

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2013

KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

MAGNIFICENT SECOND HALF EFFORT COMES UP SHORT AS WASPS
TAKE THE SPOILS

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 30 LONDON WASPS 32

Gloucester overcame a 14-0 deficit against London Wasps to briefly take a late lead and threaten a memorable win, only to concede two late tries and go down 30-32.

For the neutral, it was probably a cracker of a game – four tries apiece, 62 points in total and only two points in it come the final reckoning.

However, for Gloucester the outcome will come as a kick in the teeth. Wasps were allowed to open up a 14-0 lead without really having to create too much themselves.

The Cherry and Whites then showed real grit and determination, playing into the wind in the second half, to claw their way back in front and look as they were going to chalk up a great win.

However, with only a few minutes left to play, Wasps scored two late tries, which snatched victory from the jaws of defeat and left Gloucester looking as though even a losing bonus point was to be denied them.

One last effort though, which included turning down a very kickable penalty, saw Rob Cook scamper over to finally clinch that losing bonus point and secure the first try scoring bonus point of the season.

Two points were Gloucester's reward, but that will come as little consolation to Nigel Davies and his side when they look back on the errors that cost them the game.

There were positives of course. Some of the play in the second half showed exactly what this team is capable of when it hits its straps. There was powerful driving play from the pack, and the ingenuity to score four tries.

But it was the errors that led to at least two of the Wasps tries that will really hurt.

At the moment, it seems that Gloucester are having to chase the game too often, too early. A little more control will see the Cherry and Whites dominate matches and make life a little less stressful for the supporters and playing staff alike.

The challenge now is for the team to dust itself off and prepare for two weeks of LV= Cup action. A trip to Northampton next weekend, is a tough one but what better place to get back to winning ways?

Credit to the visitors, they took full advantage of every little thing that went their way and, in Christian Wade, had the man who played a decisive role in the result. His two tries were something to behold.

Conditions from the off looked as though they were going to be tricky. Heavy rain was falling and a strong wind swirling.

Gloucester had an early scare when playmaker Freddie Burns took a heavy blow to the head as he and Josh Bassett competed for a high ball. The fly half stayed down for a while and went off to be assessed, Charlie Sharples replacing him.

Wasps tried their hand with a couple of early rolling mauls, but Gloucester responded in kind with a fine effort of their own which lifted the home crowd who appreciated the execution.

However, it was a moment of magic from Wasps winger Christian Wade who broke the deadlock. Turnover ball gave Wade to run[sic], and he beat Rob Cook before outpacing Tom Savage to go under the posts. Andy Goode converted.

It was a bitter blow for Gloucester, who had been on the attack themselves before the ball was won, seemingly controversially, at a ruck on the Wasps 22. However, a timely and painful reminder of Wade's danger.

Bad went to worse. The ball came out of a Gloucester scrum deep in their own 22, Joe Simpson got a boot to it and number eight Nathan Hughes pounced to shrug off a tackler and score. Goode converted again and alarm bells were ringing at Kingsholm.

Gloucester did their best to hit back, a dangerous grubber from Rob Cook well handled by the covering Andy Goode, before a brawl amongst the packs angered the crowd but saw no action from JP Doyle.

Freddie Burns did belatedly get Gloucester on to the scoreboard though, as a period of pressure in the Wasps 22 led to a penalty and the fly half made no mistake.

Gloucester then scored their first try, with a bit of luck! A searing break from Henry Trinder opened up the visitors. Quick ball saw Shaun Knight rampaging out wide, and he shipped the ball on to Andy Hazell.

Superb cover defence got across to Hazell who seemed to lose the ball in contact. The replays, however, showed the ball to go forward off his foot, and Knight pounced to touch down. Burns added a superb conversion to get Gloucester back into it.

It was a potentially huge moment, and huge credit to referee Doyle who had the presence of mind to check with the TMO.

Nigel Davies' side had their tails up, and the physical collisions were now being won by the home side. More pressure followed, but no further score.

As half time approached, a couple of needless penalties were conceded to allow Wasps to move downfield into the danger zone. Gloucester held out, but at the expense of a Goode penalty.

10-17 to the visitors at the break, and Gloucester would be ruing the two relatively soft tries they had conceded to gift the initiative to Wasps.

The fightback had been impressive, and Gloucester were certainly still in this. However, they couldn't afford any more slip ups, particularly as Wasps now had the wind at their backs.

Gloucester certainly came out fighting. A break from Burns got them on the front foot and the pressure was on when Elliot Daly kicked out on the full.

A penalty went to the corner, Gloucester ran a gimmick lineout at the front and Sione Kalamafoni powered over. Burns' conversion held up in the wind, but it was now 15-17 to Wasps.

James Simpson-Daniel then lit up the crowd with a superb break down the 5 metre channel, but the Wasps scramble defence just got back to deny the winger as the excitement levels grew.

The TMO was then called for again as Ryan Mills swatted aside a would-be tackler to drive for the line, but just couldn't get the ball down to the obvious disappointment of the home faithful.

Gloucester had by now replaced five of their starting pack, and the fresh legs paid off as they won a penalty at scrum time and Burns nudged his team into a narrow 18-17 lead with 21 minutes left to play.

However, the lead was frustratingly short-lived. Gloucester halted a maul illegally, and Andy Goode slotted an excellent penalty from in front of the Shed to make it 18-20.

Still Gloucester fought. Burns' penalty attempt held up in the wind and Wasps couldn't gather. More powerful carrying got them back within metres of the Wasps line and Jimmy Cowan's long pass saw Rob Cook dive over to restore the lead at 23-20.

Kingsholm was buzzing but the mood changed in an instant. Cowan couldn't hold onto the subsequent restart, Josh Bassett pounced upon the loose ball and Guy Thompson took the offload to score.

Goode converted before Wade, incredibly bettered his first scoring effort. Seemingly running up a blind alley, he dodged and weaved, arced around James Simpson-Daniel and dived over in the corner.

Now trailing 23-32, Gloucester could simply have thrown in the towel. But Gareth Evans claimed the restart to put his team back on the attack.

Twice Gloucester turned down a penalty which would have secured the losing bonus point, and the reward for their endeavour was a second try for Rob Cook.

Sadly, it was too little, too late and all Gloucester could do was contemplate how this one had got away from them.

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