

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2012

KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

GLOUCESTER HOLD OFF TIGERS IN KINGSHOLM THRILLER

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 27 LEICESTER TIGERS 21

Gloucester Rugby have been building and building in recent weeks, and delivered possibly their best performance of the season with a 27-21 win against the Leicester Tigers on Saturday.

England can apparently make do with the likes of Freddie Burns and James Simpson-Daniel at the moment, but they both played pivotal roles in Gloucester's win[*sic*].

Burns contributed 17 points, including a superb solo score, while Sinbad tore the Tigers defence to shreds on occasion.

But it was all about the team effort in all honesty; a win that caused every member of the Gloucester team to strain every sinew in the pursuit of victory.

This wasn't a game that was handed to them on a plate. They had to battle for every yard made and every point scored against a side who don't know the meaning of the word of defeat.

They led from the off, but were continually pegged back by a Tigers side who simply refused to be shaken off.

In fact, the final quarter saw Gloucester pretty much constantly on the back foot, reduced to thirteen men at one point, battling to keep the visitors at bay.

Wave after wave of Tigers attack crashed into Gloucester's defence but the thin Cherry and White line held to secure the four points and move Gloucester into second place in the Aviva Premiership table.

It was a stunning start from the Cherry and Whites. The kick off was placed short and well palmed back by Billy Twelvetrees. Ben Morgan and Billy Twelvetrees carried on with power into the 22.

Gloucester stayed patient in the face of determined Tigers defence, before Freddie Burns threaded a kick through for Charlie Sharples to touch down. Burns then added the extras for good measure.

The response, predictably was immediate. Twelvetrees' clearance was half charged down, and a penalty followed with Gloucester under pressure and Toby Flood made it 7-3.

This was swiftly cancelled out as Burns punished some indiscipline from the Tigers, and made it 10-3 after nine minutes as the lively start to the game continued.

And the Tigers, although they'd been on the back foot, showed the stuff of champions as they capitalised on their first real visit to the Gloucester 22.

Patient build up play saw the ball shipped wide to Scott Hamilton on the right, who slipped one tackle and just made the corner despite the best efforts of Jimmy Cowan and Ben Morgan. It went to the TMO but the try was awarded and it was now 10-8.

Burns was short and wide with a 17th minute penalty, but Gloucester were playing with power and purpose and Billy Twelvetrees, for one, looked as though he had a point to prove.

The crowd were certainly behind them, and the roof nearly came off Kingsholm on 20 minutes as Burns dipped into his box of tricks. A neat chip over the top was deftly re-gathered and the fly half was over. He added the conversion for 17-8 after 21 minutes.

Burns then so nearly inspired a third try as he took a quick tap near his own line and fired downfield for Sharples to chase. The winger seemed to be held back by Anthony Allen but still got there first, only to be hauled down by the cover.

At this point it was all Gloucester. However, further points remained elusive as the Tigers dug in deep and waited for the chance to fight their way back into the game.

Ideally, Gloucester would have added another score before half time. Unfortunately, a half break from Toby Flood earned a penalty chance and he made no mistake from in front of the posts.

17-11 to Gloucester at half time and a thrilling 40 minutes of Aviva Premiership rugby had been served up on a cold afternoon at Kingsholm.

Nigel Davies' side were good value for their lead, having thrown everything at the Tigers in what was probably their best 40 minutes of the season, taking into account the opposition.

However, Leicester had battled hard in the face of constant pressure. And the visitors had shown enough when in possession to suggest that they were far from being out of this.

A thrilling second half lay in wait and the 15,000 plus crowd at Kingsholm hoped the Cherry and Whites would prevail.

A steady start was needed but Gloucester didn't see much of the ball in the opening few minutes, until a breakout from deep resulted in a high tackle from Leicester on a bobbing and swerving James Simpson-Daniel. Burns slotted the kick with confidence.

The breathing space was promptly snatched away. Gloucester's scrum buckled and Flood had no hesitation, or difficulty, in making it 20-14 while Burns was narrowly off-target a couple of minutes later.

Step forward James Simpson-Daniel.

Fielding a loose ball deep in his own half, Sinbad took off. Leaving tacklers in his wake as only he can, he opened up the Tigers defence like a can of beans. Qera took the scoring pass and cantered home. Burns converted for 27-14.

Back came the Tigers, forcing penalty after penalty as they kicked for the corner. Cowan was yellow carded as Gloucester battled to keep the visitors at bay and was swiftly followed by Rob Cook for slapping the ball into touch.

Gloucester were short of numbers in the backs, but the score eventually came courtesy of a huge scrum from the Tigers, forcing JP Doyle to award a penalty try which Flood converted. The Tigers were now scenting blood.

The thirteen men competed heroically and Cowan and Cook both returned to restore parity of numbers as the Gloucester pack produced a superb scrum to ruin Tigers possession in the home 22.

As time ebbed away, there were still nervy moments as the visitors threw the kitchen sink at Gloucester.

The tension was palpable and the Kingsholm faithful screamed for the final whistle. However, every Gloucester player stood tall and played their part in defending the line.

The stadium erupted as referee Doyle finally brought proceedings to an end and Gloucester can now look forward to taking on another formidable opponent – Harlequins.

JC