

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2014

KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

**GLOUCESTER'S BRAVE EFFORT COUNTS FOR NOTHING AGAINST
RUTHLESS TIGERS**

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 17 LEICESTER TIGERS 22

Gloucester led for much of the second half, but were finally ground down by the efforts of the Leicester Tigers pack, which gave Toby Flood the chance to kick his side to a 22-17 win.

It was a real kick in the teeth for Gloucester, who had battled bravely against the Premiership Champions only to see the game slip away in the final ten minutes.

Nigel Davies had admitted in the build up to the game, that Gloucester were expecting Leicester to play a set piece game. His team bravely resisted but were finally ground down in the closing stages.

It had genuinely looked as though Gloucester might have been able to hang on to their narrow lead and clinch a vital win, but it turned out to be a case of what might have been.

Many will look at the fact that Gloucester missed four penalties. However, Toby Flood was also wayward off the tee, missing three attempts at goal himself on an evening to forget for the goal kickers.

However, Flood did find his range in the final quarter and made the most of the attempts that his pack created for him to secure the win.

It was a disappointing outcome for Gloucester who rode their luck slightly to hold a narrow 14-13 lead at half time, Freddie Burns scored with an interception and Jonny May scored a wonder try from deep.

It provided real hope for the home faithful, and their team produced a titanic effort in the third quarter of the game but just couldn't get the vital score that would have opened up a bit of daylight. The nagging feeling persisted that, with the lead at just four points, the Tigers were within striking range, and so it proved to be.

The visitors, as they have done so often before, soaked up the pressure and then moved downfield when they could, to squeeze the life out of the Gloucester set piece and take the win. It was simple, brutal, effective and heart-breaking.

Gloucester will need to dust themselves off with the Heineken Cup double header against Edinburgh to come. They're genuinely not that far away from really clicking, but small errors are undoing so much good work.

It's a time for staying strong and sticking together. There's so much quality in this Gloucester squad that some good wins are surely just around the corner.

It was a strong opening from the home side as the Tigers failed to gather the kick off. Billy Twelvetrees pounced and powered into the Leicester 22, but Gloucester couldn't breach a well organised defence.

It was a helter-skelter opening few minutes, with both sides enjoying attacking possession. The unlikely figure of Graham Kitchener made one break from deep to alarm the Kingsholm crowd.

But it was the vision of Billy Twelvetrees which set up the first chance of points. He found Shane Monahan in space and the Irishman made good ground. Matt Kvesic took it on, and the Tigers were penalised but Freddie Burns was off target.

However, Burns made immediate amends. Leicester were looking dangerous on halfway, when the fly half came up with the interception and no-one caught him as he romped home. He duly added the conversion for a 7-0 lead after 10 minutes.

However, Gloucester knocked on the restart and conceded a penalty at the subsequent scrum. Toby Flood knocked over a straightforward penalty to get the Tigers on the board.

Nigel Davies' side were quickly back on the front foot, setting up a couple of 5-metre lineouts. The Tigers defence just held out though, as another penalty was conceded and Burns pulled it wide of the posts.

His rival for the England number ten shirt, Toby Flood, rubbed salt into the wound by slotting a long-range effort a couple of minutes later to narrow the gap to 7-6.

They were testing times for Burns, and his possible lack of confidence showed shortly afterwards, when he took a quick tap rather than go for goal.

Flood, though, also had a touch of the yips when he dragged a very kickable attempt wide on 29 minutes. Perhaps justice was done, as there seemed to be a clear Leicester knock on in the build-up. It was a mere stay of execution as the visitors scored their first try on 33 minutes.

Ben Youngs seemed to be offside as he snaffled Dan Robson's attempted pass from the base of a Gloucester scrum, but play went on and Flood's neat offload put Dan Bowden in for the score. Flood converted for 7-13.

The visitors were definitely having the better of it at this stage, as Gloucester turned over a couple of key pieces of possession but Flood let the home side off the hook with another missed penalty on 37 minutes.

It seemed as though Gloucester needed to regroup at half time, but they struck from nowhere with a huge slice of luck involved.

The Tigers were hammering away in the home 22, when the ball went loose. Lua Lokotui had the vision to spin the ball out to Henry Trinder who thumped the ball downfield. No-one was home and Jonny May won the foot race to score a dramatic try.

Rob Cook's conversion saw Gloucester go into half time with a slender 14-13 half time advantage, one which, on the balance of play, they just about merited.

There was plenty of dawg from the Cherry and Whites and, after the past few weeks, surely no-one would begrudge them a bit of luck? The key now was to stop the Tigers juggernaut at source, play on their own terms and preferably extend the lead.

It was another bright start from Gloucester, powerful running combined with canny tactical kicking. It led to a penalty chance for Cook, but the attempt on the angle drifted wide right, and he was also off target on 50 minutes.

Four penalty chances had been spurned by Gloucester, and next up was Billy Twelvetrees. The 'third choice' kicker made it 17-13 on 52 minutes with his first attempt.

It had been a good spell for the Cherry and Whites, but the lead was still only four points and the Tigers hadn't really got going as yet. A response was surely around the corner?

It very nearly came from another offload out of the tackle from Flood, this time to the flying Miles Benjamin, but Gloucester just held out.

The tension was rising, and it got even worse when Flood kicked a 64th minute penalty to make it a one point game at 17-16.

The Tigers scented blood, and only a last-ditch tackle in the corner kept them out. However, a penalty was forced at a set scrum and Flood's penalty made it 17-19 with ten minutes to play.

The visitors' set piece power was starting to tell, and another massive effort from the Tigers pack allowed Flood to make it 17-22 on 75 minutes.

It was a bitter blow for Gloucester, and Flood even had the chance to deny the Cherry and Whites a bonus point but missed a last-ditch penalty.

The ball didn't run dead and Gloucester bravely ran it from deep, making progress as far as the Tigers 22, when a crossing call brought an end to the attempt to snatch a draw and possibly a win.

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