

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2012

KINGSHOLM – LV= CUP

**GLOUCESTER TURN ON THE STYLE IN LV= CUP WITH WIN
OVER LONDON WELSH**

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 46 LONDON WELSH 20

Gloucester Rugby ran in six tries on Saturday afternoon on their way to an emphatic 46-20 LV= Cup victory over London Welsh.

The win was never really in doubt after a fine opening half hour when the Cherry and Whites were even able to overcome the sin-binning of Rob Cook after only 90 seconds.

Nigel Davies' side, welcoming back several first team regulars, simply had too much pace and power for the Exiles.

The try scoring bonus point was in the bag by the 37th minute as Gloucester swept to a 34-6 half time lead.

With one eye on the return to Aviva Premiership action next weekend, Gloucester started making replacements as early as half time and the second half was a little more disjointed as a result.

London Welsh also showed admirable fight despite trailing throughout and two second half tries were an appropriate reward.

They've shown the rest of the Premiership that they're a force to be reckoned with already. Although the LV= Cup tests their strength in depth, they're still a team who fights for everything.

Overall though, after a tough eight days, the result is a real confidence booster for Gloucester with Sale Sharks the visitors to Kingsholm in seven days' time.

The first incident of note was a harsh one for Gloucester. Rob Cook chased his own kick ahead, but took his man out on the air and was yellow carded after 90 seconds.

It was an inauspicious start, but Gloucester shrugged it off and took a 5th minute lead when the visitors were caught offside chasing a kick ahead and Freddie Burns kicked the penalty.

The first try wasn't far behind. Billy Twelvetrees burst through the midfield, before Steph Reynolds jinked his way to within metres of the line after a lovely miss pass from Burns.

Gloucester's pack piled in to secure possession, and Cowan's neat reverse pass put Shane Monahan over. Burns added a fine conversion for a 10-0 lead.

Still down to 14 men, it had been a good opening for Gloucester, but London Welsh hit back with a Gordon Ross penalty after 11 minutes to get off the mark, and then added another on 20 minutes for 10-6.

Gloucester had been playing with ambition but the pack obviously decided it was time to show what they could do. A purposeful driving maul almost made the line, but Ben Morgan picked up and dove over. Burns again converted.

Burns added another penalty on 26 minutes as Gloucester really started to settle into the game. Things were looking tough for the visitors.

Burns almost sidestepped his way to the line and Matt Corker was yellow carded for killing the ball. Gloucester took the tap rather than the sure-fire three points and Fijian flanker Akapusi Qera crashed over. Burns added the extras.

The best try was yet to come. Slick hands freed Qera on the right who was well supported by Monahan coming back on the angle at pace.

The Irish winger took the tackle and offloaded for Ben Morgan to shrug off a last-ditch tackle and romp home from 20 metres. Another Burns conversion made it 34-6.

There was still time for Burns to miss with a penalty with the last kick of the half but it had been one way traffic as the teams left the field.

Despite the less than perfect start, Gloucester had simply been too powerful for London Welsh and the visitors were going to have to dig deep to get back into this.

The big question for Nigel Davies was probably when to start using his replacements, although his half time team talk was no doubt looking for more of the same from his team.

Perhaps with next week's visit of the Sale Sharks in mind, Will James and Akapusi Qera were withdrawn at half time with Will Graulich and Ross Moriarty joining the fray.

The Exiles were quickly pinned back at the start of the second half as Billy Twelvetrees' cunning grubber forced them to carry over their own line.

The Cherry and Whites couldn't drive over from close range and Reynolds very nearly latched on to a cross kick from Burns but couldn't quite hang on. The visitors defence hung on grimly.

Jimmy Cowan was nearly in after a fine burst down the touchline from Ben Morgan, but the pass inside was a little low and the scrum half couldn't hang on. It was a frustrating spell for Gloucester.

And that feeling was compounded when former Gloucester favourite Tom Voyce made a good break, leading to a score for winger Nick Scott. Ross converted to narrow the gap to 34-13 on the hour.

If Gloucester had lost their way somewhat, conceding a try stung them into action. A catch and drive five metres out was well set, and Koree Britton powered over for the fifth try of the afternoon.

Both teams were now utilising all their replacements and the game opened up, although perhaps without some of the precision of earlier.

This was amply demonstrated when an ambitious Exiles pass was knocked on, and Ben Morgan pounced to kick ahead, gather and complete his hat trick. Rob Cook converted for 46-13 with just a few minutes left to play.

If the game had ended then, Mike Tindall would have been a happy man. By now, the centre was playing at fly half and doing so pretty well. Freddie Burns would have been proud of one raking touch finder.

As it was, the centre knocked on in front of his own posts and replacement prop James Tideswell simply picked up and fell over the line to score.

The Shed good naturedly gave Tindall the bird, and the skipper responded with a huge smile.

He's had worse days – a Gloucester win and Monbeg Dude romping home at 25-1 at Cheltenham? Enough to make anyone smile.

JC