

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, 14 AUGUST, 2010

KINGSHOLM – FRIENDLY

GLOUCESTER SHAKE OFF COBWEBS WITH SCARLETS WIN

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 26 SCARLETS 6

Match Report by Duncan Wood

Despite the absence of a host of internationals, Gloucester got their 2010-11 campaign off to a winning start with a 26-6 pre-season win over the Scarlets.

The final scoreline was comfortable enough, however, the Scarlets did take some breaking down and there was the inevitable rustiness that will always be present in the first competitive game of the season.

That said, Gloucester kept their line intact and scored four tries of their own to earn an encouraging victory and put the squad in good heart ahead of their trip to take on the Ospreys next weekend.

There is still plenty to work on but there were plenty of positives not least the first outing for quite some time for the likes of Dave Lewis and Henry Trinder.

Gloucester were forced into a late reshuffle with Freddie Burns and Will James both late withdrawals. Burns was replaced by England U18 Ryan Mills and the youngster, making his first senior start, didn't put a foot wrong on the day.

The visitors made a bright start as Gloucester couldn't hang onto the game's opening kick off and gave the Gloucester defence a work over as they hung onto possession for several phases but the home side were up to the task.

Starved of the ball for the first few minutes, Gloucester finally moved into the Scarlets 22 with Charlie Sharples popping up in midfield and the pack carrying well before Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu's vision with a floated pass outside almost put Sharples in, only for a despairing tackle to bring him down just short.

Sharples was looking sharp and made a scintillating 50 metre break shortly afterwards but he was a little bit too quick for his support and the Scarlets cover just got to him.

However, Gloucester's pressure finally told on 15 minutes as they secured a five metre lineout and the pack drove over in style with Akapusi Qera emerging as the try scorer. Tim Taylor converted for a 7-0 lead.

The visitors earned some good-natured boos as they opted to kick for goal as Gloucester obstructed at the resulting restart but Steven Shingler shrugged them off to nudge the ball over and make the score 7-3.

A scrappy spell followed for Gloucester as the lineout misfired a couple of times and the Scarlets were able to spend time in the home 22 before offside in midfield gave Shingler a second opportunity and he made no mistake for 7-6 after 26 minutes.

The opening half hour had been one of contrast. Gloucester had shown ambition, kicking for the corners and keeping ball in hand. Yet they had made errors in doing so.

The Scarlets weren't afraid to kick long or take their kicks at goal and they received more stick from the crowd as Shingler attempted a drop at goal which drifted wide.

As half time approached, Gloucester were then dealt a blow as Lesley Vainikolo was forced off with an arm injury although his replacement, Jonny May, very nearly conjured a try out of nothing as he chased his own grubber ahead but was just beaten to the ball.

Gloucester finished the half strongly with Peter Buxton prominent with some powerful ball carries. Good ball retention resulted in the defence running out of bodies and Tim Molenaar's half break allowed him to put Jonny May in for the second try and a half time score of 12-6.

The Scarlets made five changes whereas Gloucester emerged unchanged and it was the home team who started the second period the better with Pasqualin and Sharples both making dangerous breaks and a charged down kick almost costing the visitors dear.

Gloucester made a few changes but continued to press as the penalty count started to mount against the visitors and the pressure up front eventually told with the try from close awarded to Darren Dawidiuk and Taylor's conversion making it 19-6.

The home side were now beginning to get things together and a fourth try duly followed as Ryan Mills slid through a measured grubber and Charlie Sharples gathered well to score in the corner. Taylor converted well from out wide for 26-6.

More replacements followed with Gloucester losing some cohesion as a result and the Scarlets were able to enjoy some significant time in the home 22. Bryan Redpath's men were heavily penalised during this phase of play but defended stoutly to keep their line intact and close out a well earned win.

JC