

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2011**

**KINGSHOLM – LV= CUP**

**MAGNIFICENT SEVEN TRIES FOR GLOUCESTER AGAINST SALE**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 58 SALE SHARKS 27**

**Match Report by Duncan Wood**

Gloucester Rugby and Sale Sharks went toe to toe at Kingsholm in an LV= Cup thriller on Saturday afternoon before a strong final quarter saw Gloucester clinch a 58-27 win.

The visitors up to that point had more than played their part in an end-to-end encounter which saw the sides locked at 27 points apiece on the hour.

However, four tries in the final fifteen minutes took the game away from Sale and gave the score-line an emphatic look for Gloucester.

It was somewhat harsh on Sale who had caused Gloucester problems throughout but the introduction of Gloucester's Scottish World Cup stars seemed to steady the ship.

Until then, Sale had scored three excellent tries of their own to counter what had looked to be an impressive attacking display from Gloucester.

It was certainly value for money for the 9,934 crowd!

It was a massively competitive encounter, Sale had three men sinbinned and Gloucester lost two backs to blood injuries but the LV= Cup defence is off and running.

Gloucester returned to the familiar surroundings of Kingsholm having taken on the same opponents at Edgeley Park last weekend. This time though, it was LV= Cup action with Gloucester the current holders.

Bryan Redpath made several changes from last week's line up and was able to call upon his four returning World Cup stars.

And it was a dream start for the Cherry and Whites.

James Simpson-Daniel caught Freddie Burns kick off as Sale badly misjudged the flight of the ball and offloaded to Matias Cortese who rumbled his way into the 22.

The ball was shipped right and Lesley Vainikolo was able to ignore the men around him and power his way to the line. Freddie Burns added an excellent conversion from in front of the Shed.

However, the Sharks hit straight back as they audaciously moved the ball from near their own line after a Gloucester turnover.

Amesbury was prominent as Sale offloaded the ball out of contact skilfully before Richie Vernon took a flat pass and galloped over. Macleod converted for 7-7 after only six minutes.

The Barbarians-like rugby continued as Burns almost scythed his way through from the restart. David Seymour conceded the penalty but Burns' penalty faded across the posts from wide out on the left.

Macleod, though, made no mistake on 12 minutes as Gloucester went in at the side of a ruck supporting a Lesley Vainikolo break, bisecting the uprights with confidence from near the 10 metre line.

Gloucester very nearly hit straight back. Matt Cox inspired a break from deep, Lesley Vainikolo again made good ground but James Simpson-Daniel was hauled down just short of the line as he tried to step the last man.

Simpson-Daniel was then taken out in the air by Tom Brady as he took a high ball. A lecture followed but no card was brandished. Burns levelled the scores with the resulting penalty.

And referee Hennessy seemed to make amends for the lack of a card when James Gaskell tackled Matias Cortese before the Argentinian had received the ball. Gaskell went for a 10 minute sit down and Burns kicked the penalty.

Sale were still finding plenty of gaps in the Gloucester defence though. Macleod missed a drop goal and Seymour came close before the visitors exploited numbers on the right and Andrew Higgins crossed. Macleod converted for 13-17 after only 21 minutes.

The helter-skelter nature of the game continued. Gloucester pinned Sale back near their own line and Scott Mathie had to clear but only to Charlie Sharples on half way.

His inside pass found May who first showed his pace and then weaved his way past some hapless defenders to score a sensation solo try. Burns added the extras.

The running rugby was scintillating. Henry Trinder very nearly sliced Sale apart once again but his potentially scoring pass found Sale hands with men queuing up to score.

After such a blistering opening that was remarkably it for the scoring before half time although Nick Macleod missed with a penalty attempt with the last kick of the half.

It had been an entertaining opening 40 minutes and Sale had fully contributed to the feast of rugby on show. They had fully taken advantage of any unfamiliarity defensively in the revamped Gloucester line up.

Bryan Redpath's side looked devastating in attack and a little more composure with the final pass would have seen a try scoring bonus point already clinched.

However, Sale's potency with ball in hand would rule out any second half complacency with everything to play for.

Indeed, Sale caught Gloucester napping again after the resumption. Poor handling in the 22 gifted possession back to Sale and Scott Mathie's run allowed Rob Miller to cut a good angle and score. Macleod converted for 20-24.

There was a delay at this point as Freddie Burns received lengthy treatment before being helped off although the gifted young fly half departed under his own steam when a stretcher had looked likely at one point.

It was a time for cool heads and Charlie Amesbury almost cost his side when he knocked on in his own in-goal area. However, Gloucester knocked on as they looked to drive over from the 5 metre scrum.

Gloucester got a second chance and Sale creaked at the scrum with Alasdair Dickinson sinbinned for collapsing. After three penalties, the crowd were baying for a penalty try but finally Luke Narryway touched down.

Taylor converted for 27-24 but Macleod immediately drew his side level with his second penalty as Gloucester held on to the ball at the first ruck following the restart.

Burns remarkably returned, his absence having been ruled a blood injury and promptly had a difficult penalty chance but dragged it just wide of the posts.

However Burns showed great composure to nudge Gloucester in front on the hour as the pack forced the Sale pack to collapse another scrum and he slotted it from distance.

Scott Lawson then marked his return with a potentially decisive score as Burns pinned Sale back. Gloucester launched a catch and drive and the hooker spun out of contact to dive over. Burns converted.

Gloucester's tails were up. Richie Vernon became the latest Sale player to be yellow carded and Rory Lawson pounced for a close range try. Burns extended the lead to 44-27 with the conversion.

Sharples then finished well as he took a nice angle off Jonny May's run and Freddie Burns completed the scoring with a last gasp interception. The fly half converted both scores to send the Kingsholm faithful home happy following a 58-27 win.

JC