

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2013

MURRAYFIELD – HEINEKEN CUP

**BATTLING GLOUCESTER SECURE VITAL HEINEKEN CUP WIN
AT EDINBURGH**

EDINBURGH RUGBY 12 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 23

Gloucester made light of the long trip north to take on Edinburgh on Sunday, as one of the best road performances of the season resulted in a 23-12 Heineken Cup victory at Murrayfield.

It's a morale boosting win for Gloucester, who will take on the same opposition at Kingsholm next Sunday in the second leg of the double header.

The Cherry and Whites now trail Munster in the pool by three points. Depending on next weekend's results, the game between Gloucester and Munster at Kingsholm in January could be huge.

Sunday's win was based on the powerful platform created up front, with loose head prop Yann Thomas having perhaps his best game in a Gloucester shirt.

Behind the scrum, the backs oozed menace. Time and again, they broke the defensive line and, perhaps the only disappointment on the day, was that the try scoring bonus point went begging.

It wasn't all one-way traffic. Edinburgh rocked Gloucester with an early try, and there was a nervy spell in the second half, where a comeback from the home side looked to be on the cards.

But, on the day, Gloucester were very good value for the win and can take a lot of positives into forthcoming matches.

Gloucester were immediately on the defensive, dropping the kick off to give the home side a superb attacking position, but the early defence was up to the job.

Elliott Stooke came off with a blood injury following those early exchanges, Tom Hicks taking the field for his first Heineken Cup appearance.

Edinburgh had started in lively fashion, and struck in the sixth minute. Quick recycled ball stretched the defence right, then left. David Denton produced a great offload to free full back Greig Tonks who stepped inside the final man to score.

Gloucester's response was immediate. A solid scrum platform gave Freddie Burns the chance to move the ball wide, where Henry Trinder's grubber through saw Rob Cook run through unmarked to score and level the scores at 5-5 after 12 minutes.

It was a shot in the arm for Gloucester, who very nearly scored a second soon afterwards following powerful running from Ben Morgan and Yann Thomas. Jonny May ran through onto another Trinder kick but was tackled just short.

Another scoring chance then slipped away, as Rob Cook made a searing break but didn't spot the supporting runners and took the tackle. Freddie Burns added the penalty as Edinburgh failed to roll away.

Gloucester had their tails up and duly added a second try soon afterwards. Again the pack made the hard yards, before Cook's inside pass found Martyn Thomas who sprinted home untouched. Burns added the conversion.

It had been a good few minutes for Nigel Davies' side, but a missed lineout throw gave Edinburgh a glimmer of hope, only for Greig Laidlaw's penalty to drift wide.

The home side promptly had a real stroke of luck though, as Jack Cuthbert escaped punishment for tackling a man in the air.

The momentum was all with Gloucester. It was all about making the most of it, and no-one blamed Freddie Burns for taking the three points on offer to extend the lead to 5-18 after 32 minutes.

Edinburgh managed some pressure as half time approached, but the defence fronted up and there was no further addition to the score before the break.

Gloucester went in with a well-deserved lead; the only pity was that they hadn't converted more of the scoring chances that they had created.

However, after the body blow of conceding the early score, it had been an impressive 40 minutes. Could they now do likewise in the second half and secure a valuable win on the road?

Gloucester needed to start well and duly did so. Jonny May fielded a loose clearance on halfway and set off on a mazy run, leaving a host of would-be tacklers in his wake. Finally, he offloaded to Martyn Thomas who finished with ease.

It opened up a 23-5 lead, and perhaps Gloucester switched off mentally a touch, as a kick out on the full gifted Edinburgh good field position and, after several phases of possession, David Denton burrowed over from close range. Laidlaw converted for 12-23 after 53 minutes.

Gloucester powered forward looking to finish the game off, but Freddie Burns missed a penalty when a kick to the corner may have been a better option.

A turnover in the home 22 then saw Edinburgh counter from deep and it was panic stations in the Gloucester ranks. The scramble defence just got back but James Hudson was yellow carded in the effort.

It was all hands to the pumps, but an Edinburgh knock on gave Gloucester the scrum, and a massive forward effort won the penalty to clear the lines.

The game entered a scrappy phase, with neither team really able to gain the upper hand. James Hudson re-entered the fray with nine minutes to go and Gloucester still holding on to a 12-23 advantage.

Gloucester pressed desperately for the fourth try as time ticked away, perhaps trying a bit too hard as anxious hands fumbled away good possession and the Edinburgh defence held firm.

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