

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2014

HONORABLE ARTILLERY COMPANY – FRIENDLY

GLOUCESTER FINISH 2013-14 WITH LOSS IN FRIENDLY
TO SARACENS

SARACENS 45 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 12

Match Report By Tom Burrows

The Cherry and Whites ended their season with a friendly match against Aviva Premiership table toppers Saracens at a sun-drenched Honourable Artillery Company in central London.

With Andrew Stanley leading the youthful Gloucester side, captained by the returning Tom Savage, City suits enjoyed an exciting game deep in the heart of the capital.

There were first appearances in a Gloucester shirt for England U20 wing Kai Little and Clifton RFC's Charlie Foley, deputising after a string of injuries in the Gloucester backline. England U18 back rower Joe Batley made a start at number eight also.

The hosts, with an Aviva Premiership semi-final to look forward to against Harlequins, rotated their squad but still included plenty of talent with Tim Streather and the recently cleared Justin Melck starting after his rescinded red card at Leicester Tigers.

Gloucester started the brighter, but it was Saracens who scored first. A loose ball found Ben Ransom and Romanian winger Catalin Fercu raced home, a score that Ben Spencer improved.

It was swiftly followed minutes later as full back Will Edwards touched down from a Tim Streather drift. Spencer again was faultless from the tee.

Spencer's box kicks were giving the hosts a solid exit strategy but the young Gloucester back three of Reynolds, Little and Monahan dealt well with all the aerial missiles that came their way.

With Gloucester growing into the game, they were dealt a blow as Jimmy Cowan was shown a yellow card by referee Andrew Small for an innocuous looking tackle on Streater.

Saracens punished that straight away, with the forwards gaining yards, a loose ball found its way to Streater and the centre strolled home. Again, Spencer converted via the upright.

Three tries, seemingly from fortuitous events for the hosts, a loose ball, a charge down and a friendly bounce leading to a trio of scores to the eager hosts.

Then a bit of luck nearly went Gloucester's way, Rob Cook seized a loose pass and as he looked to feed Sam Westcott, the ball was touched in flight by a host.

Winger Kai Little then scorched his way past his opposite number Fercu and weaved in and out of tackles before quick ball was prevented by a cynical bit of behaviour by the hosts.

Gloucester recycled the penalty and Dan Murphy barged over from short range. Cook converted and it was exactly what Gloucester deserved. At this stage, the Cherry and Whites were on top and at the break had played all the rugby.

The second half saw Saracens continue their clinical performance, with Gloucester working to find room and create chances, it was Fercu who crossed for a second half hat-trick and Eoin Sherriff barged over to put the game out of reach.

The young Gloucester side did fight for every ball but it was the hosts who kept the scoreboard ticking over.

Gloucester did cross for a try that their second half endeavours fully merited as Shane Monahan barged his way over from short range after a neat ball from Sam Westcott.

In fact, in the latter stages, it was the Academy players that stood out against their physical opponents. Thomas Young, on his last appearance in Cherry and White was a constant presence, with Joe Batley, Sam Westcott, Rory Bartle and Hartpury wing Kai Little all to the fore.

In the end, Saracens did run out comfortable 45-12 winners, but the score-line was perhaps an unfair reflection of the game.

Saracens Lineups

Will Edwards; Jack Wilson, Tim Streater, Ben Ransom, Catalin Fercu; Nils Mordt, Ben Spencer; Rhys Gill, Jared Saunders, Petrus du Plessis; Hayden Smith, Eoin Sheriff; Justin Melck (capt), Scott Spurling, Tom Jubb

Replacements:

Nick Auterac, Titi Lamositele, Gregor Gillanders, Harry Broadbent, Tom Whitley, Josh Sharp, James Tirrell, Ian Vass, Rory Teague

Gloucester Rugby Lineups

Steph Reynolds; Shane Monahan, Andrew Bulumakau, Charlie Foley, Kai Little; Rob Cook, Jimmy Cowan; Dan Murphy, Dan George, Shaun Knight; Lua Lokotui, Tom Hicks; Tom Savage (capt), Thomas Young, Joe Batley

Replacements:

James Stevenson, James Gibbons, Tom Heard, Rory Bartle, Max Cresswell, Reece Boughton, Sam Westcott, Rory Damant