

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2014**

**KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**GLOUCESTER STUN SALE WITH SECOND HALF COMEBACK  
AND CLINCH 34-27 WIN**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 34 SALE SHARKS 27**

Having trailed 6-17 at half time, Gloucester Rugby produced a sensational second half comeback to outduel the Sale Sharks and clinch their first Aviva Premiership victory of the season by 34 points to 27.

It was quite some comeback as Sale were good value for their half time lead, while Gloucester still looked to be suffering a hangover from last weekend's defeat at Northampton.

But the second half was a completely different matter, as Gloucester emerged from the dressing rooms a transformed outfit.

They were back on level terms within nine minutes and, although Cipriani edged Sale back in front at 17-20, Gloucester dominated to take a 34-20 lead going into the final few minutes.

A word first about that man Cipriani. On the day, he was brilliant. All three first half tries were down to his imagination and execution, and he made it a nervous final few minutes as he scored a superb solo fourth.

But Gloucester finished ahead on the scoreboard in the final reckoning, and that was the important thing. Equally as important though was the development of the new look team. It seems to be heading in the right direction although everyone will admit that there is still much work to do and huge improvement to come.

The Kingsholm crowd certainly played their part as well. The stadium came to life in the second half, while the biggest roar was, understandably, reserved for the award of a penalty try!

The important thing now, however, is to back today up. Exeter are the next visitors to Kingsholm, on Friday, and they will pose a tough test. But, for now, Gloucester will savour the win.

The game got off to the worst possible start for the home side. The first lineout was overthrown and Sale had good possession and field territory.

Danny Cipriani got the ball with room to move, and he threaded a lovely grubber for Tom Arscott to run on to and score. 0-5 after 2 minutes.

Gloucester needed to settle, but the next incident of note was both sides losing players to injury, as Nathan Hines limped off for Sale while Jacob Rowan was stretchered off for Gloucester.

The next few minutes saw the Cherry and Whites enjoy a decent spell in the Sale half, but the occasional error and some robust Sale defence kept the home team at bay without any real alarms.

Gloucester were then undone by a moment of genius from Danny Cipriani. From his own 10 metre line, the fly half dinked a chip over the top and re-gathered superbly. The defence stood off as he sprinted into the 22, before offloading for the supporting Chris Cusiter to score. Cipriani added the conversion.

It had been a frustrating opening quarter for Gloucester, but they finally got the scoreboard moving on 25 minutes when Greig Laidlaw slotted an excellent long-range penalty.

Kingsholm then erupted as the home crowd were enraged when Jonny May was penalised for a double movement. Cipriani then caught the home defence napping with a quick tap, and a quick exchange of passes saw Luke McLean motor over in the corner for a 3-17 lead.

Laidlaw was just off target with another long-range penalty attempt on 37 minutes, but quickly made amends as the Gloucester pack were rewarded for a massive shove at scrum time.

Half time came with the Sharks leading 6-17, a just reward for three moments of brilliance from Danny Cipriani. The mercurial 10 had been the creative spark behind all three of Sale's tries and would need to be shackled – rapidly.

Gloucester were still in this. However, it was going to take a massively improved effort from the home side in the second half.

The Cherry and Whites did get an immediate break as Sale blocked the kick chasers from the restart, and Laidlaw had a simple task to slot his third penalty of the afternoon from bang in front.

Gloucester finally had a spring in their collective step, and the back row all stepped up with some powerful ball carrying. There was a half chance for Henry Trinder, but the ball squirmed out of his grasp. However, advantage was being played and Laidlaw duly made it 12-17.

Better was to come as Hook kicked Gloucester deep in Sale territory. Clean lineout ball found its way to Trinder whose cultured left boot dribbled a grubber through and Jonny May outscored the defence to score and level the scores[sic]. Kingsholm was alive at last!

It has been a good spell for Gloucester, and Sale looked rattled having been pegged back. However, Cipriani nudged the visitors back into the lead with a 59th minute penalty from distance.

It was a time for character, but Gloucester were growing in confidence and the second try wasn't far away. May was again involved, benefitting from a sublime flat pass from Hook before making the key break and offloading to Cook who just made the corner. Laidlaw added a superb conversion for 24-20.

The tide had well and truly turned, and half backs Hook and Laidlaw were now controlling proceedings. Gloucester were also playing in the right areas of the pitch, and the pressure finally told as the Sale scrum splintered and referee Garner awarded a penalty try.

Now leading 34-20, Gloucester looked home and hosed. However, credit to Sale, they piled forward in the final stages and a jinking run from Cipriani saw him go over for his side's fourth.

It ensured a nervy final few minutes for Gloucester, but the defence did its job and Gloucester had the win as Hook hoofed the ball into touch to bring the game to a close.

JC