

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2008**

**TUOHY LEADS GLOUCESTER TO WIN OVER IRISH**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 34 LONDON IRISH 14**

The message should be keep the faith. Those who thought Gloucester were spiralling into a pit of despair after defeats against Bristol and Harlequins may well be singing from the roof tops about this performance and a result that breathes life into their Guinness Premiership challenge.

In many respects this could be their performance of the season to date. Without a raft of senior players because of international call-ups and injuries and down to the very last options in the squad, Gloucester's inexperienced brigade of battlers drove London Irish to distraction.

What was even more surprising is that they took Irish to task in the very areas they may have struggled – the line-out and in the driving game – and dominated to such a degree it was remarkable.

In lock Dan Tuohy, making his debut against a line-out operation with the most steals in the Premiership, Gloucester had the player of the match. His ability to get high from a standing start and safe hands were always in synch with Andy Titterrell – the hooker who had a right old stormer at the set-piece.

Add in a raging performance from Will James and another monumental effort from the likes of Nick Wood and Andy Hazell and it is easy to appreciate how Gloucester created all the grief London Irish could handle.

Gloucester's game retrieved some credibility and the pressure they created through their kick and chase and all-round general mayhem produced four tries.

Three contained all the luck going but they simply took their chances and by the end were playing from deep to emphasise their confidence.

What Gloucester needed with the wind at their backs was a good, solid start and they got it with a try after eight minutes. James orchestrated a drive from a line-out that crept infield, Peter Buxton carried off the edge of the maul and Willie Walker's chip hit Seilala Mapusua and into the arms of Nick Wood, who crashed over.

It set the tempo and the crowd responded. Four minutes later, Gloucester scored again. James Bailey kicked long from full-back and with the chase gathering speed, Juan Leguizamon attempted to dribble clear but lost the ball to Jack Adams, who hacked forward via a post before lunging home to score.

There was plenty of niggles and that just unsettled Irish even more. They struggled in the scrum and couldn't get going behind and all they had to show in the first quarter was a Peter Hewat penalty after 18 minutes.

But not even that could dent Gloucester's momentum. Bailey made a telling tackle on Topsy Ojo and Buxton arrived next – clattering forward into midfield. When possession came back, Walker aimed to kick and for the second time it hit an Irish player – Mike Catt.

The ball was diverted to Akapusi Qera who got a foot on it and Mark Foster reacted the fastest to scoop up the ball and get behind the sticks for try number three.

It was now Gloucester needed to keep their cool. Their ability to keep Irish at bay through their discipline and cast-iron determination were key to the lead but when Olivier Azam – on for Titterrell because of a blood injury – was binned at a ruck, Hewat made it 24-6 before half-time.

And when he landed a 47th minute penalty it was just the start to the second half Irish wanted and the nerves began to twitch even more when they got their only try of the game.

The frustrating thing from Gloucester's point of view was again it came from their mistake – a forced turn-over when they had the ball. They kept possession through a number of phases but when Walker forced his off-load in the tackle, Ojo stepped in and raced 65 metres to the line.

Hewat missed the conversion but anything lingering doubts about Gloucester's credentials to win the match were blown away in the last quarter. It was now their forwards doubled the efforts – their driving game was at its most potent – James' line-out calling was spot on and it created a platform the hosts could work off.

London Irish did their utmost – Bob Casey is not the sort of individual to take anything lying down – and the contest was fierce at close quarters throughout.

However, it swung with seven minutes to go when the combative David Paice was sinbinned for pulling down another drive. Gloucester pounced – Walker nudged the penalty to the corner and Tuohy and Co. sniffed out a fourth try.

It was the youngsters catch that set up the drive and although referee David Rose needed the assistance of the video official, he awarded the score to the brilliant Titterrell.

There was still time for Qera and then Hazell to threaten a fifth try when Gloucester broke from deep late on – but that would have been stretching the matter no end. The performance was what counted and Gloucester produced a giant one.

#### Gloucester Team

15. James Bailey 14. James Simpson-Daniel 13. Jack Adams  
12. Anthony Allen 11. Mark Foster 10. Willie Walker 9. Gareth Cooper  
1. Nick Wood 2. Andy Titterrell 3. Jack Forster 4. Dan Tuohy 5. Will James  
6. Peter Buxton 7. Andy Hazell 8. Akapusi Qera

16. Olivier Azam 17. Christian Califano 18. Jonathan Pendlebury  
19. Jeremy Paul 20. Mike Prendergast 21. Charlie Sharples 22. Dan  
Norton

London Irish Team

15. Peter Hewat 14. Topsy Ojo 13. Gonzalo Tiesi 12. Seilala Mapusua  
11. Sailosi Tagicakibau 10. Mike Catt 9. Warren Fury 1. Dan Murphy  
2. David Paice 3. Faan Rautenbach 4. Kieran Roche 5. Bob Casey  
6. Juan Manuel Leguizamon 7. Steffon Armitage 8. Richard Thorpe

16. Clarke Dermody 17. Stuart Mackie 18. Tonga Lea'aetoa 19. Gary  
Johnson 20. Declan Danaher 21. Ross Blake 22. Eoghan Hickey

HT: 24 - 6

Attendance: 12,354

JC