

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2013**

**SALFORD CITY STADIUM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**GLOUCESTER SLIP TO DISAPPOINTING DEFEAT  
AT HANDS OF SALE SHARKS**

**SALE SHARKS 32 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 9**

Gloucester have a poor record away at the Sale Sharks, and it continued on Friday evening as they couldn't overturn the body blow of two tries conceded from charged down kicks in the first seven minutes and went down 32-9 at the Salford City Stadium.

It's a sign of the progress that Gloucester have made this season, taking at least a point from every Aviva Premiership game before tonight, that this evening's outcome was so disappointing.

Gloucester came to Salford with every incentive to do well. A win would have sent them third in the table. It certainly wasn't a dead rubber. But it just didn't happen on the night.

Conceding two fluke scores in the first seven minutes would have rocked most teams. Seeing their starting hooker stretchered off in the first half was another setback.

But Nigel Davies' side dug deep and did their level best to battle their way back into this game. On several occasions in the first half, they moved menacingly into the home 22 only to see the chances slip away due to handling errors.

And a real game changing moment went against the Cherry and Whites just before half time.

Gloucester were still in the game at 15-6, when Cameron Shepherd latched on to a pass from Sam Tuitupou that looked a long way forward. Referee David Rose was suspicious and went to the TMO, but the call went against Gloucester. It was a key moment.

For all that, Gloucester couldn't make any real impression on Sale after the break with the home team's defence in inspired form. They soaked up what Gloucester had to throw at them, and then struck twice to twist the knife.

Gloucester will lick their wounds, learn from this and move on. The former league champions and current leaders, Saracens, come to Kingsholm next Saturday, and a big performance is required.

It was a disastrous start for Gloucester. They turned the ball over on the Sale 22, and it was rapidly kicked downfield. Dan Robson was back in good time, but his kick was charged down by Johnny Leota who fell on the loose ball to score.

It was a blow, but Gloucester came back well from the restart. Powerful ball carrying from the pack forced a penalty, and Freddie Burns had no trouble making it 5-3.

Amazingly, lightning then struck twice. Another turnover had the Cherry and Whites on the back foot. Rob Cook covered a grubber from Dwayne Peel, but his clearance was blocked by Peel who scored the second try.

MacLeod converted and it was 12-3 to Sale after only seven minutes, with the home team hardly having to break sweat.

It was hardly time to panic, but Gloucester turned down a kickable penalty shortly afterwards as Robson took a quick tap only for the ambition to result in nothing.

When a strong scrummage forced Sale to concede another penalty a few minutes later, Burns grabbed the ball and bisected the posts to make it a 12-6 ball game.

Gloucester were then dealt a further blow on 17 minutes. Huia Edmonds made a scintillating break, but didn't get up after the tackle and was stretchered off to sympathetic applause. Koree Britton entered the fray.

Some good moments followed from Gloucester as they looked dangerous with ball in hand. However, the crucial break eluded them.

And it was Mark Cueto who almost added the next score. More turnover ball gave the Sharks the chance to free the former England winger, but a superb cover tackle from Tom Savage saved the day.

The game went through a scrappy phase. Both teams were showing ambition, but handling errors were preventing both outfits from really gaining the upper hand.

Sale, though, extended their lead on the half hour as Gloucester were bizarrely penalised at their own scrum and MacLeod made no mistake with the penalty to extend the lead to 15-6.

Gloucester pressed but handling errors and spirited Sale defence continued to thwart their efforts, and they paid the price just before half time.

A scrum needlessly given away gave Peel the chance to work a neat wrap around move, and Cameron Shepherd took a forward looking inside pass to break the defensive line and score. MacLeod converted to make the half time score 22-6.

It had been an error strewn half from Gloucester, and the Sharks had taken full advantage. Gloucester had created their own chances, but simply had not been able to finish them off.

The home team had their tails up, and were now sniffing definitive Premiership safety. Gloucester needed a big second half to rescue this one.

Predictably, Sale were playing full of confidence when they emerged and took the game straight to Gloucester. The defence had to be rock solid, and it was. But, ten minutes had ticked away, and Nigel Davies introduced Dan Murphy and Ben Morgan.

Trinder and Sharples quickly followed them into the action, and Burns reduced the gap to 22-9 with a 55th minute penalty as Gloucester looked to force the pace.

However, a subsequent penalty attempt slid past the post shortly afterwards as the game entered its final quarter, and the game seemed to be slowly slipping away from Gloucester.

It was almost gone for sure on 64 minutes when Johnny Leota looked to have battled his way over after fine running from Tuitupou and Seymour. However, the TMO decision went Gloucester's way.

Sale were now in A1 position, and in no mood to leave the Gloucester 22 empty handed. It was all hands to the pumps and Dave Lewis was eventually sinbinned as the penalty count grew.

The last-ditch defence couldn't last forever. From a maul on the Gloucester 22, Dwayne Peel spotted a gap down the blindside, dummied past the outnumbered Shane Monahan and dived over for the bonus point try and a 27-9 lead.

With the try scoring bonus point in the bag, the Sale supporters celebrated joyfully but there was still more to come.

With time up on the clock, Danny Cipriani floated a measured cross kick for Mark Cueto to gather and score, and round off the scoring at 32 points to 9.