

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 2014**

**TWICKENHAM STADIUM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**BATTLING GLOUCESTER EDGED BY LONDON WASPS  
AT TWICKENHAM**

**LONDON WASPS 38 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 30**

Gloucester gave it everything in The Stinger against London Wasps, but paid the price for conceding a couple of soft tries, going down 38-30 as their 7th place ambitions took a hit.

It was a day of frustration for Gloucester. At times they played some genuinely attractive incisive rugby. However, it's a game of taking chances, and Wasps took their better on the day.

Gloucester did threaten on several occasions. They possibly carved out more half chances than their hosts but, crucially, on several occasions the ball was spilled in the Wasps 22.

Crucially, the Cherry and Whites didn't take advantage of a key period of play just after half time when Wasps were reduced to 14 men with Will Helu in the sin bin. Similarly, Wasps lost two men to yellow cards in the final few minutes but it was too late to capitalise.

And every time Gloucester got within striking distance on the scoreboard, Wasps would pop up with a vital score to keep Nigel Davies' side at arm's length. There wasn't much between the two sides but it was enough.

One brief passage of play seemed to sum up Gloucester's fortunes as Freddie Burns very nearly snatched an interception. Shortly afterwards, Tom Varndell duly did so and ran it back all the way.

Ultimately though, Gloucester will leave without even a losing bonus point and Wasps are now seven points clear of the Cherry and Whites in the Aviva Premiership table with just two rounds to play.

The battle for seventh place is still therefore on, with London Irish the next opponent for Gloucester, but it's a tough challenge.

Martyn Thomas' late withdrawal led to a reshuffle of the Gloucester backline before kick-off. Twelvetrees, Tindall and May all moved out a position to accommodate the call-up of Freddie Burns at fly half.

Kick off time dawned with the conditions nigh-on perfect – it was cool with a light breeze and no sign of rain on the way.

Gloucester kicked off, and the returning Ashley Johnson was quickly in ball carrying action for the home side. However, it was a cute chip from Freddie Burns that created the first alarms for the Wasps defence.

Both teams looked keen to keep the ball alive and play an open game, however, the first real incident of note was Jonny May requiring lengthy treatment when he was shaken up after making a tackle.

When play resumed, Burns so nearly caught Wasps napping. A trademark chip and gather took him past the first line of defence, his long pass found the flying Charlie Sharples but the return pass was difficult to gather and knocked on.

But the first score went the way of Wasps. Nathan Hughes broke a tackle on halfway. Will Helu took the offload before linking with James Haskell who made the line despite the best efforts of Rob Cook and Jonny May. Andy Goode converted.

Importantly, Gloucester hit straight back. Wasps spilled the ball on their own 22, Huia Edmonds hacked on and Jonny May swooped for his 10th try of the season. Billy Twelvetrees levelled the scores with the conversion.

Gloucester were looking lively and Burns very nearly grabbed an interception, but it was opposite number Goode who made it 10-7 after 20 minutes, when Gloucester were penalised for holding on in the tackle.

Fate then dealt Nigel Davies' side a cruel blow. Gloucester were attacking with numbers on the right, when Billy Twelvetrees' floated pass was picked off by Tom Varndell who ran it home untouched. Goode duly made it 17-7.

If they were disheartened, Gloucester didn't show it. They were quickly back on the front foot, asking questions in attack and Twelvetrees slotted a penalty on the half hour to narrow the gap before adding another two minutes later.

It had been a good few minutes for Gloucester who were keeping the ball alive and cleverly changing the point of attack. The remaining few minutes before half time would be crucial though.

And, unfortunately, Wasps struck again. Chris Bell took a good line in midfield, but poor tackling ushered him through. Bell drew the final defender and put Elliot Daly over. Goode converted once again.

The final word of the half went Gloucester's way. Ben Morgan was pivotal, taking the restart and carrying powerfully. Wasps scrambled back but conceded a penalty and Twelvetrees had no difficulty in making the half time score 24-16.

It was a half of rugby that showed Gloucester at their best and worst. There was some real ambition in attack, stretching the Wasps defence on several occasions.

However, several first up tackles had been crucially missed which had very much undone a lot of the good work. An 8-point gap at half time to overcome, with the interception try looming large.

Will Helu was an early second half loss for Wasps, yellow carded for a deliberate knock on, but Gloucester couldn't take immediate advantage as Wasps repelled a 5 metre lineout.

Dan Robson, returning after a hamstring injury, replaced Jimmy Cowan on 50 minutes and made an immediate impact as he charged down an attempted drop goal from Andy Goode. Helu returned from the sinbin with no change to the score-line.

Wasps now looked to turn the screw, seeking the score which would clinch the try scoring bonus point and possibly finish off the game.

Gloucester held out manfully, holding firm at several 5 metre scrums but eventually the pressure told. Chris Bell made a half break and his pop pass allowed Ashley Johnson to power over. Goode converted for 31-16.

Still Gloucester weren't discouraged, and threw everything at Wasps. Patient build up work created a ruck 10 metres out from the Wasps line, and Huia Edmonds spotted a gap to pick up and score. Twelvetrees converted to give Gloucester hope.

When Freddie Burns picked off an errant pass with just a couple of minutes left to play, Twelvetrees converting in a hurry, there was a flicker of a chance.

Gloucester pushed for the score that would guarantee a losing bonus point and Wasps were stretched, losing both Johnson and Masi to the sin bin.

But it was simply too steep a mountain to climb. Yet another turnover near the Wasps line allowed the home side to clear and close out the match.