

# GLoucester RUGBY

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2013

ADAMS PARK – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

BRAVE GLOUCESTER EFFORT COMES UP JUST SHORT  
IN 33-29 WASPS DEFEAT

LONDON WASPS 33 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 29

It was a tale of taking chances at Adams Park on Saturday afternoon[*sic*]. Gloucester led going into the final quarter, but a Christian Wade try from nothing changed the momentum and Wasps ran out 33-29 winners.

It was actually a fantastic effort from Gloucester, who pushed one of the Premiership's in-form sides all the way, and only just came up short as they chased a memorable win in the final few moments.

They outscored their hosts four tries to three, leave Adams Park with two valuable league points and move back into fifth place in the Premiership table, still in the hunt for a playoff berth. And it could have been more.

Nigel Davies' side had looked well set going into the final quarter with a 17-13 lead – an appropriate reward for a solid 60 minutes effort.

However, the game turned on its head as Christian Wade benefitted from a gift; a controversial scrum that went against Gloucester.

Wasps didn't need any second invitation. They piled on the pressure in a bid to put Gloucester away and, when a Nicky Robinson penalty made it 33-17, they seemed to have been successful in their efforts.

However, they hadn't reckoned on Gloucester's admirable never say die attitude.

Ryan Mills darted over from close range and, when Charlie Sharples scored Gloucester's fourth try to secure the try scoring bonus point, an unlikely comeback was on the cards.

With no time left on the countdown clock, Gloucester proceeded to give the home crowd an almighty fright as they moved the ball from deep in a bid to win the game, until a handling error brought matters to a close.

Two points is not to be sniffed at and could well be vital come the end of the season. However, Gloucester will rue a five minute spell when the game got away from them and a number of missed chances in attack.

At a sunny Adams Park, the home team got the game underway, playing into what looked to be a stiff breeze. The low sun looked as though it may present problems for anyone collecting a high ball.

Gloucester showed some early ambition with a quickly taken lineout, and earned a penalty as Wasps slowed the ball up illegally. Cook's long-range attempt though struck the post pad.

A helter-skelter opening continued as Cook and Sharples combined well down the right before a knock-on ended the threat, while Wasps looked keen to move the ball wide when possible.

Cook then very nearly broke through after another promising Gloucester attack, but couldn't quite hold on to Mike Tindall's inside pass.

However, when it came, the try was worth waiting for. A catch and drive looked to be moving sideways, until Akapusi Qera burst clear from halfway with Wasps caught napping.

The Fijian drew the final man and Dan Robson scampered home for his first try in the Aviva Premiership. Cook converted for 7-0 after 13 minutes.

However, there was an immediate response from the home side.

Gloucester took the restart but conceded a scrum, and were penalised at the set piece. Stephen Jones stroked the penalty confidently between the uprights.

Ill discipline now started to hurt Gloucester. Two penalties, one at a scrum and one for offside, allowed Wasps to move into the Gloucester 22, and a powerful catch and drive allowed Ashley Johnson to muscle his way over from close range. Jones converted for 10-7.

It was virtually the first time that the hosts had entered the Gloucester 22, but it was a lesson in taking chances.

The Cherry and Whites forced an attacking 5 metre attacking scrum[*sic*] from the restart but lost control to concede possession.

However, a patient spell of possession followed as Gloucester probed for an opening. Wasps eventually conceded a penalty and Rob Cook levelled the scores.

Half time was rapidly approaching, and teams looked set to go into the interval all square, a feeling reinforced when Stephen Jones dragged a straightforward looking penalty wide of the left hand upright.

Wasps then had a double escape. A Mills penalty from inside his own half hit the upright and stayed out, while Mike Tindall charged down a Hugo Southwell kick only for the ball to run dead with the Gloucester captain bearing down on the rolling ball for a possible try.

Sadly for Gloucester, Akapusi Qera was forced out of the action after delivering a massive hit on Sam Jones. The Fijian had put in a tremendous half and was replaced by Matt Cox.

The half ended with one last chance for Wasps. Another penalty awarded at the scrum gifted good field position to Wasps, who drove the lineout and earned a penalty which Jones slotted for a 13-10 half time lead.

It brought to a close an entertaining half of rugby with neither side really in the ascendant.

Both teams were looking to play a good brand of rugby, and Gloucester had enjoyed the better of the territorial game.

However, they hadn't made as much of their chances as the home team had. Wasps had only entered the Gloucester 22 sporadically, but had come away with points every time.

Being more clinical in the second half would be key for the Cherry and Whites as well as cutting down on the penalties conceded, which were giving Wasps easy territory gains.

The first scrum of the half gave Gloucester a chance to draw level as Wasps were penalised, much to the chagrin of the home crowd. But Rob Cook was wide left in much the same way as Stephen Jones just before half time.

Gloucester though shrugged off the disappointment and promptly scored a fine second try.

Nick Wood stole Wasps lineout ball at the tail, Tom Savage set it up in midfield, before Mike Tindall ran onto a flat pass from Ryan Mills to break a tackle and score. Rob Cook converted to put Gloucester in front 17-13 with half an hour to play.

The game was still very much in the balance and Wasps, backed by the home crowd, came back hard, A Jones penalty on 59 minutes narrowed the gap to a point at 16-17 as the nerves began to jangle.

Wasps then scored from nothing and it was a bitter blow. A Gloucester scrum broke up, the ball went loose and Billy Vunipola found the unmarked Christian Wade on the right who ran it in from halfway. Jones converted for a 23-17 lead.

With the benefit of hindsight, should Gloucester have had a penalty from the scrum? It's all academic now . . .

Gloucester had to soak up some more pressure, but missed a chance to narrow the gap when Rob Cook again dragged a kickable penalty left of the posts after good work by the pack.

The home side had their tails up as a Joe Simpson break almost put Tom Varndell into the corner. Rather than chasing the win, Gloucester were hanging on for a losing bonus point at this stage with 14 minutes to play.

It was all about playing the game in the right areas of the pitch at this point and Wasps got it right. Pinning Gloucester back set up a close-range scrum and Billy Vunipola powered over. Nick Robinson converted for 30-17.

Robinson added a penalty to extend the lead as Gloucester tried to hang on grimly, and Nigel Davies' side almost hit straight back, but Lua Lokotui couldn't hold on when well placed.

It looked grim but Gloucester still weren't done. Ryan Mills darted over from range, with Mike Tindall adding the conversion. Then a superb Martyn Thomas break from deep saw the full back put Charlie Sharples over for the fourth.

With virtually no time left, Tindall's drop goal conversion attempt was off target and Gloucester launched one last gallant, but ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to snatch the win.

There will be an element of frustration for Nigel Davies and his team. But they can take so much from this as they prepare for the visit of Worcester Warriors on Friday evening.

Six points have been accrued from two away games. The challenge is to back it up at Kingsholm on Friday.