

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2011

KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

GLOUCESTER TRIUMPHANT IN HIGH DRAMA DERBY

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 34 BATH RUGBY 22

Match Report by Duncan Wood/Tim Lamden

Gloucester faced possibly their toughest game of the season as in form local rivals Bath Rugby came to town but responded in fine style securing a bonus point 34-22 victory.

The win didn't see Gloucester climb in the Aviva Premiership standings at all but does extend their lead position over fourth place Bath to nine points.

Tom Voyce will garner a few headlines for his two try contribution but the pack deserve massive plaudits for targeting and destroying the Bath scrummage.

Yet Head Coach Bryan Redpath was modest after the game, claiming that his side looked a little flat after a series of high intensity matches and that there was still plenty to work on.

When all is said and done though, it's now nine wins in a row for Gloucester and the side now head into next weekend's LV= Cup semi-final against the Dragons in good heart.

It was a game that fizzed and crackled right from the very off with Gloucester kicking off at a furious pace and pinning their opponents back.

It was backs to the wall stuff for Bath in defence and they went behind to a 6th minute Nicky Robinson penalty for going off their feet at a ruck.

Gloucester, looking for a league double over their near neighbours, were well up for the task in hand and soon extended the lead.

Olly Morgan got his side moving with a terrific catch of his own high kick but Andy Hazell played a key part as he secured possession.

Rory Lawson spotted space behind the defence and his little dink kick bounced beautifully for Henry Trinder who dived over for the first try.

Bath were reeling but then struck from nowhere. Clean lineout ball was followed by[*sic*].

Just as Gloucester were looking to have real control of the game, Bath caught the defence napping with a cut-out pass from fly-half Butch James, putting Ben Williams into space and the centre drew the last man for Matt Banahan to score. Olly Barkley converted to cut the deficit to 10-7.

Gloucester responded well. Number eight Luke Narraway broke from the base of a scrum on the Bath 22, dummied and going through into space ahead and offloaded to Jim Hamilton in support who had the line beckoning only to lose the ball in contact.

However, Gloucester weren't to be denied and Robinson threaded a deft chip over the try line into the right corner which Paul Doran-Jones was just able to touch down despite the attentions of Pieter Dixon.

The decision went to the television match official who awarded Gloucester the crucial try just before half-time. Robinson missed the conversion to leave Gloucester leading 15-7.

Bath, though, caught a break as half time approached as Gloucester blocked the kick chasers from the restart and Olly Barkley slotted the penalty for 15-10.

It had been a pulsating half of rugby and it was difficult to believe that a second half of such intensity could follow but it lived up to expectations.

It started on a down note for Gloucester as left wing Tom Biggs slipped out of one tackle and shrugged off another to score with nothing seemingly on. It was a soft score and drew Bath level and back into the game.

The stakes were high and, at times, it seemed as though referee Garner might lose control of things but the cards stayed in the pocket and the game carried on.

Robinson struck the upright with a 46 minute penalty attempt but was on target a minute later to edge his side back in front before both captains received a lengthy lecture from the referee and seemed to be told to calm it down.

As the hour mark approached, Robinson made it 21-15 and then Gloucester took a decisive grip on proceedings.

Narraway's burst from the base of a scrum was decisive and Rory Lawson was in support. Robinson was in support but a Bath hand slapped the ball away.

With a certain try seemingly denied, Narraway showed quick thinking to pick up the loose ball and spread possession right for Tom Voyce to score in the corner. Robinson couldn't convert but Gloucester still led convincingly at 26-15.

Bath showed immense character and Gloucester had to endure a period of intense pressure on their own line but a raking touch finder from Lawson helped ease the pressure and Robinson slotted his third penalty for 29-15 after a lengthy break during which Olly Barkley was sadly stretchered off.

It looked done and dusted but Simon Taylor carried powerfully from a Bath scrum and Ben Williams took the offload to bring Bath back into it after James' conversion.

The drama hadn't finished and, on 78 minutes, Tom Voyce grabbed a brace, with a frantic dash to score in the corner, to round off a superb performance and send the Kingsholm hordes into a frenzy.

JC