

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2009

RICHO ARENA – EDF ENERGY CUP

GLOUCESTER SECURE EDF FINAL PLACE

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Match Report by Anna Mitchell

A superb Gloucester defensive blanket squeezed the life out of the Ospreys as Gloucester won through to the EDF Energy Cup final with a display full of guts at the Ricoh Arena.

The forwards, led by Gareth Delve, absorbed everything the Welsh side had to throw at them and gradually chipped away at the scoreboard, fly-half Ryan Lamb kicking 12 points.

The final nail in the coffin was an Iain Balshaw interception try in the 75th minute as the Ospreys chased the game and looked to force it.

Gloucester opened the scoring in the second minute through a Lamb penalty but spent most of the remainder of the half in defence.

James Hook, Shane Williams and Sonny Parker all made breaks, but the Gloucester defence held firm and the mistakes eventually came from the Welsh outfit.

Hook also missed two regulation penalties which would have given his side the lead.

The Cherry and Whites threatened sporadically, Iain Balshaw with a run down the right ruled out for a forward pass from Mike Tindall.

Skipper Tindall limped off injured minutes later, replaced by Matthew Watkins but when the Ospreys lost stand-in full-back Gavin Henson it evened things up.

The score remained three nil until the break, Lamb missing a chance to extend the advantage just before half time but the Gloucester defence ruling.

Lamb did land a penalty just after half time to double the lead but it was still the Ospreys who threatened in attack.

One try-saving tackle from substitute Olly Barkley stood out, openside Marty Holah looking certain to score after receiving a well-timed Hook pass.

But Lamb was gradually working into the game. He found Balshaw with a fine cross field kick on 61 minutes, but spoiled it with a kick too far aimed at Morgan.

Then the fly half put up a high ball which was superbly caught by Morgan, who had been a rock at the back all the time. The ball was recycled and Lamb slotted a sweet drop goal for the all-important nine point lead.

Five minutes later, on 71 minutes, Lamb was on hand to slot another simple penalty to make it 12-0.

Then, as the Ospreys chased the game Mike Phillips forced a pass which Balshaw intercepted and ran in from his own 22 to confirm the win.

JC