

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

FRIDAY, 27 AUGUST, 2010

MUSGRAVE PARK – FRIENDLY

GLOUCESTER PUSH MUNSTER BUT SUFFER NARROW DEFEAT

MUNSTER 15 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 10

Match Report by Duncan Wood

Gloucester brought their pre-season preparations to a close on Friday evening as they went toe to toe with Munster at a passionate Musgrave Park before the home team edged it 15-10.

Bryan Redpath's side deserve full credit for more than playing their part in a hard fought and entertaining encounter.

However, the home pack will take the plaudits as they scored two well taken tries from catch and drives close to the Gloucester line either side of half time to earn the win.

Gloucester had led for most of the first half, scored an excellent try and genuinely tested the home defence which was, for its part, incredibly well drilled.

Right to the final whistle, Gloucester kept going with some added pace and sparkle injected from replacements like Henry Trinder and Matt Cox but the equalising score eluded them.

Two out of three for Gloucester in preseason but it's next weekend when the serious stuff really starts with the opening Aviva Premiership fixture at the Exeter Chiefs.

The Friday night clash at Musgrave Park represented perhaps Gloucester's toughest test of preseason and a good performance and clean bill of health would have been the goal before the game kicked off.

Showing the ambition that has characterised their preseason, Gloucester started brightly and quickly looked to move the ball around but the Munster defence in the early stages was easily up to the task. The home side also had the benefit of the elements in the first half and this was evident in the distance gained with the kicking from hand.

Gloucester enjoyed more than their fair share of possession in the first 10 minutes but Munster had the first chance of points when awarded a penalty midway between the Gloucester 10m and 22m lines but Paul Warwick dragged his attempt left of the posts.

Warwick though immediately was gifted another, more head on to the posts, chance as Gloucester transgressed at a ruck and duly made it 3-0 after 14 minutes.

More good possession followed for Gloucester including a thwarted 5m catch and drive but good defence kept them at bay until Tim Taylor's delicate grubber behind the defence found space and the fly half touched down for the try before adding the conversion for 3-7 after 20 minutes.

Munster were stung into life and debutant John Murphy made ground with a break down the right wing before the pack took the ball on through several phases, inching ever closer, until knocking on under pressure when a try seemed on the cards.

Gloucester found themselves under the cosh for the next few minutes but held firm with Olly Morgan producing one superb tackle on a flying Doug Howlett to cut the former All Black down in full flight.

It was full blooded entertaining stuff and there seemed to be a rendition of "Gloucester, Gloucester" from the away followers as they acknowledged the effort being put in by Bryan Redpath's side.

However, the Munster pack finally clicked as they put together a powerful catch and drive and drove over the Gloucester line with the opinion being that prop Wian du Preez got the score. Warwick converted for 10-7 after 37 minutes.

Munster spent the final couple of minutes pressing hard and the Gloucester scrum creaked a little but the sides went into half time with just one score separating them and all to play for.

Gloucester put themselves under pressure by failing to claim the kick off and it took three tacklers to bring down the huge prop Tony Buckley.

Gloucester conceded a penalty and the kick went to the corner. The catch and drive followed and, for the second time, Munster scored. Alan Quinlan was awarded the score on this occasion to make the score 15-7.

Munster were, by now, dominating possession and Gloucester were having to put in some hard work in defence to keep the home side at bay with Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu leading the way with some shuddering hits.

The inevitable raft of replacements started to take place on both sides and the game lost a bit of cohesion as a result with Gloucester straining every sinew to get back into the game but getting little change out of the home side's defence.

A line break from Tim Molenaar finally gained some vitals yards and, when Munster handled the ball on the deck, Tim Taylor's penalty reduced the score line to 15-10 after 63 minutes.

Gloucester were giving it a real go now and very nearly got back on terms when Henry Trinder ghosted into the home 22 but a supporting player went straight to the ground to end the danger.

Munster weren't done themselves though and full back Felix Jones very nearly scored the third try as he took a nice line onto a short pop pass but lost the ball in the tackle as he neared the line.

Gloucester stretched Munster right to the very end with Henry Trinder in particular catching the eye with some nifty footwork with ball in hand.

The game finished with Gloucester driving towards the Munster line before releasing the backs and a long, floated pass seemed to give Tom Voyce a real chance but the winger was tackled into touch near the corner to end a pulsating game.

JC