

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2013

KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

PROFESSIONAL CHIEFS EARN WELL DESERVED WIN
OVER GLOUCESTER

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 12 EXETER CHIEFS 29

Off the back of two successive wins in the Aviva Premiership, Gloucester looked to make it three in a row on Sunday afternoon, but found themselves on the end of a job well done by the visiting Exeter Chiefs.

It was a hugely disappointing day for the Cherry and Whites, who came into the game looking to round off the first batch of Premiership matches in style ahead of next weekend's Heineken Cup opener.

They certainly wouldn't have underestimated Exeter, who have shown themselves to be a tough opponent since their elevation to the highest rung in English club rugby.

However, everyone at Kingsholm was rocked to a certain extent by the manner in which the visitors took the game to Gloucester.

The Chiefs were certainly helped by Gloucester's indiscipline, which gave the visitors a huge advantage in the territory and possession stakes. And Rob Baxter's side took full advantage.

They opened up some breathing space as they went into half time with a 13-5 lead, and then repelled whatever Gloucester threw at them as they fought to get back into the game.

As Gloucester became more and more frantic in their attempts to get back on terms, they were then picked off in the final quarter as the Chiefs showed a clinical side to their make-up.

Nigel Davies' side did have their moments, but they were unable to capitalise on some good opportunities, possession being squandered at key times.

It all added up to a difficult afternoon, and not one that anyone connected with the club will look back on fondly.

However, the beauty of modern rugby union is that a chance to put things right comes around quickly, and next Saturday's Heineken Cup clash with Perpignan will provide exactly that.

Both teams started brightly in perfect conditions, but Gloucester had an early let off when Gareth Steenson dragged a more than kickable penalty attempt wide of the left upright.

Gloucester's first attack was via the driving maul, which Exeter defended well, before the home backs asked some serious questions but without reward.

Nigel Davies' side then had another narrow escape. A penalty conceded at a ruck gave Steenson another shot at goal, but his effort hit the crossbar and bounced back into play.

The visitors were looking lively in this opening quarter, and making a real effort to take the game to Gloucester whose defence was having to be of the highest calibre.

However, the pressure finally told on 19 minutes when Gloucester stood up at a scrum and it was third time lucky from the kicking tee for Steenson.

Gloucester hit straight back as they reclaimed the restart. Savage and Tindall carried powerfully before the ball was spun wide to the backs.

Billy Twelvetrees spotted a gap, and his neat inside pass found Martyn Thomas who had too much speed for the defence, as he made the line for a 5-3 lead.

It was a fine piece of skilful finishing, but Gloucester couldn't build on it.

Stenson missed his third penalty after 24 minutes, but was on target with an effort from bang in front on the half hour to nudge his team into a 5-6 lead.

And the visitors kept up the pressure as another penalty allowed them to move into the Gloucester 22.

Patient build up play moved them to within a metre or so of the Gloucester line, and eventually flanker Ben White stretched out to score. Steenson's conversion made it 5-13 after 33 minutes.

Things very nearly got worse. A kick from Steenson ricocheted fortunately into the arms of Dean Mumm who was only just hauled down short of the line by Mike Tindall.

Hoani Tui then thought he'd burrowed over from close range as Exeter drove for the line, but the TMO ruled in favour of Gloucester.

Half time came with Gloucester still very much trying to find their rhythm, and with the Chiefs deservedly holding the advantage.

The visitors looked massively up for the game and the Cherry and Whites just hadn't hit their straps. Had Steenson been more accurate from the kicking tee, the margin could have been wider.

Gloucester knew they would have to step things up a gear in the second half if they were to get anything out of this game. However, with the Chiefs playing well and looking full of confidence, it would be no easy feat.

So, it came as no real surprise when the Chiefs ran the ball from deep straight from the opening kick-off and made good ground into the Gloucester half.

Gloucester continued to hurt themselves. A free kick conceded at the next scrum, was followed by a penalty for a high tackle and Steenson's penalty opened up a 5-16 gap.

Burns had an immediate chance to respond in kind as the Chiefs buckled at a scrum, but was wide with his effort to increase the frustration at an unusually muted Kingsholm.

Gloucester needed a spark, and turned down a kickable penalty in favour of a kick to the corner as they went after a crucial try. However, the Chiefs defence was solid and up to the job.

The Exeter scrum then did a job on the Gloucester eight, to set up a five metre lineout, and the pressure finally resulted in a close range try for Chiefs captain Dean Mumm. Steenson converted for 5-23.

It provoked a furious response from Gloucester, who finally got some front foot ball. Even then a four man overlap was squandered, before Jonny May took an inside pass from Burns at pace to score. Burns added the extras to provide some hope.

That ray of hope was swiftly extinguished, as the Chiefs pack again went about their simple and effective business, and two late Steenson penalties completed the job.

Gloucester were even denied the comfort of a consolation try, as Elliott Stooke looked to have powered his way over after James Hudson's fine offload, but couldn't ground the ball and an afternoon to forget drew to a close.