

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23, 2014

KINGSHOLM – PRE-SEASON FRIENDLY

IMPRESSIVE GLOUCESTER GRIND DOWN MUNSTER AT KINGSHOLM

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 45 MUNSTER RUGBY 8

Match Report By Duncan Wood

Gloucester continued to make progress in their 2014-15 preseason campaign as they eventually wore down a dogged Munster side, running in six tries on their way to a 45-8 win.

Six tries against Munster sounds like a dream afternoon for Gloucester. However, everything has to be put in context. Munster left a lot of first choice players back at home, but still fought tooth and nail as you'd expect.

Gloucester got off to a flyer but then had to remain patient and break down Munster gradually. It took some time, but the Cherry and Whites got there in the end.

Perhaps the penalty try in the first couple of minutes set the expectations a bit too high, a bit early on! After that, chances were created but, too often, over-eager hands fumbled the openings away.

However, Gloucester were so on top in terms of possession and territory that the odds were on Munster not being able to maintain their strong defensive effort for the full 80 minutes – and so it proved.

As the second half progressed, even the anticipated flurry of replacements didn't knock Gloucester off track, and the tries eventually came.

Interestingly, five came from the pack. The early penalty try was followed by a pair for both Matt Kvesic and Elliott Stooke. Promising signs.

Most importantly though, Gloucester made progress. They improved upon their performance against Yorkshire Carnegie last weekend and will hope to do so again against the Scarlets next Saturday.

It was almost a dream start for the new look Cherry and Whites as Munster fumbled the kick off, gifting Gloucester possession. Jonny May was almost put through by Charlie Sharples but the Munster defence just held out.

A knock on put Munster under pressure and the Gloucester scrum pounced, first turning over possession before twice destroying the visiting scrum from 5 metres out and earning a penalty try. James Hook converted.

The home side had a spring in their step and slick hands down the right saw Henry Trinder make good ground, but the inside, possibly scoring, pass was just off the mark.

Richard Hibbard was next to lift the crowd with a bullocking run into the Munster 22. Desperate defence killed the ball and Hook settled for a penalty and a 10-0 lead.

Munster dug in, but it was still very much Gloucester on the front foot. A raking cross-field kick from Laidlaw almost caught the visiting back three napping but Sharples and Trinder just couldn't capitalise.

Gloucester's build-up play was showing so many promising signs, but there was almost an over eagerness to score. On several occasions, the final pass was forced a little and a chance was squandered.

A Jonny May score was rightly ruled out for a forward pass from Greig Laidlaw, while Ben Morgan was denied a score when he lost control of the ball going over the line.

As half time approached, Munster were reduced to 14 men as centre Ivan Dineen was yellow carded for a tip tackle on James Hook but the Irish province were still holding firm in defence.

More superb handling almost carved out another score on the stroke of half time but a desperate interception kept Gloucester out and restricted the Cherry and Whites to a 10-0 lead at the interval.

The scoreboard was almost an irrelevance in some respects. What was important was that Gloucester were dominating and creating chances galore. A little more composure and they would surely extend the lead.

However, it was Munster who scored first after the restart. Gloucester were penalised having gathered the kick and Johnny Holland slotted the penalty. However, this was swiftly cancelled out by two from Hook.

Gloucester then showed what they're capable of with ball in hand as a lovely delayed pass in midfield sent Henry Trinder sprinting through, and the centre slowed up cannily to offload to Billy Twelvetrees for the second try. Hook's conversion opened up a 23-3 lead.

The third was only a few moments behind, as a kick to the corner set up the catch and drive and Matt Kvesic touched down. And the fourth was a carbon copy with Kvesic again touching down.

The dogged defence of the first half now seemed to be taking its toll on Munster.

Another scything break from Trinder was halted just short of the line but the centre popped the ball up for Elliott Stooke to score. Billy Burns converted and the lead was now 40 points to 3.

Stooke took an offload to cross for the final Gloucester score and there was just time for Cian Bohane to grab a consolation for the visitors to give them something positive to reflect on ahead of the trip home.

Gloucester Rugby Lineups

Rob Cook; Charlie Sharples, Henry Trinder, Billy Twelvetrees (capt), Jonny May; James Hook, Greig Laidlaw; Dan Murphy, Richard Hibbard, John Afoa, Tom Savage, James Hudson, Sione Kalamafoni, Matt Kvesic, Ben Morgan.

Replacements:

Yann Thomas, Darren Dawidiuk, Sila Puafisi, Elliott Stooke, Jacob Rowan, Callum Braley, Billy Burns, Stevie McColl, Tom Palmer, Ross Moriarty, Henry Purdy, Shane Monahan, Mark Atkinson, Tom Isaacs.

Munster Rugby Lineups

Stephen Fitzgerald; Ronan O'Mahony, Cian Bohane, Ivan Dineen, Darren Sweetnam; Johnny Holland, Duncan Williams; Alan Cotter, Ger Slattery, BJ Botha, Donncha O'Callaghan (capt), Sean McCarthy, Shane Buckley, Barry O'Mahony, CJ Stander.

Replacements:

Kevin O'Byrne, Niall Horan, John Ryan, John Madigan, Ryan Murphy, Cathal Sheridan, David Johnston, Ned Hodson, Rory Scannell, Ryan Foley, Greg O'Shea.