

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2014**

**KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**GLOUCESTER EARN THEIR STRIPES AGAINST OFF COLOUR TIGERS**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 33 LEICESTER TIGERS 16**

Gloucester produced their best performance of the Aviva Premiership season as they dominated a strangely subdued Leicester Tigers, running out winners by 33 points to 16.

Virtually all the damage was done in the first half as Gloucester, who have been striving week on week to turn a new look team into a cohesive unit, put the game to bed before the half time whistle.

Tries from Nick Wood, Charlie Sharples and Jonny May saw the Cherry and Whites lead by 30 points to 9 at the break. It was certainly the best 40 minutes of the season from Gloucester with Leicester unable to come up with a response.

The only slight disappointment on the day was the fact that Gloucester couldn't kick on and clinch the try scoring bonus point. But it would be churlish to complain after such an impressive win, albeit against an opponent shorn of several starters due to injury.

Gloucester did manage to prevent any sort of comeback from the visitors after the break, professionally closed out the game and so very nearly scored the fourth try shortly before the end, with a frustrating knock on undermining a superb move.

And it was actually the Tigers who had the last word as David Mele scampered over with no time left on the clock to give the visitors some crumbs of comfort as they head back to Welford Road.

However, all things considered, the Gloucester faithful will go home happy. It was the best performance of the season, the most comprehensive win.

Judge us after a few weeks said David Humphreys before the start of the season. Things will take time to gel. It looks as though his prediction was spot on.

With a tough visit to Saracens now lying ahead of Gloucester next week, they have shown what they're capable of. They now need to produce this level of performance more consistently and will certainly need to do so at Allianz Park.

Gloucester lined up as announced, but there was a late change to the Tigers starting line-up as former Gloucester fly half Freddie Burns started in place of Seremaia Bai.

But it was Owen Williams, who had moved from 10 to 12 to accommodate Burns, who took on the goalkicking duties, opening the scoring with a 3rd minute penalty when Gloucester were caught offside in midfield, the kick just clearing the bar.

However, this was swiftly cancelled out when Mathew Tait held on to the ball in possession and Greig Laidlaw neatly bisected the posts.

Gloucester were buzzing, and Rob Cook was only a tap tackle away from scoring. Leicester regrouped and a second penalty from Laidlaw was Gloucester's consolation. A third swiftly followed as Gloucester kept up the pressure.

So, 9-3 after 13 minutes but the Tigers are well known for their resilience and Owen Williams immediately narrowed the gap with his second penalty as the home side were penalised at the ruck area.

But Gloucester were then the recipients of a welcome stroke of luck. Tom Savage charged down an attempted clearance by Freddie Burns and powered through on to the loose ball. Williams got back to make a great cover tackle but Savage offloaded for Nick Wood to score under the posts. Laidlaw's conversion opened up a 16-6 lead.

The Cherry and Whites kept up the pace. More good ball carrying from the pack softened up the defence, Ben Morgan spun out a long pass and Sione Kalamafoni spotted Charlie Sharples out wide. At full tilt, the winger was able to dummy his way past the last man to score. Laidlaw added the extras.

The Tigers may have been rattled, but they were next to move the scoreboard. Gloucester lost a lineout deep in their own 22 and were then pinged at the breakdown again. Williams had an easy kick for his third penalty.

Incredibly, there was still more to come from Gloucester. This time they exploited the blindside. Laidlaw, Hook and Cook all showed good hands and Jonny May dived over in the corner. Laidlaw added a superb touchline conversion.

Half time came with Gloucester leading by 30 points to 9 and good value for it. They had taken the game to the Tigers who, frankly, were reeling. It had definitely been the best 40 minutes of the season so far.

Freddie Burns had been reduced to clearing his lines from deep as the Cherry and Whites dominated the territorial battle. It was unusual to see the Tigers so dominated.

The challenge now was for Gloucester to keep up the pace. A comeback from the Tigers was bound to come, and a 21 point lead may not be enough against such a proud opponent.

Gloucester needed to be robust from the off and Tom Savage showed he was up for the fight as he tussled with Matt Smith. He and his fellow forwards then dug deep to repel a Leicester 5-metre lineout.

The Cherry and Whites didn't have too much possession in the opening exchanges, but they weathered the opening ten minutes without too many alarms against a much better organised Leicester side.

And the lead was extended on 58 minutes when Laidlaw slotted his fourth penalty of the afternoon after a darting run from James Hook forced the Tigers to concede a penalty in the shadow of their posts.

The main question now was whether Gloucester could score the fourth try. They had several opportunities to do so but just couldn't finish off some promising build-up play.

The best chance saw a powerful burst from Rob Cook see the full back link up with Mark Atkinson whose sensational offload behind his back freed James Hook. The fly half offloaded just a couple of metres from the line but Dan Robson and Charlie Sharples seemed to get in each other's way and the ball was spilled.

As it was, the Tigers scored a consolation, replacement scrum half David Mele crossing as time expired. It was too little, too late for the visitors.

JC