

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2009

ADAMS PARK – LV= CUP

SIMPSON INSPIRES WASPS' COMEBACK AT ADAMS PARK

LONDON WASPS 21 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 14

Match Report by Duncan Wood

Another game slipped away on Sunday afternoon with Gloucester seemingly set for an LV= Cup victory over London Wasps but finishing the game with the bitter taste of defeat in their mouths.

Bryan Redpath's men had dominated the first half against a lacklustre Wasps and extended their lead to 14-3 early in the second period.

At that point, defeat looked unlikely.

However, a combination of two poor tries conceded and the introduction of Joe Simpson turned the tide in the favour of the home team.

Both tries were avoidable but the quality of Simpson's contribution couldn't be questioned.

That said, Gloucester will be hurt, disappointed and frustrated that the game slipped away when they were so well set.

Arriving at Adams Park late due to a traffic accident on the M40 wasn't ideal preparation for the Gloucester side but, following the terrible weather conditions that had hit the West Country on Saturday, conditions were nigh on perfect.

Gloucester had to withstand some early pressure as they were adjudged to have kicked out on the full having carried the ball back into their own 22 but won a morale boosting penalty from the first scrum.

However, a ball spilled in midfield gave Wasps the first scoring chance as Gloucester failed to roll away from the tackle area. After a lengthy lecture for the Gloucester pack from referee Martin Fox, Eoghan Hickey opened the scoring with a fifth minute penalty.

Hickey then rolled a kick into touch just metres short of the Gloucester line to set up another great attacking position but the pack once again rose to the occasion to win a penalty just yards from their own line.

And the pack continued their good work as they won another penalty at a set scrum to give Freddie Burns a shot at goal but the fly half's kick was just wide of the left post.

Dave Attwood storming through the middle then set up another great position with Freddie Burns jinking through after quick ball but the subsequent offload didn't quite go to hand to frustrate the visitors.

However, the try wasn't long in coming as the forwards ripped the ball out of a Wasps' maul. Ben Phillips took it on, supported by Jonny May, and quick ball gave Burns the chance to dummy his way over and convert his own try to give Gloucester a 7-3 lead after 20 minutes.

It had been a good spell for Gloucester with the pack having the edge up front and the defence tearing into Wasps and forcing multiple turnovers.

A second score almost followed when Hickey knocked on in his own 22 and Nick Wood was swift to hack the ball on but the dead ball line saved Wasps with Gloucester players sniffing the score.

Gloucester's superiority up front continued and, by the 37th minute, both starting Wasps' props had departed. Beech looked to be injured, Horn-Smith to be tactical. However, the score remained 7-3 despite Gloucester's best efforts to extend their lead.

There was time for the returning Olly Morgan to incur the wrath of the Adams Park crowd as he took out full back as he waited to take a high ball but the half time whistle came with no further addition to the score.

Gloucester would have been happy with the lead but, given their dominance up front, could have enjoyed a bigger lead at the break and a Wasps fightback would be inevitable.

Yet Gloucester struck first. Burns fielded a kick downfield and chipped ahead. Varndell and Hickey both made a hash of dealing with it and Burns gleefully picked up his own kick ahead to score. Burns dusted himself off and converted to make the score 3-14.

Wasps were stung and hit back as Burns made his first error of the afternoon as his chip ahead was gathered by Shaw on halfway. A quick transfer of the ball gave Tom Varndell room to run and he showed great pace to round Morgan and score. Hickey's conversion was wide of the mark but Wasps had new life at 8-14.

Momentum was now with the home side. Dave Walder and Joe Simpson had both entered the fray and there was greater pace in the game as a result. Gloucester had to defend gamely as Walder pinned them back near their own line and were given a boost when Walder was off target with a 53rd minute penalty.

Gloucester then hit the self-destruct button as they threw long into a lineout near their own line but straight into the arms of Simpson who just made the line. Walder's conversion edged Wasps into the lead at 15-14 to the delight of the home crowd.

Hickey struck the left upright with a penalty from inside his own half to prevent Wasps extending the lead further but Gloucester were left pinned in their own half with the home team now on top.

A brief foray into Wasps territory ended rapidly as Gloucester lost one against the head. Simpson's lightning break had the defence at sixes and sevens and Scott Lawson was yellow carded for infringing around the side of a ruck. Walder's penalty made it 18-14 with just 11 minutes to play.

A man light up front, Gloucester were now struggling in the scrum and Walder added his second penalty, albeit off the left post, five minutes from time to extend the lead to 21-14.

Gloucester tried in desperation to turn the tide but never came close to threatening the Wasps' line and the home team ran out the clock in some comfort.

JC