

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 30, 2014**

**PARK Y SCARLETS – PRE-SEASON**

**GLOUCESTER'S PRE-SEASON CAMPAIGN FINISHES WITH NARROW  
DEFEAT AT SCARLETS**

**SCARLETS 29 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 24**

**Match Report By Duncan Wood**

Gloucester Rugby tasted defeat for the first time as they wound up their preseason campaign with a 29-24 defeat to Scarlets at the Parc y Scarlets on Saturday afternoon.

Defeat on the day was a disappointment but, throughout preseason, David Humphreys and the Gloucester Rugby coaching staff have been stressing that it's all about making sure the team are in the best possible shape for the season opener at Northampton.

In that respect, today's friendly at Parc y Scarlets served its purpose. The team went toe to toe with a strong home side and, although they finished on the wrong end of the score-line, took another step along the road to Franklin's Gardens.

Gloucester did, to be fair, start a little slowly. But, once they found their stride, enjoyed a competitive battle with the Scarlets. The visitors did threaten, but were always just kept at bay by the home team.

What today will have given the Gloucester coaching team is food for thought and plenty to work on. Key players have got more game time under their belts, and different combinations have been tried. All this information will be crucial in the preparations for Northampton.

The game got underway in night on perfect conditions at Parc y Scarlets; dry and with just a hint of wind. Only one stand was open but a good atmosphere built as kick off approached.

The early stages were surprisingly cagey for a preseason friendly, plenty of kicking from both sides and a desire to gain territory first and foremost.

The first real offensive spark came courtesy of a half break from Rhys Priestland. The fly half got over the gain line, only for Gloucester to be called offside at the ensuing ruck. Priestland kicked the penalty for a 3-0 lead after 12 minutes.

The home side were looking lively at this point and turned down another shot at goal in 17 minutes in favour of kicking for the corner. The catch and drive play worked with Ken Owens touching down and Priestland adding an excellent conversion.

Gloucester hadn't really got going, but a half break from Jonny May almost opened up the home team until a loose offload went loose to halt the attack.

Clad in their new change strip of all black, Gloucester stayed on the front foot, a quick tap from Dan Robson drawing a high tackle from Rory Pitman only for James Hook to push the penalty wide of the right hand upright.

However, the former Osprey, a popular figure in these parts, redeemed himself with a long-range effort as the half hour approached to narrow the gap to 10-3.

Disaster struck at the restart though, as Gloucester tried to counter from their own 22. Ross Moriarty's pass was picked off by Scott Williams who cantered home for the second try. Priestland had an easy conversion for 17-3.

Gloucester shrugged off the setback, the pack firstly driving to within inches of the Scarlets line, before a sublime chip from James Hook sat up nicely for Henry Trinder to dot down under the posts. Hook added the extras.

Half time came without further change to the score-line with Gloucester still trailing by a score. The home side had enjoyed the better of the first quarter but Gloucester had bounced back well.

Plus points were the solidity of the set piece and the hint of some real cutting edge behind the scrum.

Only the interception was the difference between the two teams with the game still very much in the balance, 40 minutes standing between Gloucester and an unbeaten pre-season.

The Scarlets struck first, however, with an excellent try from first phase. Clean lineout ball saw the home backs outflank the Gloucester defence, Liam Williams making good ground before offloading to Michael Tagicakibau for the try.

Again Gloucester responded well to adversity, remaining patient when in Scarlets' territory. Aleki Lutui smashed his way close on one occasion, but made no mistake when given a second chance. Aled Thomas' conversion narrowed the deficit to 22-17.

When Rory Pitman muscled his way over from close range to make it 29-17, it looked as though it might be a tough final few minutes for Gloucester.

However, Steve McColl intercepted and ran it back from 60 metres to make things interesting, Braley converting. Gloucester pressed for the go ahead score but the clock was against them and they ran out of time.

#### Scarlets Lineups

Liam Williams; Kristian Phillips, Regan King, Scott Williams, Michael Tagicakibau; Rhys Priestland, Aled Davies; Phil John, Ken Owens (capt), Rhodri Jones; Jake Ball, Johan Snyman; Rob McCusker, John Barclay, Rory Pitman

Replacements:

Kirby Myhill, Rob Evans, Peter Edwards, Richard Kelly, Aaron Shingler, James Davies, Gareth Davies, Steven Shingler, Harry Robinson, Gareth Owen, Jordan Williams

Gloucester Rugby Lineups

Rob Cook; Charlie Sharples, Henry Trinder, Billy Twelvetrees (capt), Jonny May; James Hook, Dan Robson; Yann Thomas, Richard Hibbard, John Afoa; Tom Savage, Tom Palmer; Ross Moriarty, Matt Kvesic, Ben Morgan

Replacements:

Aleki Lutui, Dan Murphy, Shaun Knight, Elliott Stooke, Jacob Rowan, Callum Braley, Aled Thomas, Steve McColl, James Hudson, Sione Kalamafoni, Shane Monahan, Henry Purdy, Mark Atkinson