

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2010

KINGSHOLM – LV= CUP

GLOUCESTER SMASH SORRY SARRIES IN LV= ROMP

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 36 SARACENS 10

Match Report by Duncan Wood

Two tries, once either side of half time, settled this LV=Cup tie as a contest as Gloucester dominated a surprisingly lacklustre Saracens side by 36 points to 10.

Maybe the 1pm kick off time caught the visitors cold? Whatever the reason, such a one-sided encounter certainly wasn't expected given the quality of side that Saracens brought to Kingsholm.

Brendan Venter's team certainly looked like the one that started last season, kicking deep and chasing hard rather than the one that lit up the Premiership in the second half of the season.

But that's to take nothing away from Gloucester who, making good use of the perfect conditions, gorged themselves on the feast of possession that they were served up.

They were even able to weather the disadvantage of playing for 20 minutes with only 14 men as Narraway and Wood were yellow carded as they ran in five tries to one.

The win represents a huge boost of morale ahead of the tricky trip to Newcastle but increases the frustration at the manner of defeat in Newport last week.

Gloucester made one late change from the side announced as Alex Brown was taken unwell overnight. Peter Buxton replaced him in the second row.

An impeccably observed minute's silence by both sets of supporters to mark Remembrance Sunday preceded kick off and then the action proper started.

A slightly scrappy first couple of minutes for Gloucester was ended as the back row duo of Luke Narraway and Andy Hazell linked to get over the gain line for the first time but the Saracens defence held up well despite some sustained pressure.

The opening eight minutes passed without the scoreboard being troubled although Gloucester were looking the more adventurous with Saracens frequently putting boot to ball.

And the adventure paid off after nine minutes as Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu chipped through delightfully before gathering his own kick. Play was taken on through several phases before Charlie Sharples showed great pace and broke a tackle to score on the right. Tim Taylor converted superbly for a 7-0 lead.

Saracens had an immediate chance to hit back as Andy Hazell looked to be harshly penalised as he stole possession at a ruck but Owen Farrell's penalty attempt was poorly struck and wide of the mark.

The Gloucester pack then won a moral battle as they forced a penalty at the next scrum to give Taylor a long shot at goal but the kick drifted wide right.

The visitors' tactic of kicking ball away was giving Gloucester plenty of possession and it was duly exploited on 19 minutes.

Fuimaono-Sapolu bobbed and weaved, bamboozling would be tacklers, before releasing James Simpson-Daniel who bumped off an attempted tackle and just made the line for a superb long range score.

Taylor's touchline conversion wasn't the prettiest but was on target for 14-0 after 20 minutes.

Saracens then enjoyed a spell of possession and territory but didn't really threaten much and a Hazell turnover led to a Narraway break but the supporting Tim Taylor didn't have the pace to get away from the cover.

In fact, after 30 minutes, the only negative for Gloucester was the sight of Olly Morgan having to leave the action and Andy Hazell suffering a blood injury.

However, a couple of errors gifted Saracens good field position on 36 minutes and Luke Narraway was yellow carded as Gloucester desperately defended their own line. Curiously, Saracens opted to kick at goal despite the home team being a man short in the pack and Owen Farrell made it 14-3.

But the lead was promptly restored and extended as Taylor responded with a penalty of his own as the pack came up trumps again before Henry Trinder picked off an ambitious pass in midfield and ran it back from his 22 for the third try with Taylor's conversion providing a more than useful 24-3 half time lead.

Half time saw a further shuffle of resources for Bryan Redpath's side as Charlie Sharples was replaced by Lesley Vainikolo with only Dan Robson now left as a backs replacement.

But the re-jigged back line struck next as Schalk Brits was stripped of the ball in the Gloucester 22. Simpson-Daniel was freed by Fuimaono-Sapolu and made 50 metres before floating an inside ball to Trinder who picked it up off his toes and then tiptoed down the line for a scintillating try. Taylor again converted for 31-3.

Gloucester were on fire and the pack now enjoying themselves hugely. A penalty forced at a scrum set up position in the Saracens 22 and a monstrous catch and drive resulted in a try for Azam for 36-3.

The visitors were given some hope on the hour when Nick Wood was sinbinned after a number of reset scrums and duly took advantage as they carved an opening for replacement James Short to score. Farrell converted well for 36-10.

Gloucester's bench had by now been all but emptied with the win seemingly in the bag. The name of the game was now consolidation – close out the game and avoid further injury.

Darren Dawidiuk made a great flying tackle to deny a flying Schalk Brits as Saracens rallied in the final minutes but it was way too little, way too late.

JC