

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 2010**

ADAMS PARK – GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP

GLOUCESTER FALL JUST SHORT AT ADAMS PARK

LONDON WASPS 24 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 19

Match Report by Duncan Wood

Despite a valiant comeback, when they clawed back a 13 point deficit to level matters, Gloucester couldn't quite complete the job and slipped to a 24-19 defeat at Adams Park.

It was a frustrating afternoon in Wycombe. Gloucester have been so good in terms of discipline in recent weeks but, for some reason, seemed to catch the eye of referee Andrew Small on Sunday afternoon and Dave Walder's right boot did the rest.

After a fairly drab first half, Mike Tindall's second half try gave real hope that Gloucester were going to go on and chalk up what had seemed to be an unlikely victory having trailed 16-6 at the break.

However, David Lemi's late piece of wizardry was the straw that broke the camel's back as his sparkling footwork clinched the win.

Gloucester now need to regroup as the Guinness Premiership takes a break as an LV=Cup semi-final against Cardiff Blues beckons and a step up in performance will be required.

Matchday dawned clear and bright at Adams Park with Gloucester looking to maintain their recent good form and continue their push up the Guinness Premiership table.

Harlequins' narrow win over Worcester the day before had taken them above Gloucester in the table so a win would be crucial in keeping up the pursuit of a Heineken Cup place.

However, it was Wasps who had the first chance of early points as Gloucester came in at the side of a ruck but Dave Walder pushed his kick wide.

Gloucester responded well, shoving Wasps off their own scrum ball and Tim Taylor's up and under created panic but Fuimaono Sapolu's promising pass to Vainikolo was ruled forward as the winger piled into the home 22.

Wasps, though, were generally on the front foot in the opening ten minutes, enjoying considerably more possession.

Although Gloucester's defence wasn't significantly tested, Dave Walder nudged Wasps in front with a 12th minute penalty and doubled the lead three minutes later as Gloucester were penalised at the ruck on both occasions.

Taylor had a chance to respond on 17 minutes with Wasps caught offside in the backs but, head on to the posts, pushed a kickable penalty wide. It sparked a good phase for Gloucester as they produced quick ball from the ruck area but couldn't penetrate the Wasps defence.

And Gloucester were made to pay the price. Vainikolo mishandled Walder's clearance into touch to give the home side excellent field position.

Kefu made an incisive break, the forwards took it on and, despite Gloucester slowing the ball down, Walder darted his way over for the game's first try which he converted himself. 13-0 after 25 minutes.

Gloucester needed to score next and duly did so as Taylor found his range with a 27th minute penalty to narrow the gap to 13-3 but Walder responded in kind on 33 minutes as Gloucester failed to wrap the arms in the tackle.

With half time approaching, Gloucester needed a spark. They tested the Wasps defence without any real joy although Taylor did land a 38th minute penalty.

An uninspiring first half duly drew to a close with Wasps reduced to 14 men as replacement scrum half Warren Fury was yellow carded for stamping.

Neither team had set the world alight but Gloucester were being made to pay for indiscipline at the breakdown.

In attack, there were glimpses of the recent good form but handling errors and an unsteady lineout were preventing them from maintaining any real possession and territory. Improvements would be needed in the second half.

A good start was needed and there was an escape when Walder was narrowly wide with a drop goal attempt whilst Nicky Robinson was introduced as a 45th minute replacement and Rory Lawson appeared in the 47th.

There was certainly more urgency about Gloucester's game but still they struggled to make any real headway although Gareth Delve produced one storming run from the base of a scrum but his chip ahead was safely dealt with by Dave Walder.

Then, out of nowhere, Mike Tindall struck. Clean lineout ball was moved into the midfield where Tindall burst through a gap before stepping past Paul Sackey and powering to the line. Robinson converted and it was game on at 16-13.

Walder was then short and wide with a penalty from distance before Robinson levelled the scores at 16 apiece with a long-range effort of his own as the game went into the final quarter.

Wasps hit back. Sackey took a quick tap and Qera was adjudged not to have retreated ten metres. Qera was yellow carded and Walder booted his fourth penalty for 19-16.

It was all to play for but one moment of magic from David Lemi proved decisive. Given half a yard of space, he left Alasdair Stokosch for dead and then beat Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu to score in the corner and open up an eight point lead.

Gloucester were still fighting and Robinson slotted a 75th minute penalty to get his side back into bonus point range and give his side hope.

In desperation, Gloucester tried to move the ball from deep and Simpson-Daniel's superb run gave hope but holding on in the tackle in the Wasps 22 ended the game and a losing bonus point was the only reward.

JC