

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2010**

KINGSTON PARK – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

ERROR STREWN GLOUCESTER SLIP UP AT FALCONS

NEWCASTLE FALCONS 12 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 6

Match Report by Duncan Wood

After the highs of recent weeks, Gloucester came down to earth with a bump at Newcastle on Sunday as a crippling error count saw them clinch only a losing bonus point in a 12-6 defeat.

Gloucester simply never got going. The errors started from the kick off and continued right until the very end.

Nothing happened in attack and, although they enjoyed the lion's share of possession in the second period, they simply couldn't capitalise.

Newcastle, for their part defended gamely, but did little in attack save kick the ball and chase hard.

However, it was enough as it created four easy penalty chances for Jimmy Gopperth. He took the lot and it was enough to earn the home side only their second Premiership win of the season.

Gloucester head south with a losing bonus point but they'll be well aware that it could, and perhaps should, have been so much more but they were the architects of their own downfall.

It was a poor start for Gloucester as Luke Narryway seemed to be harshly penalised for taking out the kicker with seemingly nothing on. But the decision stood and Jimmy Gopperth slotted the kick for a 3-0 lead after three minutes.

There was plenty of possession for Gloucester in the opening few minutes but a lack of precision in their play was preventing them making any inroads into the Falcons defence.

And there was an escape on 13 minutes when Micky Young caught the defence napping with a quickly taken tap. Brent Wilson took it deep into the Gloucester 22 but Youngs' pass to Bobo was dropped with the line beckoning.

However, Gloucester gifted three points to Gopperth as they tried to run the ball away from the ensuing scrum, were caught in the shadow of their own posts and conceded an easy penalty for a 6-0 home lead.

After the sparkling form of recent weeks, it was a lacklustre opening from Bryan Redpath's side who were guilty of aimlessly kicking possession away and were yet to really get into the game.

With the rain starting to teem down, Gloucester's pack started to keep it tight and battered their way towards the home line. A series of 5m scrums followed as referee Fox penalised Newcastle time and again until Gloucester themselves were bizarrely penalised and the Falcons escaped.

With half an hour on the clock, Newcastle had offered little more than a willingness to chase the high kick but Gloucester were unable to test them due to poor execution and ill-discipline and so the 6-0 scoreline remained.

And the frustration level grew even further as Sharples dropped yet another high kick leading to a penalty at the ruck and Gopperth opened up a 9-0 lead which was the score at half time.

It was a desperately disappointing 40 minutes for Gloucester were fluffing their lines against an opponent who had only won once in the Aviva Premiership before today and who were, frankly, not offering much.

A much-improved performance was going to be required in the second half. Possession would have to be maintained and discipline improved as Jimmy Gopperth was happy to wait for the chances that he knew were going to come his way.

The omens weren't good even before half time ended as the temperature notably dropped whilst the rain started to hammer down.

Indeed, bad went to worse as Taylor mishandled another high kick, a team mate fielded it in an offside position and Gopperth's boot did the rest.

However, Gloucester did finally get a decision after 50 minutes following a scrappy phase of play and Freddie Burns stepped up to make it 12-3.

Bryan Redpath was doing his best to use his replacements to shake things up. By the 53rd minute, five had been used in the second half and all were tactical.

However, despite a lot of grunt, there was still precious little sign of the incisive play that has been Gloucester's hallmark in recent weeks and they still weren't being done any favours by referee Fox.

As the gloom deepened at Kingston Park so did Gloucester's prospects and, following another mishandled up and under, they were fortunate to see Gopperth's drop goal attempt slide wide.

Freddie Burns gave Gloucester a glimmer of hope as he stroked home a 69th minute penalty as Gloucester pressed but the conditions were worsening by the minute as the Falcons looked to close out the game.

A catch and drive nearly breached the home but Dawidiuk looked to offload instead of going to ground as Gloucester tried to press, perhaps too hard.

Gloucester had all the pressure but simply couldn't penetrate a resolute home defence who defended like their lives depended on it and duly hung on for the win with Vainikolo's final handling error symbolic of the whole game.

JC