

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2014**

**KASSAM STADIUM – LV= CUP**

**YOUNG GLOUCESTER SIDE DOG OUT TOUGH LV= CUP WIN  
AT LONDON WELSH**

**LONDON WELSH 9 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 18**

It was far from pretty, but a young Gloucester side, featuring four debutants, worked hard to dog out an 18-9 LV= Cup win at the Kassam Stadium on Sunday afternoon.

It keeps Gloucester in the LV= Cup running and, importantly, gives Gloucester some vital momentum going into Friday's Aviva Premiership encounter at home to Harlequins.

A number of Gloucester's young guns had to rise to the occasion in a performance that pushed them to the very limits. The likes of Callum Braley, Luke Cole, James Gibbons and Charlie Norman were all making their first starts, and all put in one heck of a shift.

But, perhaps most impressive was the defensive effort just a few minutes from time with Gloucester clinging on to a six point lead. The home team had made a rare foray into the Gloucester 22 and threw the kitchen sink at the visitors.

But Gloucester held out, chopping down Welsh runners and finally turning over possession to break the spirit of the home team.

It won't go down as a classic, in truth, it wasn't a game that will last long in the memory. But it's an important win and a display that will form a vital part of the rugby education of some of Gloucester's most talented prospects.

Gloucester named a youthful looking line-up, and had to make further changes when Yann Thomas and Steph Reynolds were late withdrawals. James Gibbons and Charlie Norman came into the starting XV.

Gloucester's reshuffled defence was prised open after just a couple of minutes, flanker Peter Browne romping into the Gloucester 22. Gareth Evans was penalised at the ruck and Will Robinson kicked a third minute penalty.

In front of a sparse crowd, Gloucester's pack were put under real pressure in the opening stages, the more experienced home forwards flexing their collective muscle, and there was little possession of note for Callum Braley and Aled Thomas to work with.

The scrums were a mess, and the home side were definitely getting the benefit of the decisions. A Gloucester offence at a ruck on 17 minutes gave Robinson another shot at goal but the fly half was off target.

Shortly afterwards, the referee lost patience after another reset scrum and sinbinned Shaun Knight and Shane Cahill. There were 19 minutes on the clock.

Gloucester finally got a foothold in the game after 23 minutes. Aled Thomas' long kick put the home team under pressure, former Gloucester hooker Koree Britton came in at the side of a ruck, and Thomas kicked the resulting penalty with ease.

After a tricky start, Gloucester were slowly gaining the ascendancy. Welsh's second row Dean Schofield was sinbinned for pulling back a man off the ball after a promising break and Thomas' second penalty earned a 6-3 lead.

However, it was even Stevens on 33 minutes when Gloucester conceded a needless penalty for crossing as they counter attacked from deep and Robinson had an easy job bisecting the posts.

To their credit, Gloucester didn't let the error get to them. Instead they patiently worked their way into the home 22, through multiple phases of possession, and a third penalty from Thomas edged Gloucester back in front.

Frustratingly, there was still time for the home side to draw level. Gloucester could, and should, have run out time but kicked possession away, were then caught offside and Robinson kicked his third penalty of the day from halfway to make the score 9-9 at half time.

It was a long way from being a classic. Despite the many changes and debutants on display, Gloucester looked the more likely to score with ball in hand but, up to this point, it had been a tale of goal-kicking.

Gloucester's pack came out fired up, firstly winning possession at a ruck when they had no right to and then forcing a scrum penalty. Thomas rewarded their efforts with his fourth penalty.

Billy Burns was then sent into the fray, replacing Charlie Norman, and was quickly into the action as he trapped Nick Scott in his own in-goal area after a lovely grubber through from Callum Braley.

However, the position was lost as the home side produced their best scrum of the day and forced Gloucester off their own ball. Most of the play was in the home half, but the crucial next score remained elusive for Gloucester.

Aled Thomas put a penalty from halfway underneath the bar as Gloucester looked to extend the lead, but a strong spell of pressure followed from the home team as time began to ebb away.

They chose to kick for the corner rather than at goal but fluffed the lineout. Aled Thomas rubbed salt into the wound by kicking his fifth penalty as Seb Stegmann failed to release the ball when tackled.

It was a six point lead, but a narrow one, and Welsh gave it one last push with just a few minutes to go.

They kicked for the corner again, and piled on the pressure. Runners came around the corner with regularity and Gloucester were pinned back onto their own line.

But the Cherry and Whites, clad in unfamiliar black, didn't buckle. They survived, moved downfield and then earned another penalty which Thomas converted to clinch the 18-9 win.

It was a good first day at the office for a number of young starters.

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