantage and although Newcastle regained the lead, Lamb hit them again with a sumptuous try of his own to take Gloucester towards the summit of the table above Leicester.

This was a remarkable game, fuelled by the brilliance of Mathew Tait, Toby Flood – comfortably Newcastle's stand-out performers, the accuracy of Matthew Burke and a couple of potent finishes from Jamie Noon.

Throw in another bewitching contribution from Lamb, a test of endurance for Anthony Allen and an exceptionally tough afternoon for the home pack and it contributed to a wonderful afternoon that Newcastle could have won.

Although the likes of Flood and Tait will grab the plaudits, Newcastle's forwards were outstanding – comfortably better than anyone might have expected. They grafted ferociously on the floor, defended brilliantly and held their own in the line-out.

It took every ounce of effort from the likes of Andy Hazell, Marco Bortolami and Boer to subdue them and their efforts only added to the tension.

“We just wanted to get this out of the way and I am really pleased with the victory because I thought we were put under tremendous pressure,” said Gloucester’s head coach Dean Ryan.

“I thought Newcastle were outstanding but at the same time we knew that if we kept going for 80 minutes we had the game to stress them and that is what happened eventually.

“We gave them two pretty soft tries and with their level of ability that is a very dangerous thing to do.”

Newcastle were certainly out of the blocks the sharper and were ahead inside 10 minutes. Their first try owed everything to the awareness and control of Burke, who managed to evade Mike Tindall’s tackle, make great ground up the right and somehow flick his inside pass to Noon, who had tracked the full-back’s break, to score.

Gloucester rolled and shuddered against Newcastle’s start. Flood appeared in almost every position in the backline – switching from wing to centre and then stand-off as Newcastle shifted the emphasis of their attacks and moved the ball quickly.

Tait was also exceptionally slippery and when Burke made another telling break up the centre, Tom May really should have scored and stretched Newcastle’s lead.

The home side had fumbled their way through the opening half-hour. Lamb had dropped a pass here and there, Allen had got caught in some midfield traffic and Newcastle’s forwards stood up to the pressure but when Lamb took Peter Richards’ pass from a scrum, he cut back against the drift defence brilliantly and sent James Forrester to the line for the score with a lovely over-head ball.

Willie Walker's conversion made it 7-5 but right on the interval, Newcastle scored again. Flood, heavily involved and with a glorious range of passing, composed the move and Noon hurtled through Carlos Nieto and Bortolami on his way to the line.

There was every indication at this stage that Newcastle had what it might take to win the game and when Jonny Wilkinson landed a 42nd minute penalty, the Falcons were 15-7 to the good and some anxious looks spread across Kingsholm faces.

Walker hauled Gloucester back immediately with three points of his own and when Forrester, on a short burst, took Lamb's pass, Boer opened Newcastle's defence with a great line and had the pace to reach the line.

Kingsholm erupted at his score but more importantly it established Gloucester with a 17-15 lead that was immediately wiped out by Wilkinson's left boot.

The contest could have gone either way at this stage. Although Gloucester's forwards got through a tremendous amount of work and were thoroughly on top at the scrum, the likes of Ben Woods, Brent Wilson and Micky Ward kept Newcastle ticking over.

However, when they were penalised with 10 minutes to go, Walker kicked for the corner and from the line-out, Mefin Davies, Nick Wood and Forrester all drove over the ball to get Gloucester within range.

And with Newcastle desperately hunting for the ball on the floor, they took their eyes off Lamb. The slightest gap was all he needed and picking up the ball 10 metres out, he skated past two despairing tackles to score the try that took Gloucester 24-18 ahead.

Although there were a couple of late scares – Nieto found himself in the cooler for collapsing a maul under heavy Newcastle pressure – Gloucester wound down the clock to leap to the top of the table and complete a memorable Kingsholm afternoon.

### Gloucester Team

15. Willie Walker 14. James Simpson-Daniel 13. Mike Tindall  
12. Anthony Allen 11. James Bailey 10. Ryan Lamb 9. Peter Richards  
1. Nick Wood 2. Mefin Davies 3. Carlos Nieto 4. Will James 5. Marco  
Bortolami 6. Jake Boer 7. Andy Hazell 8. James Forrester

16. Olivier Azam 17. Jack Forster 18. Adam Eustace 19. Peter Buxton  
20. Rory Lawson 21. Mark Foster 22. Jon Goodridge

### Newcastle Falcons Team

15. Matt Burke 14. Tom May 13. Mathew Tait 12. Jamie Noon 11. Toby  
Flood 10. Jonny Wilkinson 9. James Grindal 1. Joe McDonnell 2. Matt  
Thompson 3. Micky Ward 4. Mark Sorenson 5. Jason Oakes 6. Geoff  
Parling 7. Ben Woods 8. Brent Wilson

16. Jon Golding 17. Andy Long 18. Andy Perry 19. Andy Buist 20. John  
Rudd 21. Lee Dickson 22. Loki Crichton

HT: 7 - 12

Attendance: 12,500

JC