

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, AUGUST 25, 2012

KINGSHOLM – FRIENDLY

KNIGHTS PUT TO THE SWORD AS GLOUCESTER ROMP TO VICTORY

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 54 DONCASTER KNIGHTS 9

Match Report By Duncan Wood

Gloucester Rugby round off their pre-season campaign with a 54 points to 9 victory over a spirited but ultimately outgunned Doncaster Knights outfit.

It was a curious old afternoon at Kingsholm. The game kicked off in bright sunshine but quickly deteriorated into torrential rain against a backdrop of thunder and lightning.

Then there was the small matter of Gloucester starting the game with one XV on the pitch but having replaced them all by the 52nd minute.

Ultimately, however, it was a comfortable enough win for Gloucester who ran in 8 tries on the day.

It was a win that had to be earned though. Doncaster were a big physical team who competed well in the tight and defended with great spirit. In attack, they were somewhat more limited but they gave the Gloucester defence a good workout.

In the end, Gloucester were simply a stronger outfit and, despite taking some time to hit their stride, eventually eased into a high enough gear to motor to a comfortable enough win.

Importantly with Northampton in mind next week, there were no injuries to report and Director of Rugby Nigel Davies certainly has some interesting decisions to make in terms of selection.

The build is over, the Aviva Premiership returns next week and everything will be taken up a notch at Kingsholm next weekend.

The visitors started in determined fashion but it was all in defence. A 5 metre Gloucester catch and drive was bundled into touch and James Simpson-Daniel hauled down just as he threatened to burst clear.

Mike Tindall then very nearly made the line, but his attempted scoring pass was picked off by a retreating Knights defender. All within a hectic first 10 minutes.

The Cherry and Whites were trying hard to dip into their box of tricks but it wasn't quite coming off at this stage with the Knights tackling in determined fashion.

And the visitors duly took a 3-0 lead from their first trip into the Gloucester 22, earning a lineout penalty, which led to Jamie Lennard bisecting the posts.

Thunder started to rumble in GL1 and there were grumbles emerging from the Shed as Gloucester struggled to find top gear and at what the crowd perceived to be a persistently offside Knights defensive line.

The groans went up a notch on 23 minutes when another handling error gifted Lennard a second shot at the posts and the fly half gratefully accepted.

But, after 27 minutes, Gloucester struck. Dan Robson exploited an undermanned blindside defence, Jonny May made the incisive break and Charlie Sharples was on his shoulder to accept the scoring pass. Burns added an easy conversion.

The Knights were quickly back in the lead, however, as Gloucester were caught offside in midfield and Lennard kicked his third penalty of afternoon for a 9-7 lead.

The response was swift. A Simpson-Daniel break set up great field position and Ben Morgan took a neat inside pass to crash over near the posts. Burns added the extras as the heavens opened in spectacular style.

Half time beckoned but there was still time for the Gloucester pack to assert themselves, a series of close range drives setting up a position from which Akapusi Qera powered his way over. Burns again converted for a 21-9 half time lead.

It had been a mixed performance so far for Gloucester. There was plenty of ambition but the execution wasn't quite where it needed to be. That said, three good tries had been scored.

The Knights were competing well but were obviously content to play for territory and pick up points via the boot for Lennard when possible. Whether the game plan would change if they fell a further score behind remained to be seen.

Gloucester very nearly scored straight from the off as Huia Edmonds showed the hands of a centre to offload and send Ben Morgan hammering into the Knights 22 but the ball was ruthlessly killed to protect the line.

Gloucester opted to scrum and couldn't capitalise on the first couple of chances but Dan Robson eventually sniped his way around a ruck to score. Burns made it 28-9.

What followed was the unusual sight of Gloucester replacing virtually the entire side with the exception of two positions where changes had already been made.

Understandably some of the cohesion was lost from Gloucester's play as a result but there were plenty of fresh legs.

Two of them belonged to Sione Kalamafoni who burst through the ten channel on 65 minutes and romped home from 25 metres out. Tim Taylor added an easy conversion.

More good work from the pack then turned over Doncaster on their own put in 20 metres out from their line, allowing Tim Taylor to scamper his way to the line and convert his own try for a 42-9 lead.

Taylor was enjoying himself against a visibly tiring Knights defence and his half break seemed to have put Drew Locke in for another score, but the centre couldn't hang on with the line beckoning.

The visitors didn't throw in the towel and continued to make their tackles but a seventh try wasn't long in coming as Ian Clark made a sharp break and Dave Lewis finished from close range.

Gloucester continued to press and there was just enough time for Locke to restore some pride as Tom Barrett miscued his clearance horribly straight into the centre's midriff just a few yards from the line and the former Cornish Pirate dived over gleefully to round off proceedings.

Gloucester Rugby Lineups

Jonny May; Charlie Sharples, Mike Tindall, Billy Twelvetrees, James Simpson-Daniel; Freddie Burns, Dan Robson; Nick Wood, Huia Edmonds, Rupert Harden; Tom Savage, Alex Brown (capt); Matt Cox, Akapusi Qera, Ben Morgan

Replacements:

Dan Murphy (for Wood, 51 mins), Darren Dawidiuk (for Edmonds, 51 mins), Shaun Knight (for Harden, 48 mins), Peter Buxton (for Savage, 51 mins), Will James (for Wood, 51 mins), Sione Kalamafoni (for Cox 51 mins), Andy Hazell (for Qera, 51 mins), Gareth Evans (for Morgan, 51 mins), Dave Lewis (for Robson, 51 mins), Tim Taylor (for Burns, 51 mins), Ian Clark (for Simpson-Daniel, 51 mins), Tim Molenaar (for Trinder, 61 mins), Henry Trinder (for Tindall, 31 mins), Drew Locke (for Twelvetrees, 51 mins), Shane Monahan (for Sharples 51 mins), Rob Cook, Yann Thomas, Dario Chistolini, Tommaso d'Apice, Martyn Thomas (for May, 51 mins)

Doncaster Lineups (Not recorded)