

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2011

KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

GLOUCESTER OFF TO WINNING WAYS AGAINST WORCESTER

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 29 WORCESTER WARRIORS 8

Report by Duncan Wood

Gloucester clinched their first win of the Aviva Premiership rugby season with a hard fought but ultimately comfortable 29-8 win over the Worcester Warriors on Saturday.

It wasn't easy. The Warriors have never been an easy opponent and have caused Gloucester problems on more than one occasion in recent seasons.

But Jonny May's early, slightly fortunate try, settled any early nerves and Tim Taylor played a smart tactical game in the opening half to ease the game away from the visitors.

The second half saw Gloucester close out the game without too many alarms although a try scoring bonus was never on the cards and secured an important four points.

It ended a difficult week on a high note and will have the squad in good spirits ahead of next weekend's trip to Harlequins.

James Simpson-Daniel was a late withdrawal for Gloucester, failing a fitness test on an ankle he rolled in training during the week. Tom Voyce took over on the left wing.

Playing into the wind, it was a nervy start for Gloucester. The kick off sailed straight into touch and a free kick was conceded off the subsequent scrum.

A powerful drive from the pack got Gloucester moving forward but the visitors proved robust in defence and forced a knock on after several phases of possession.

Fortune then smiled on Gloucester. A loose Worcester pass in midfield bounced up nicely for Jonny May and the young centre simply pinned back his ears and ran 60 metres for the score. Taylor had the simplest of conversions for a 7-0 lead.

The visitors then threatened courtesy of a well-executed catch and drive but the Gloucester pack dug deep and Horstmann held on in the tackle when the ball was shipped wide.

Worcester did have a chance to get on the scoreboard on 18 minutes as they won a penalty when Gloucester slipped their bind at a scrum but Joe Carlisle was off target.

Carlisle then kicked the ball dead at the Gloucester end as the wind took his kick further than intended. Gloucester won a penalty at the scrum and Tim Taylor made no mistake from head on to the posts.

Taylor's tactical kicking then paid dividends as he pinned back Miles Benjamin with a kick over the winger's head. Charlie Sharples made the tackle and Benjamin held on as the Gloucester pack arrived. Taylor slotted the resulting penalty for 13-0 after 27 minutes.

Worcester were starting to infringe repeatedly but no yellow card was forthcoming and, despite a 5 metre lineout, Gloucester settled for a third Taylor penalty and a 16-0 lead.

Richard Hill's side still had confidence in their own line though and opted for a kick to the corner as half time approached but, like Gloucester, had to settle for a penalty. Joe Carlisle was the successful goal kicker.

Gloucester very nearly finished the half on a high as smart handling on the blindside saw Jonny May free Lesley Vainikolo but Marcel Garvey got back to haul him down, only to kill the ball and receive a yellow card.

With the last kick of the half, Tim Taylor landed the penalty from near the left hand touchline and Gloucester could reflect on a job well done in the first half.

Worcester may have been a man down as the second half started but a couple of cheap penalties gave them great field position early on and a 5 metre lineout almost rumbled over but Shaun Perry was bundled into touch at the corner.

A messy phase of play followed with neither team really able to string enough possession together to threaten with Gloucester winning some key turnovers on the floor and using the wind to good effect with their kicking.

Garvey returned with no further score and Worcester soon made four replacements including the introduction of perennial Kingsholm favourite, Andy Goode. Meanwhile, Henry Trinder replaced Lesley Vainikolo.

The changes seemed to fire up the Warriors and a spilled Gloucester lineout led to a penalty chance for Goode but he dragged his kick left of the posts to the delight of the home crowd.

On the hour mark, Freddie Burns replaced the excellent Taylor and immediately punted Gloucester into the Worcester 22. Gloucester stayed patient, worked the phases and Burns extended the lead with a 62nd minute penalty.

Worcester had nothing to lose and came back strongly but replacement hooker Ed Shervington was smashed into touch by a combination of Olly Morgan and Freddie Burns to keep the line intact.

It was possibly Worcester best spell of the game, certainly in terms of continued possession but it was pretty easily soaked up by the Gloucester defence.

And the home side showed the visitors how to take a chance three minutes from time as the pack drove close to the Worcester line before releasing the ball and Tom Voyce dived over in the corner. Burns converted magnificently for 29-3.

With no time left on the clock, Worcester finally strung together enough possession to work an opening for Dale Rasmussen to dive over in corner for a consolation try. But that's all it was – a consolation.

JC