

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, 21 AUGUST, 2010

LIBERTY STADIUM – FRIENDLY

GLOUCESTER CHALK UP IMPRESSIVE AWAY WIN AT OSPREYS

OSPREYS 14 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 24

Match Report by Duncan Wood

Head Coach Bryan Redpath has been very open in his desire to see his Gloucester side win more matches on the road and they duly achieved that on Saturday afternoon with a hard fought 24-14 win over the Ospreys at the Liberty Stadium.

It was an impressive display with all Gloucester's points scored in the first half before a gutsy second half defensive effort just kept the Ospreys at bay.

The home side weren't at full strength but were clearly in no mood to roll over and introduced several of their big guns as they fought to get on even terms, but to no avail.

Three tries to two in favour of Gloucester was a fair summary of the game and will provide a huge boost of confidence although a number of players having to leave the field will be a concern.

A grey damp afternoon greeted both sides at the Liberty Stadium and a pre match downpour meant that handling would probably be difficult and that kicks would skid across the greasy turf, a fact quickly exploited by Nicky Robinson.

Gloucester had the first attacking chance as they kicked for the corner after only 2 minutes but the attempted catch and drive was held up by the Ospreys.

Predictably, the opening few exchanges were error strewn and both defences looked solid and well drilled. However, Nicky Robinson carved open the Ospreys defence on 10 minutes as he first chipped over winger Nikki Walker who had to concede a penalty which led to the field position from which his exquisitely slid grubber was touched down by Henry Trinder. Robinson converted for 7-0.

Gloucester had to withstand some Ospreys pressure from the restart but moved downfield thanks to some home indiscipline and Robinson added a 17th minute penalty to open up a 10-0 lead.

The home side's response was ferocious and they turned down a kickable penalty before Richard Fussell very nearly latched onto a neat chip through but couldn't ground properly.

They were testing times for Gloucester and Fussell and Gareth Owen almost sprung the trap but the scrambling defence just got back and secured a key turnover.

The Cherry and Whites then produced a peach of a try. Morgan made good ground down the right, well supported by Tindall. The ball came back left and Attwood gave Simpson-Daniel room to run into the 22 and he linked with Jonny May whose quick hands put Luke Narryway in for the second try. Robinson converted for 17-0.

It was Robinson's last contribution as he left the field, seemingly moving OK, to be replaced by Tim Taylor.

The Ospreys hit straight back. While Andy Hazell was in midfield receiving treatment, a long lineout was tapped to Jamie Nutbrown who exploited the gap where Hazell would have been and dummied his way over. Dai Flanagan converted for 17-7 and Matt Cox replaced Hazell.

A weaving run from Tim Taylor almost resulted in a score. Drama then followed at the Gloucester end as Jonny May knocked on when running the ball out from near his own line but Fussell did likewise as he looked to capitalise.

Gloucester then made the most of a superb kick and chase which earned a penalty. Dave Lewis took a quick tap and Matt Cox spotted a prop out wide, went through the gap and scored his first try for Gloucester. Taylor converted for 24-7 and a job well done at half time.

However, Gloucester immediately put themselves under pressure as they tapped the kick off straight to Nikki Walker as the home side poured through. It was panic stations and only desperate defence kept the Ospreys at bay at the expense of a 5 metre scrum.

However, half time replacement Dan Biggar was quickly into the action and dummed his way over from close range having been just held out with a previous attempt to get the Ospreys back in the game. Biggar converted his own try to narrow the gap to 24-14.

Biggar had turned the corresponding fixture at Kingsholm last season decisively the Ospreys way. Would he do likewise today? The Ospreys cause was certainly helped on 52 minutes as full back Olly Morgan, chasing a high kick, was adjudged to have tackled the catcher in the air and promptly yellow carded by referee James Jones.

The game was also becoming increasingly physical and both Trinder and Tindall were forced to leave the field to be replaced by Molenaar and Fuimaono-Sapolu respectively as, meanwhile, the Ospreys sent on high profile international replacements in an attempt to break through.

And the home team were only denied by a post as Biggar's grubber kick exploited Morgan's absence but hit the post padding with two Ospreys in hot pursuit and rebounded kindly to Fuimaono-Sapolu.

The game entered the last quarter with Gloucester grimly holding on but back up to 15 with the return of Morgan. Gloucester weathered the immediate storm and almost scored a fourth try as May and Simpson-Daniel were both just held out in the corner after extensive pressure but still the home side remained dangerous, but a late fully produced nothing and Gloucester closed out a good win.