

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2015**

**KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**GLOUCESTER PRODUCE SENSATIONAL COMEBACK  
TO CLIP THE FALCONS WINGS**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 42 NEWCASTLE FALCONS 40**

Perfect conditions produced an amazing game of rugby at Kingsholm on Saturday afternoon, but Billy Burns was the hero as his last gasp try secured a dramatic 42-40 win for Gloucester.

It was a match that, right until the final minute, Gloucester looked as though they were going to lose. In fact, with just 12 minutes to play, the Cherry and Whites trailed by 17 points. Their goose looked well and truly cooked.

However, in a truly dramatic finish, Gloucester crossed three times to snatch the win. The final score coming with no time left on the clock as Billy Burns, who contributed 22 points in total, touched down for the win.

It maintains Gloucester's unbeaten record at Kingsholm in 2015 and maintains the momentum going into next Friday's European Rugby Challenge Cup Final.

It demonstrates Gloucester's never say die attitude at the moment, but it was a bruising game and may come at a price with a number of players coming off with knocks.

A word, as well, for Newcastle. They played some great rugby at times and, to be honest, very few would have begrudged them the win such was the way they played.

Gloucester may have been a bit disjointed given the number of changes they made to their starting line-up. But Newcastle took full advantage of any misunderstandings and did so with some style.

However, they did seem to run out of steam in the final quarter and couldn't quite hold on. The long trip up north will seem just that bit longer this evening.

Gloucester now look ahead to Europe and the Final against Edinburgh at The Stoop. If they needed a workout ahead of that game, they certainly got one today.

In perfect conditions, It was all Gloucester in the opening stages as the reshuffled team played with a refreshing willingness to move the ball around.

However, the first incident of note was a worrying one. Jonny May took the ball into contact and stayed down. Thankfully he left the field under his own steam but was replaced by James Hook.

Billy Burns missed an early chance to open the scoring as he pushed a penalty wide and the visitors made Gloucester pay.

A quickly taken lineout caught the defence napping, Sinoti Sinoti made good ground and Mark Wilson crossed for the game's first try. Clegg converted for 0-7 after 14 minutes.

The visitors were now looking really lively, and it came as no real surprise when a second try followed. Hogg took a flat pass from Tipuna to break the defensive line and the number eight put Sinoti Sinoti in unopposed. Clegg converted again.

Gloucester may have been slightly rattled, but they got the all-important next score as Billy Burns made amends for his earlier miss and slotted a 23rd minute penalty as the Falcons dragged down a lineout jumper.

The Cherry and Whites had been struggling for possession but a Matt Kvesic steal then set up a great try. Counter-attacking from deep, Billy Burns made the key break and his inside pass found Billy Twelvetrees for the try. Burns added the extras to narrow the gap to 10-14.

Clegg responded with a 31st minute penalty as Gloucester were penalised at a set scrum, but Burns immediately hit back with his second of the afternoon to maintain a four point margin at 13-17.

However, as half time approached, the visitors stretched away again. Clegg drilled a penalty to within metres of the Gloucester line, the catch and drive was good and Scott Lawson touched down against his former club. Clegg's conversion then went in off post and bar to rub salt into the wound and open up a 13-24 lead.

Referee Tempest was certainly causing a storm in the crowd with his interpretation of the ruck area, and he handed Clegg another chance on the stroke of half time and the fly half duly made it 13-27 at the break.

It had been a difficult first half for Gloucester. An already reshuffled side lost May and Kalamafoni to injury early on and a confident Newcastle side took full advantage.

The visitors were certainly getting the benefit of the decisions, but they were making the most of it and, to be fair, their three tries were all well taken. There may have been an element of Gloucester getting to know one another in defence but the Falcons were good value for their lead.

The second half was going to be hard work. Gloucester had already battled their way back from 0-14 down and would effectively have to do so again against an upbeat opposition. The first score would be crucial.

The coaching staff didn't hang around at half time – on came Afoa, Hibbard, Murphy and Savage and the pack was hastily reshuffled. However, Murphy lasted a mere 17 seconds as he took a blow to the head in the opening moments and had to be replaced by Yann Thomas.

Gloucester's scrum immediately looked a different animal, destroying the first put in by Newcastle and Burns' third penalty made it 16-27 after an almighty shove at the first scrum.

However, Gloucester were then bizarrely penalised at the next scrum and Clegg restored the 14 point advantage as tempers started to fray on and off the pitch.

The crowd were certainly incensed as the officials continued to miss key calls – a kick going out on the full went unseen, a high tackle on Dan Robson in a scoring position went unpunished.

The game was now drifting with the Falcons comfortably sitting on their 14 point lead and Gloucester almost trying too hard in their efforts to get back into the game. Chances came and went and it looked as though it wouldn't be Gloucester's day.

In fact, Clegg extended the lead to 16-33 with his fourth penalty before Gloucester finally got some reward for their attacking endeavours as Dan Robson scampered over near the posts after a quickly taken tap penalty.

It gave the Cherry and Whites a chink of light, but any lingering hopes looked to be well and truly extinguished as a turnover resulted in Josh Furno touching down the Falcons.

The lead was back up to 23-40 and, with only 12 minutes left, the outcome looked to have been decided.

Cue one amazing fightback. Twelvetrees crossed for his second and a buzz went around Kingsholm. Purdy then finished in style to give Gloucester a try scoring bonus point and get them back within losing bonus point range.

As time expired, Gloucester were camped on the Falcons line. The forwards smashed away time and again but couldn't break the thin black line. Newcastle defended heroically.

Finally, Gloucester moved it wide. Burns broke the tackle and touched down for his first Premiership try to complete the win and break Newcastle hearts.

JC