

# GLOUCESTER RUGBY

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2012

KINGSHOLM – FRIENDLY

AMAZING SECOND-HALF COMEBACK SECURES 31-29 WIN  
OVER FIJI

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 31 FIJI 29

When Gloucester trailed 18-0 after 33 minutes to a Fiji side who looked on the verge of running riot, a home win looked unlikely. However, a superb second half comeback turned this game on its head.

Gloucester's young side had been far from outclassed in the opening stages, but Fiji had clinically exploited the slightest of chances and their big backs had snuffed out Gloucester's smaller, nippier runners.

As half time approached, with Fiji starting to turn on some Sevens style rugby, things weren't looking great for the Cherry and Whites.

However, a try from Matt Cox got Gloucester off and running and Dan Robson's conversion and penalty sent Gloucester into half time trailing only 18-10.

And the second half was a completely different affair as Gloucester kept it tight, kept the ball away from the dangerous Fijian runners and took the game to the visitors up front.

Two penalty tries followed as well as a score from a driving maul. Added to Dan Robson's impeccable goal kicking, Gloucester snatched a memorable win and sent the Kingsholm crowd home happy.

Overall, it was a magnificent occasion. The Fijians can count themselves to finish on the losing side[*sic*] and they certainly did their best to play open attractive rugby.

Gloucester obviously had the home crowd at their backs throughout, especially when the comeback was on, but the knowledgeable Kingsholm crowd paid noisy tribute to the Fijians who were most welcome visitors.

Gloucester had an early scoring chance as Fiji knocked on near their own line. Matt Cox took a quick free kick after the ensuing scrum but his support went off their feet.

Fiji moved downfield and earned a penalty chance as Gloucester were penalised at scrum time. Fly half Jonetani Ralulu made no mistake with the kick.

Gloucester responded well. Dan Robson may have been playing out of position but his break from his own half was reminiscent of Freddie Burns as he scampered 50 metres up-field.

Robson was in fact getting plenty of chances to run with ball in hand, as both teams looked to move the ball wide at every opportunity. An open game looked on the cards.

Fiji were especially ambitious and were rolling out some incredible, Sevens style offloading out of the tackle.

One phase of play seemed to go on for minutes before Gloucester simply ran out of tacklers, as they just couldn't slow down the Fijians, and hooker Tuapati Talemaitoga ran in to score from 20 metres out.

Gloucester certainly weren't getting the rub of the green at the breakdown, and were being repeatedly penalised by JP Doyle. Ralulu had no hesitation in extending the lead to 11-0 after 22 minutes.

The young Cherry and Whites were battling hard and the likes of Steph Reynolds and Drew Locke looking lively with ball in hand. However, the Fiji tackling was ferocious at times and scoring chances were rare.

Fiji soaked up the pressure and then ruthlessly exploited some poor tackling in midfield. Talebula made the break and Matanavou finished in style. Ralulu added the conversion for 18-0.

To their credit, Gloucester put the setback behind them. A kick to the corner set up a driving maul which came up just short. However, Matt Cox picked up from close range and bullied his way over. Robson converted.

Robson then added a penalty with the final kick of the half as Gloucester fought their way back into contention.

However, the Fijians were quickly on the front foot and drew first blood. Inroads were made down the right, before Ralulu floated a lovely cross kick for left wing Votu to catch and score.

Once again, Gloucester showed some spirit as powerful mauling took them into the Fijian 22 while Tim Molenaar almost muscled his way to the line.

Gloucester opted to scrum and piled on the pressure as Fiji conceded several penalties. Replacement prop Penijamni Makutu was sinbinned before referee Doyle awarded the penalty try. Robson's conversion made it 17-23.

Having worked so hard for their try though, Gloucester conceded a penalty from the restart and Ralulu was again on target with the boot.

Gloucester's scrum was having a real purple patch as the game went into its final quarter and Fiji were in genuine trouble. Number eight Naqusa was the next to see yellow as the pressure increased and a second penalty try duly followed.

Good old fashioned forward power had got Gloucester right back into the game as they trailed only 24-26 with 16 minutes left to play.

Frustratingly, more indiscipline promptly followed and Ralulu's fourth penalty made it 24-29.

Forward power once more came to the fore for Gloucester. Robson kicked to the corner, the pack drove the lineout and Britton touched down. Robson added his best conversion of the night to give Gloucester the lead with 11 minutes to go.

Fiji refused to throw in the towel and Gloucester had to remain sharp.

Ralulu tried a penalty from deep inside his own half but came up short and wide and Gloucester had to withstand a 5m metre scrum but held out to clinch a famous win.

JC