

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 2012

ADAMS PARK – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

HEARTBREAK FOR GLOUCESTER FOR SECOND SUCCESSIVE WEEK

LONDON WASPS 26 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 24

Match Report by Duncan Wood

For the second successive week, Gloucester were sunk by a last minute kick, Elliot Daly slotting a penalty from halfway to clinch a 26-24 victory for Wasps with less than a minute left.

If anything, this defeat was harder to stomach than last week's home setback at the hands of the Exeter Chiefs.

Having clawed their way back from the wrong end of a 23-10 score-line, Gloucester had the game in their hands in the final couple of minutes.

However, twice in the last two minutes, they lost crucial set piece ball as they were penalised for obstruction at the lineout and then at a ruck having secured their own scrum ball.

Daly's kick bisected the posts leaving Gloucester on the wrong end of yet another tight score-line and felt like a dagger to the heart.

The Gloucester camp were left to rue another one that slipped away from them. Anger and frustration were the two main emotions on display.

However, there still remain three games to play in the Aviva Premiership and three games to clinch as high a place in the table as possible with, hopefully, Heineken Cup qualification, as a result.

However, as Head Coach Bryan Redpath stated afterwards, lessons need to be learned from the past two weeks and the findings put into place on the pitch.

Both teams were forced into late changes. Wasps lost Paul Emerick and Jack Wallace to late fitness tests and Tim Taylor replaced Ryan Mills amongst the replacements for Gloucester.

Conditions were glorious as the game got underway with Wasps kicking towards the Dreams Stand.

And the home team had a dream start as Gloucester were penalised having caught the kick off and former Kingsholm favourite Nick Robinson made no mistake for a 3-0 lead.

Gloucester were then caught napping at a quickly taken free kick as Nic Berry jinked past a static defence and sprinted home untouched. Robinson added the easy conversion for 10-0 after only six minutes.

A nerve settler was needed but Freddie Burns just couldn't provide it as a penalty attempt from halfway fell just short. However, he made no mistake four minutes later to reduce the arrears.

Robinson missed a kickable attempt just minutes later but the following minutes were characterized for errors more than anything positive.

The Cherry and Whites were really struggling to get out of first gear at this point. Wasps were defending well as a unit while Hugo Southwell was dealing comfortably with anything kicked his way.

But Gloucester got it together as the half hour approached. Simpson-Daniel latched on to a long pass from Burns, made good ground and Sharples and May almost made the line.

Gloucester stayed patient. The ball was moved left. Qera freed his hands in the tackle and Scott Lawson cut back to score. Burns added the conversion to level the scores.

Having fought back on to level terms, Gloucester promptly pulled down a maul and Robinson kicked the penalty to nudge Wasps back in front but rapped an upright with another chance minutes later.

Wasps piled on the pressure in the final couple of minutes of the half with Vunipola carrying with purpose but Narraway won a key penalty in front of his own posts and Gloucester held out.

It had been an understandably tense affair in the opening 40 minutes but Wasps, playing with a slight breeze at their backs, had been marginally the better side.

Gloucester hadn't really been able to maintain any concerted pressure in the Wasps half but had shown what they were capable of in the build up to Lawson's try.

It had been a nightmare opening 10 minutes but the Cherry and Whites had at least regrouped and were still in the hunt for the win.

It was another poor start to a half though as Burns' long kick ran dead at the Wasps end and a penalty was conceded at the ensuing scrum. Robinson duly made it 16-10.

It was followed by another sharp break from Berry, who slipped a tackle before finding Tom Prydie. His weaving run eventually found Elliot Daly who put Hugo Southwell in for the score. Robinson converted to open real daylight at 23-10.

Gloucester hit straight back. Narraway ran straight and hard but the key pass was from Nick Runciman. His quick offload found Sharples on the angle and the winger was home. Burns converted.

Narraway then very nearly conjured up a try for Qera as a great offload gave the Fijian a romp down the 5 metre channel but he was bundled into touch just short of the line.

Gloucester enjoyed their best spell of the game but couldn't take advantage of a 5 metre scrum, 5 metre lineout or charged down kick as the game went into the final quarter with Wasps still in the ascendant.

It looked as though it wasn't going to happen for Gloucester but they struck again from nothing.

May took a high ball near his own 22 and broke clear, making a good 50 metres. He linked up with Trinder who then found Qera who scored under the posts. Burns added the conversion to give Gloucester a 24-23 lead.

The tension rose at Adams Park. Robinson missed a kickable penalty and Southwell was off target with a long-range drop goal as the home crowd went through agony.

The pain grew even worse when Robinson had another penalty chance on 76 minutes only for his kick to hit the top of the post padding.

The game was Gloucester's to win or lose and they looked set to close it out with less than two minutes left to play and a scrum in Wasps territory.

However, they were turned over at the subsequent ruck, conceding a penalty in the process and Elliot Daly smashed it over from halfway.

Adams Park erupted in a mixture of joy and relief but still the game wasn't over.

Gloucester took one against the head with just seconds to go but Luke Narraway was bundled into touch to snuff out Gloucester's hopes once and for all.