

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2014

KASSAM STADIUM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

GLOUCESTER SEE OFF PLUCKY EXILES TO TAKE THE POINTS
AT THE KASSAM

LONDON WELSH 10 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 46

Gloucester Rugby secured their first Aviva Premiership win of the season away from Kingsholm as they downed London Welsh by 46 points to 10. But they were made to work awfully hard for the win.

It was a bonus point win for Gloucester, but the score-line doesn't always reflect the tale of the contest.

For more than an hour, the Exiles were more than competitive – uncomfortably so for Gloucester. But the sin-binning of Taione Ve'a proved to be a turning point and the Cherry and Whites ran riot in the final quarter of an hour.

Four tries during that period took the score-line from 15-10 to 46-10 in almost the blink of an eye, leaving the home side stunned.

It was somewhat tough on London Welsh who had battled bravely throughout and who must have entertained thoughts of a first win of the season. However, their late capitulation was dramatic.

Gloucester will certainly take the five points, a rare commodity in the Aviva Premiership, but they will know that they will have to be much better next week at Kingsholm against Leicester Tigers.

For now, however, the win is in the bag, the analysis will begin and a lot of hard work will be put in on the training paddock as Gloucester seek to maintain their gradual improvement.

The home team kicked off and largely kept Gloucester pinned back in their own half in the opening exchanges.

Gloucester's defence looked solid enough, but an early penalty was conceded at a ruck, only for Olly Barkley to push it wide.

However, there was an early injury setback for Gloucester as Dan Murphy limped off after six minutes to be replaced by Yann Thomas.

The Cherry and Whites regrouped. Their first foray into home territory forced a penalty out of the Exiles defence, but James Hook pulled it wide of the left hand upright despite several observers, including the stadium PA announcer, thinking the kick was good.

It had been a lively start from the home side, and they established superb field position when Barkley drilled a penalty into the corner. Good defence was required and Gloucester's was up to the task.

Gloucester's catch and drive started to threaten, but the closest to a breakthrough came when Dan Robson took a quick tap and chipped the final man only for the ball to take a wicked bounce away from him.

And Gloucester's frustration grew when more good work from the forwards earned another penalty. Hook, however, pushed it just to the right on this occasion.

The home side moved downfield to put some pressure on Gloucester, but the Cherry and Whites earned a penalty and struck from deep. Robson took the tap, before Hook and Twelvetrees put Jonny May into space.

The winger slipped over, but the support was there to carry on the move with Welsh scrambling back and good hands from Robson, Hook and Twelvetrees combined to put Henry Purdy in for his first Aviva Premiership try.

The second followed almost immediately. Robson scooped up a loose ball, spotted a gap down the blindside and caught the home defence on its heels. He had the vision to wait for Charlie Sharples to come up on his inside and the winger had too much pace for the chasers. Hook converted for 12-0.

It had been a good spell for Gloucester, but Barkley's excellent line kicking immediately pinned them back deep within their own 22.

The home side had a couple of goes at the catch and drive, but eventually got it spot on with Ben Pienaar touching down. Barkley converted for 12-7 after 36 minutes.

And with no time left on the clock, the home side received another boost when Barkley slotted a penalty to narrow the gap to 12-10 at half time.

It was a frustrating end to the half for Gloucester, who had battled so hard to establish the ascendancy only to see it slip away. There was everything still to play for in the second half and the Exiles had their tails up.

Two moments of inspiration from Dan Robson were the difference between the two sides at the midway point. Gloucester needed to take control of the game if they were to emerge triumphant from this one.

The opening minutes were promising as Gloucester stretched the Exiles defence left and right. Robson almost sniped his way over, but a knock on close to the line ended the immediate threat.

Gloucester piled on the pressure, including opting for a 5 metre lineout, and the home defence appeared to be creaking but the crucial score just wouldn't come for the Cherry and Whites who had to settle for a 54th minute Twelvetrees penalty.

The skipper could have made it an eight point game a couple of minutes later as the Gloucester scrum forced a penalty, but his kick struck the upright and stayed out.

The scrum was now starting to click for Gloucester and, on 65 minutes, Welsh's tight-head prop, Taione Vea was sinbinned for collapsing the scrum. Greig Laidlaw's penalty made it 18-10 to Gloucester.

The game changed in that instant and, with the home side visibly wilting, Gloucester started to run riot.

Replacement centre Mark Atkinson cut a great line to shred the defence and score from close range following a typically superb break from Jonny May, before scoring a spectacular second as he broke through in midfield, threw a slick dummy and outpaced the defence.

Jonny May showed his pace to latch on to Greig Laidlaw's superb chip for the fifth, before the pack underlined their second half dominance with a penalty try to send the travelling fans home happy.

JC