

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2007**

**BOURGOIN ARE ROASED BY LAMB**

**BOURGOIN 7 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 31**

Gloucester delivered another thoroughly convincing endorsement of their Heineken Cup credentials with a bonus point victory at the Stade Pierre Rajon.

If against Ulster they won their opening exchange in Pool Two thanks to their savagery from turn-over ball, here they triumphed thanks to their expert control, unshakable composure and sheer intensity of their work-rate that produced an error count so high from the home side it was almost criminal.

Gloucester's first 25 minutes work and then the first 10 after the interval were key in deciding the result – the fact they earned a bonus point with the final play of the match was an added but cherished bonus.

There were many aspects of the performance that demand merit – from their withering scrum performance embodied by Nick Wood and Carlos Nieto, a stirring effort from Akapusi Qera and a riotous contribution from Mike Tindall – but this was a night in which Ryan Lamb confirmed his enormous talent in the harshest of conditions against opponents who really fancied their chances.

His partnership with Rory Lawson was the defining area of the match. They were controlled, mixed their games up well and ensured Gloucester's forwards kept on the front foot against a huge unit who took some serious shifting at ruck time.

Lamb was everything we know he can be: delightfully inventive with the ball in hand and pressing with his kicking game, off both feet.

It was a performance of maturity and growing stature and he was still alert enough in the final stages to pick out Luke Narraway, who ran a brilliant line, with the defence splitting pass that created the bonus point score for Andy Titterrell.

Bourgoin were largely disappointed, although the contact area was brutal and their defensive line-out was excellent thanks to flanker Mark Rennie. But where Lamb excelled, Benjamin Boyet simply failed to drive the hosts forward. They made so many errors in the first quarter it was alarming and they never recovered.

The only down side for Gloucester will be a trio of injuries. Olly Morgan was by far the most serious, Chris Paterson damaged ribs and Tindall hobbled off with a knee injury.

But even that will not detract from Gloucester's effort. They got the perfect start after five minutes and never looked back. Gloucester won a scrum from a line-out and Lamb found Anthony Allen in midfield who rolled out of two tackles and scrambled his way to the line.

It was already obvious that Gloucester were the better side. They used Qera through the middle, Gareth Delve made plenty of excellent ground from scrums and Olivier Azam was a sizeable object at the tackle area.

They also began turning the screw in the scrum and when Wood got the better of Pablo Cardinali, Lamb made it 10-0 with a 21st minute penalty.

Gloucester were already well on the way to shutting Bourgoin out of the game. Their movement and creativity allowed James Simpson-Daniel to come in off his wing, Lamb prodded and probed and Bourgoin were camped inside their own half for long periods.

It was not long before Gloucester scored again and it was a little beauty. They drove a line-out infield before Lamb stepped back against the cover and delivered a wonderful round the corner pass to Simpson-Daniel, who found the line.

The winger could have scored again before the break but he fumbled Lamb's lovely little kick following a kick, chase and tackle by Tindall and some neat play from Iain Balshaw.

At 17-0 ahead, it was a wonderful start and Gloucester built on their advantage after the break. They dodged the bullets hurled at them and then Lamb rubbed salt into the wound – picking off Boyet's telegraphed pass and running 50 metres to score try number three.

It appeared the game was up. Bourgoin had run out of ideas and Gloucester were cruising. But then the contest threatened a turn-around. The conditions deteriorated so badly that the thunder and lightning rolled around the ground and the trio of injuries diluted Gloucester's structure.

Both Leon Lloyd and Gareth Cooper came onto the wings, Balshaw went to full-back despite a badly cut knee and Simpson-Daniel came into the centre. It prompted a Bourgoin recovery and after a series of powerful drives flanker Julien Frier scored from a ruck after 57 minutes.

The home side turned up the burners now but Gloucester's resolve and organisation remained as strong and as firm as ever. Even when it appeared a second try was almost a certainty, a forward would appear to produce the telling tackle – a Brown, a Buxton or a Delve – and Balshaw made a brilliant tackle on David Janin to prevent a certain score in the left corner.

It was a thrilling testament to Gloucester's control they didn't yield and just when you thought they had settled for four points, Lamb weaved his magic again.

He was able to pick off Narraway, coming from deep down the 10 channel and once in behind, Titterrell took the scoring pass to complete one of the most accomplished Gloucester performances in the Heineken Cup ever and leave them with 14 points from a possible 15.

### Bourgoin Team

15. Anthony Forest 14. David Janin 13. Rudi Coetzee 12. Sebastien Laloo 11. Mathieu Nicolas 10. Benjamin Boyet 9. Morgan Parra 1. Karena Wihongi 2. Benoit Cabello 3. Pablo Cardinali 4. Julien Pierre 5. Damien Fevre 6. Julien Frier 7. Mark Rennie 8. Wessel Jooste

16. Jean-Philippe Genevois 17. Olivier Sourgens 18. Chris Wyatt 19. Sylvain Nicolas 20. Mickael Forest 21. Matias Viazzo 22. Jean-Francois Coux

### Gloucester Rugby Team

15. Olly Morgan 14. James Simpson-Daniel 13. Mike Tindall 12. Anthony Allen 11. Iain Balshaw 10. Ryan Lamb 9. Rory Lawson 1. Nick Wood 2. Olivier Azam 3. Carlos Nieto 4. Peter Buxton 5. Alex Brown 6. Alasdair Strokosch 7. Akapusi Qera 8. Gareth Delve

16. Andy Titterrell 17. Christian Califano 18. Will James 19. Luke Narraway 20. Gareth Cooper 21. Chris Paterson 22. Leon Lloyd

HT: 0 - 17

Attendance: 6,500

JC