

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2011

WELFORD ROAD – LV= CUP

**TIGERS REGAIN THEIR STRIPES AGAINST GLOUCESTER
IN 40-14 WIN**

LEICESTER TIGERS 40 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 14

Match Report by Duncan Wood

Gloucester battled gamely on Friday evening but their LV= Cup hopes took a knock as they ran into a Leicester Tigers outfit seemingly determined to make a point and slipped to a 40-14 reverse.

It was obviously nothing personal as far as Gloucester were concerned. By their own standards, the Tigers have endured a shocking start to the season and were dead set on putting the record straight at Welford Road. And this they duly did in front of over 16,000 fans who will be hoping this win kick starts their season.

The Gloucester pack have won countless plaudits for their efforts thus far this season but they met their match in the Tigers forwards who made life very difficult all evening.

The platform up front gave the likes of Toby Flood an armchair ride and the England fly half enjoyed himself all evening whether kicking from the tee or pulling the strings with ball in hand.

No-one let themselves down on the Gloucester side. They threw everything into attack and defended gallantly at times. However, the pressure simply had to tell and the odd missed tackle was ruthlessly exploited.

Gloucester's returning World Cup players will benefit from the run out and the likes of Lesley Vainikolo were ever willing ball carriers.

The damage was done in the first half and although Gloucester produced a dogged effort after the break, only losing the second half 14-7, it was nowhere near enough to get on terms.

However, on the evening, Leicester were simply the better side and worthy of their win.

Under the floodlights at Welford Road, there was an early alarm for Gloucester as Freddie Burns misjudged a high kick in his own 22 but Olly Morgan gathered the loose ball and cleared downfield.

The home side were quickly into their stride though and testing Gloucester as they shifted the ball quickly from left to right. A penalty for not rolling away followed and Toby Flood kicked a simple penalty for 3-0.

Freddie Burns had a chance to hit back as the Gloucester scrum forced a penalty at a set scrum four minutes later but his penalty from distance, though well struck, was just left of the posts.

A flurry of high kicks followed as both teams tried to settle down although Akapusi Qera marked his return with a shuddering hit on an unsuspecting Tiger in midfield to draw a gasp from the crowd.

Flood then pinned Gloucester back with a fine touch finder and his pack produced a great shove to win a penalty at the ensuing scrum. Flood finished the job by slotting the penalty for a 6-0 lead after 17 minutes.

Gloucester then had a real stroke of luck as Flood had a kick charged down. Qera hacked on but slipped only for the covering defender to fumble the ball on to the post and Dan Murphy dotted down for the simplest try of his career. Burns converted for a 6-7 lead as the first quarter drew to a close.

Flood quickly redeemed himself however as he kicked his third penalty for 9-7 as Gloucester were again penalised on their own put-in at the scrum and his fourth on 27 minutes for the same offence.

In fact Gloucester were starting to feel slightly hard done especially when penalised in an attacking position despite the home side seemingly not rolling away and blocking release of the ball.

The penalties were gifting Leicester possession and the defensive line finally cracked on 31 minutes when Dan Cole took a flat pass from Flood and burst clear from the 22 to make the line. Flood added the conversion to give the Tigers some daylight at 19-7.

The half ended with the home pack really starting to turn the screw and the penalty count against Gloucester continuing to rise.

Time was up on the clock but the pressure increased and, although Gloucester defended valiantly, Manu Tuilagi eventually broke a half tackle and stretch over the line for the second try. Flood rounded off the half with the conversion for 26-7.

It had been a tough opening 40 minutes for Gloucester with the home side showing little signs of the hangover that had marked the opening weeks of their season.

Their returning World Cup players had all made their mark. The Leicester pack was certainly starting to impose itself and the pressure on Gloucester was beginning to tell.

And the home side came out after the break showing no sign of letting up. Manu Tuilagi and Toby Flood both spun out of tackles to take play up to the Gloucester line and hooker Tom Youngs burrowed over from close range. Flood converted again for 33-7.

They were tough times for Gloucester although Nick Wood provided some light relief which he flattened the referee who got in his way as the loose head built up speed.

Scott Lawson then had to leave the field, blood streaming from his head, after a big hit from Manu Tuilagi. It was a big shot although whether there was any attempt to wrap the arms was debatable without the benefit of a replay. Tuilagi himself followed Lawson to the blood bin.

A better spell followed for Gloucester and Qera and Vainikolo linked up superbly to almost prise open the mean home defence but a knock on killed the move as the backs looked to take it on.

And Gloucester finally got their reward as a long floated pass from Burns found Vainikolo on the left wing and the big man touched down in the corner despite seeming to lose the ball before grounding. Burns converted superbly from the touchline for 14-33 on the hour mark.

As time ticked by, the Tigers went looking for the bonus point try and the penalty count started to mount against Gloucester who were defending their line stoutly.

And, just as it looked as though Gloucester would hold, a midfield break from Manu Tuilagi opened open the defence and the centre drew the last man for Agulla to sprint home under the posts. George Ford added a simple conversion for 40-14 and it was game over.