

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2012

KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

**GLOUCESTER EDGE TENSE PREMIERSHIP ENCOUNTER
AGAINST WASPS**

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 29 LONDON WASPS 22

Gloucester Rugby and London Wasps served up a crackerjack of an Aviva Premiership encounter at Kingsholm on Saturday with the Cherry and Whites just edging it by 29 points to 22.

The result was in the balance right up until the final whistle as Gloucester secured their first Premiership win at Kingsholm since February 25th.

Nigel Davies' side had led pretty much from the off but were never able to quite shake off a tenacious Wasps side who had trailed 20-3 after 19 minutes.

At that point it looked to be a case of how many Gloucester would score but they hadn't counted on Wasps' resilience.

It meant that, as time ticked away, things were probably a lot more tense than they possibly could have been.

Gloucester finally looked to have clinched it as they won a scrum as time expired but Ben Morgan was penalised for throwing the ball into touch, and a nervous few phases followed before Wasps were penalised for holding on in the tackle to end the game.

It resulted in Gloucester's second Aviva Premiership win of the season, and first at home, while Wasps took home a richly deserved losing bonus point, the least they deserved after a battling performance.

Gloucester, though, move up to fifth place in the table for the time being and will travel to London Welsh next weekend in good spirits although wary of an outfit who have won their last two games.

There was just the one change from the teams announced on Friday as Koree Britton replaced Huia Edmonds in the Gloucester replacements, the Australian hooker having picked up a knock in the team run.

Before proceedings got underway there was an impeccably observed minute's silence in memory of Ulster's Nevin Spence who tragically passed away last weekend.

Gloucester started in adventurous fashion with Henry Trinder inspiring a break from his own 22. Dan Robson was then an ankle tap away from breaking clear in what was a bright opening.

Great work from the pack then seemed to have created the first try for Freddie Burns but the fly half was ruled to be held up over the line by the TMO, Graham Hughes.

Wasps survived the early score, though, and embarked upon a fluent spell of play with backs and forwards combining well. A penalty award was the result and Stephen Jones made no mistake.

There was an almost immediate response as Henry Trinder rose high to claim the restart but didn't see an unmarked Andy Hazell inside him as he took on the last man and Gloucester had to settle for a Burns penalty.

It was an open, entertaining first quarter and both sides were doing their best to put width on the ball, the visitors also enjoying a more than decent share of possession.

Despite their ambition, Gloucester were limited to two long range penalty attempts from Burns, the second of which clearing the bar to give his team a 6-3 lead.

The first try eventually came and it was a beauty. Savage gave Simpson-Daniel just a hint of room down the blindside, and the winger first of all turned on the afterburners before weaving his way inside the cover for a sensational score. The conversion opened up a 13-3 lead after 23 minutes.

Gloucester were starting to turn on the style but it was the huge figure of Sione Kalamafoni who next opened up Wasps, as he burst away from a ruck outside the away 22 and had just enough gas to make the line despite a valiant effort from Joe Simpson.

It was the Tongan's first try for Gloucester, and a real cracker, and Burns' conversion made it 20-3.

Just as it looked as though it would be a one-sided affair, Gloucester mishandled the restart and Elliot Daly showed great feet to stand up his man and score in the corner. Jones added a fine conversion to keep his team in it.

Gloucester tried to press home their advantage as the first half drew to a close but were a little over-eager and half chances went begging.

And Tommy Bell stunned the home crowd with the last kick of the half as he boomed over a penalty from several metres inside his own half to make it 20-13 at the break.

Gloucester were good value for the lead and had played some of their best rugby of the season. Only time would tell if they would live to regret allowing Wasps to score 10 unanswered points before half time.

But, when the Cherry and Whites retained possession, they looked dangerous and more of the same in the second half would hopefully do the job.

Gloucester again started with fire in their bellies and Jonny May very nearly carved open the visitors defence but was stripped of the ball.

However, Burns extended the lead with a well struck penalty from out wide.

But, again, Gloucester couldn't quite shake off Wasps as a couple of close refereeing calls went the way of the visitors and Jones drilled home a penalty for 23-16.

Burns immediately responded in kind for to open a ten-point cushion only for Jones to add his third penalty to keep Wasps within a score at 26-19.

The tension was starting to grow at Kingsholm but a massive effort from the pack earned yet another penalty at scrum time and Burns added his fifth penalty of the afternoon for 29-19.

The visitors kept coming and Twelvetrees was the saviour as he just got back to deny Joe Simpson who latched onto a kick ahead from Christian Wade, the TMO ruling that he timed the challenge perfectly.

Gloucester again tried to put the game away and Marco Wentzel was yellow carded as Wasps creaked.

Still the visitors refused to roll over, but Bell was just short with another long-range penalty and Burns just wide to keep the score at 29-19 with ten minutes to play.

Former Kingsholm favourite Nick Robinson added a 76th minute penalty to make things interesting, and nervous, and the Welsh fly half then tormented his former club with a series of probing runs.

Gloucester held out but Morgan's indiscretion ensured that no-one left their vantage point until referee Fox finally ruled the game over with Gloucester clinging on 29-22.