

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 2011

KINGSHOLM – AMLIN CHALLENGE CUP

CLINICAL GLOUCESTER DESPATCH AGEN AT FOGGY KINGSHOLM

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Match Report by Duncan Wood/Tim Lamden

On a freezing and foggy night at Kingsholm, Gloucester did a demolition job on their visitors Agen, scoring eight tries on their way to a 60-7 Amlin Challenge Cup victory.

It finished Gloucester's European campaign on a high although it was tinged with the disappointment that La Rochelle's win over Rovigo in France meant that Bryan Redpath's side failed to qualify for the knock out stages.

Nevertheless, the home side can take a lot from the performance they put in tonight, demonstrating much of the attacking class they have in abundance.

James Simpson-Daniel, in particular, reinforced his unrelenting claim for an England shirt with another superb Man of the Match performance in a game in which Agen could do nothing to halt their host's advances. Even by the end of the first half, Agen were a sorry and beaten outfit. They'd conceded five tries, 41 points and lost players to injury.

To their credit, their resolve stiffened at the start of the second half and they even scored a good try from flanker Jean Monribo but that just inspired Gloucester to finish all the stronger.

The writing was on the wall less than a minute into the game. A towering up and under from Freddie Burns was collected fantastically by a leaping Olly Morgan and the ball was swept wide across the backs to James Simpson-Daniel.

With much of the 22 ahead of him, the in-form winger brushed off the final defender effortlessly to go over for the first score. Burns converted well from wide on the left to give Gloucester a 7-0 lead.

Gloucester continued to advance and on eight minutes were awarded a penalty for an Agen offside in midfield which Burns knocked over to put Gloucester 10-0 ahead.

Minutes later centre Henry Trinder surged into the Agen 22 and was halted just short of the try line. The ball was quickly retained and spread wide on the left, leaving Akapusi Qera to draw the final defender and put Burns in at the corner.

The fly half dusted himself off and continued his untarnished record with an impressive conversion from the touchline to make it 17-0.

It didn't all go Gloucester's way. On 14 minutes, Nick Wood was sinbinned for a tackle off the ball but the temporary loss of numbers did little to stem the tide.

In fact, in his absence, Gloucester stretched the lead through a Burns penalty although they were helped by Agen's Conrad Barnard being sinbinned for not rolling away.

The marauding Qera was instrumental in the third score, smashing through the middle until he was held up just short of the try line. Quick ball found its way to Trinder who strolled in for Gloucester's third try of the evening. Burns converted to make it 27-0.

Trinder then bagged his second of the game on 36 minutes after a Simpson-Daniel burst although the centre had to rely upon the decision of the TMO as he touched down perilously close to the corner flag.

Gloucester weren't yet finished and an exchange of passes in the Agen 22 on 40 minutes was eventually finished off by Tom Voyce who ran onto Fuimaono Sapolu's pass to cross in the corner. Burns finished the half in impeccable style with a sixth successful kick to leave it 41-0.

The Kingsholm faithful were almost salivating at the prospect of more of the same in the second half but, to their credit, Agen took the game to the home side.

A crafty box kick into the Gloucester corner from scrum half Maxime Machenaud almost unpicked the defence as it was tracked by winger Ratu Kolinisau, who just knocked on as he collected the ball over the Gloucester line.

And a searing break from Kolinisau did eventually open up Gloucester, Monribot taking the offload and showing impressive pace to just make the line. Barnard converted.

The fog started to close in again and the game became fragmented although Agen indulged in a spell of almost Sevens-style rugby at one point, flinging the ball around with abandon in their own 22.

However, Simpson-Daniel showed supreme finishing power on the hour as he bobbed and weaved his way through some less than stellar defence and simply didn't stop until he crossed the line for his second.

Tim Taylor, on for Burns, continued the flawless kicking form with a conversion wide on the left to make it 48-7.

With gaps in Agen's defence blown wide open, Gloucester were now really motoring and a sweetly timed pass from Dave Lewis, on for Rory Lawson, to Trinder on the crash catapulted the centre towards the Agen line.

Trinder returned the ball to Lewis on the inside who finished off his part in the move with an offload to Morgan who sprinted into the corner. Taylor got close with the conversion but was denied by the crossbar, leaving it at 53-7.

Half an hour earlier, Taylor would have won a tidy sum for winning the half time crossbar challenge but that's another story...

There was still time for one last telling contribution from Simpson-Daniel whose half break found Luke Narraway in support and the big number eight just made the line to finish off a good night's work for Gloucester.

JC