

# GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 2014

ADAMS PARK – AMLIN CHALLENGE CUP

GLOUCESTER SLIP OUT OF EUROPE ON A DISMAL EVENING  
AT WASPS

LONDON WASPS 36 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 24

Gloucester bowed out of the Amlin Challenge Cup in disappointing fashion on Sunday evening, as Andy Goode's boot contributed 21 points in a 36-24 victory for London Wasps.

On an evening when a steady rain fell from start to finish, it was perhaps never destined to be a classic. But the Cherry and Whites will still be disappointed at how events unfolded.

The team didn't lack for travelling support – the Gloucester faithful had travelled *en masse* and did their best to inspire their side. But it was Wasps who wrestled the upper hand at key stages.

Gloucester trailed 13-3 at half time, and had worked hard to keep the game that close. Wasps were fired up and flew into the physical encounters. And with Simpson and Goode pulling the strings at half back, they had two performers who revelled in the conditions.

The lead was quickly extended to 20-3 after the half time break, albeit in slightly controversial circumstances, as a knock on in the build-up seemed to be missed by the officials.

But Nigel Davies' side looked deep within themselves and hit back with two tries to get themselves back within a score, only for ill-discipline to allow the boot of Goode to ease Wasps clear again.

Gloucester did have the final word, Martyn Thomas forcing his way over from close range. But it was too little, too late and it was a case of what might have been.

Credit to London Wasps, they were deserving of their victory. Overall, they enjoyed superiority throughout and were only rattled at times by the hint of a Gloucester comeback.

Even then they had the answer. And it came in the form of Andy Goode, who racked up 21 points to reward the efforts of his team mates and set his team on the road to victory.

Gloucester came into the game knowing that a win would lead to a home semi-final against local rivals Bath, the men from the Rec having defeated Brive comfortably earlier in the day.

There were two late changes, Huia Edmonds failing a fitness test on a knee injury and being replaced by Dan Murphy in the number 16 shirt, while Mike Tindall pulled out with a calf injury in the warm up; Freddie Burns coming in at ten and Billy Twelvetrees moving out to inside centre.

It was no surprise then that Gloucester were somewhat disjointed in the opening stages, and they had a let off when a knock on in midfield was hacked into the 22 where Joe Simpson knocked on the greasy ball with the line beckoning.

The opening few minutes were dominated by tactical kicking, Simpson kicking from the base of almost every ruck while Gloucester weren't afraid to use the up and under.

However, the first score finally came on 14 minutes. Wasps looked to be going nowhere, so Andy Goode moved back into the pocket and dropped a goal from long range for a 3-0 lead.

Goode had a chance to double the lead when the Gloucester scrum, which had looked strong up to this point, was penalised, but the fly half dragged his kick across the posts.

It was scrappy stuff, little to choose between the two teams. Burns was taking time to find his touch in the tactical kicking game whereas Wasps' rolling maul seemed their most potent weapon.

A Wasps error almost led to Gloucester's first score. Matt Kvesic charged down Goode's kick, Burns gathered and set off but couldn't escape Joe Simpson's despairing last ditch tackle which saved the home side.

Wasps were starting to win some of the physical challenges and, as the half approach, made it count to good effect.

A kick at goal was turned down in favour of a kick to the corner. The forwards stayed patient, using the pick and go near the Gloucester line until **Matt Mullan** forced his way over. Goode converted for 10-0.

The Cherry and Whites needed a boost and finally got one as Rob Cook stroked over a 34th minute penalty when Wasps failed to release the tackled player. However, that was promptly cancelled out when Goode responded in kind.

Gloucester then had their best try-scoring chance of the half as they drove a five metre lineout. Wasps dragged it down to concede the penalty but Cook pulled the kick left of the posts.

The half drew to a close with Wasps threatening again and Nigel Davies had some work to do with his half time team talk.

Conditions weren't great, but Wasps had coped better in the first half, playing an astute territorial game and waiting for mistakes to happen.

Chances for Gloucester had been fleeting and they were certainly going to have to create some in the second half to get back into this game.

But it was the home team who were out of the traps quicker at the start of the second half. Masi was held up over the line as he took a neat chip from Goode.

Wasps then went back to the pack, who hammered away at the Gloucester line until Carlo Festuccia burrowed his way over. It was controversial, the TMO took a long time to decide, and the ball seemed to have been lost forward. But the try stood. 20-3 was now a long way back for Gloucester.

Gloucester were getting no decisions at all now. A free kick was conceded at an attacking scrum, and then a penalty at a defensive scrum. Gloucester looked bemused but Goode kicked the penalty.

Gloucester dug deep. A series of five metre lineouts saw Nathan Hughes yellow carded for the home team, before a lovely miss pass from Burns put May over in the corner. Cook added an excellent conversion to narrow the gap to 23-10.

There was a bit more spark about the Cherry and Whites now. Sharples hunted down Elliot Daly deep in Wasps territory, and the travelling support, vocal throughout, roared their approval.

A man up in the pack, Gloucester took full advantage. A scrum penalty was kicked to the corner, where a catch and drive saw Gareth Evans drive over. Cook added another fine conversion and it was game on at 23-17.

However, if there were any doubts starting to creep into home minds, Goode helped settle the nerves with a 66th minute penalty. He missed on 70 minutes but was on target again after 72 minutes as Gloucester continued to fall foul of referee Mitrea.

The game was well and truly up when Elliot Daly produced a fine outside break, followed by a neat chip ahead which saw Will Helu gather for Wasps' third try.

Playing now just for pride, Gloucester added a third of their own when Martyn Thomas touched down with no time left on the clock but it was nothing more than a consolation.

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