

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2009**

FIRHILL ARENA – HEINEKEN CUP

GLOUCESTER SLIDE TO DISAPPOINTING DEFEAT IN GLASGOW

GLASGOW WARRIORS 33 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 11

Match Report by Duncan Wood

Gloucester's recent revival came to a shuddering halt at a freezing Firhill on Friday evening as the club's Heineken Cup ambitions took a real knock at the hands of the Glasgow Warriors.

Glasgow had lost their opening two games in the competition but were made to look like world beaters at a mist-enshrouded Firhill Arena.

Gloucester's performance was error strewn, of that there can be no doubt but the pack, in particular, looked genuinely mystified as to why they were being penalised so frequently in the first half by Monsieur Berdos.

Time and again, Dan Parks was awarded kickable penalties and the fly half must have thought Christmas had come early as he helped himself to a 23 point haul.

Despite the lack of possession, Gloucester remained competitive in the first half and Charlie Sharples kept up his rich scoring vein but the sin-binning of Peter Buxton proved to be critical as the Warriors pounced for two quick tries to swing the game decisively their way.

Overall, though, it was a far cry from the performances that have been delivered in recent weeks and a real disappointment for the Cherry and White clad hordes who braved the condition to travel north and back their team.

There had been some doubt throughout the afternoon as to whether the game would go ahead with Glasgow-bound flights apparently cancelled due to fog. And mist was certainly swirling around Firhill but visibility was OK at kick off although it was bitterly cold.

Glasgow kicked off to Gloucester and put the visitors under pressure from the off when Bernardo Stortoni was able to return Nicky Robinson's clearance kick which failed to find touch.

A Gloucester tackler failed to roll away from the breakdown and Dan Parks duly opened the scoring with a 3rd minute penalty.

There was no let up from the home side and, when Rory Lawson had a kick charged down in his own 22, Gloucester were on the back foot again. Another ruck penalty followed as did the successful kick from Parks. 6-0 after 7 minutes with Gloucester having barely touched the ball.

Gloucester needed a spark and got it from a big hit from Alasdair Strokosch. On the retreat, Parks sliced his up and under. Simpson-Daniel couldn't gather cleanly but Vainikolo was given a run into the Glasgow 22 and the Warriors were caught offside. Robinson landed the kick for 6-3 after 11 minutes.

However, Parks immediately restored the six point lead after Peter Buxton stole a Glasgow throw but was caught holding on in the tackle as he attempted to run out of defence.

The Gloucester pack then redeemed itself as it forced a penalty at a Glasgow set scrum and, from near halfway, Robinson reduced the gap to 9-6 but Parks promptly made it 12-6 when referee Berdos penalised Gloucester at the next scrum.

Parks then incredibly sliced another up and under and Gloucester pounced. Quick hands found Sharples whose step off the right foot and acceleration were too much for the Glasgow defence and he sprinted home for the game's first try. Robinson couldn't convert from wide out but it was game on at 12-11.

Gloucester needed to consolidate but couldn't handle the restart. The knock on was fielded by a man in an offside position and Parks made it an amazing five penalties in 26 minutes for 15-11.

Bad went to worse as Gloucester then saw Peter Buxton yellow carded for taking out the catcher at the restart. The Warriors scented blood and almost profited from an overthrown Gloucester lineout but desperate defence under massive pressure kept them at bay.

It was a crucial phase of the game but the Gloucester lineout misfired near their own line to gift the Warriors a gilt-edged chance. Quick hands moved the ball left and Max Evans was just able to slide over the line and ground the ball despite the tackle. Parks was, for once, off target, but the Warriors had a little breathing room at 20-11.

Gloucester's indiscipline was killing them and another needless penalty gave Parks the chance to drive Glasgow deep into the Gloucester 22. Swift hands across the backline bamboozled the Gloucester defence and Bernardo Stortoni was able to dummy his way over untouched. Parks slotted the conversion for 27-11.

Glasgow were good value for the lead but they were being made to look good by the sheer amount of possession they were being gifted. Cusiter and Parks were bossing the game. The Warriors were on the front foot and the crowd were loving every minute.

Gloucester's indiscipline had been their downfall although some decisions looked mystifying. Parks looked like kicking everything and he was being given plenty of opportunity.

It was going to take a massive improvement to turn this one around.

Gloucester started well but careless hands soon put them under yet more pressure as Glasgow just preyed on individual mistakes. Yet another penalty followed and Parks landed the kick from wide out for 30-11.

Gloucester simply had to chase the game by now and Robinson was instructed to kick for the corner rather than at goal but the home defence was fired up and in no mood to buckle.

Parks had a chance to extend the lead with yet another penalty but was short with an attempt from inside his own half and the game went into a lull with Glasgow having no need to chase the game and Gloucester unable to make significant inroads.

The Gloucester pack did step it up on the hour and applied some pressure and Glasgow lock Dan Turner was yellow carded for pulling down a maul but his team mates made light of his absence and defended with pride.

With Gloucester having seemingly exhausted themselves looking for a consolation score, Glasgow poured forward in the final few minutes looking to rub salt into the wounds and Parks kicked his seventh penalty for 33-11.

Understandably, Glasgow looked the stronger and fresher in the final moments and looked more likely to add to their score but Gloucester at least held out to prevent further embarrassment.

JC