

GLoucester Rugby

SATURDAY, MAY 16 , 2015

COOK RETURNS AS GLOUCESTER ROUND OFF PREMIERSHIP

CAMPAIGN AT BATH

Rob Cook is named in the Gloucester Rugby starting line-up for the first time since mid-November as the Cherry and Whites finish their Aviva Premiership season with a trip to local rivals Bath Rugby.

Cook's availability is a welcome boost as Gloucester ring the changes following an unrelenting fixture list in recent weeks, which has seen the club battle through three tough games to lift the European Rugby Challenge Cup, and face the prospect of two possible play-off games for the 20th and final spot in next season's Champions Cup.

Nick Wood will skipper the side which features just three of the team who started last weekend's 35-13 victory over London Irish at Kingsholm. Tom Hicks, Lewis Ludlow and Aled Thomas will make their first Premiership starts.

There are eight Academy players in the matchday 23 with two of them, Lloyd Evans and Sam Underhill, also set for Premiership bows if they come off the bench.

Discussing the game with the local media, Director of Rugby David Humphreys admitted that team selection for this weekend has been a balancing act.

"It's been a difficult week. We obviously have the suspensions but also a number of players out injured as well. It's a case of trying to get the best team that we can available for this weekend, bearing in mind the importance of the two potential games that are coming up with the play-offs.

"Every game is important. We've said all along that we will fight right up until the end of the league. But we also have to understand that we're going into two possible play-off games which will have a huge impact upon next season.

"The derby will always have a bit of an edge to it and, whoever wears the Gloucester shirt this weekend, will go out 100% committed to producing a big performance and making sure we continue to build upon the hard work that has been going on over the course of the last few months.

"This week we're going to one of the top two teams in England whose form has been very consistent. So, for us it's a challenge, and we need to go down there well prepared for what we're going to face and produce as good a performance as we can."

Gloucester Rugby:

Rob Cook; Steph Reynolds, Henry Purdy, Brendan Macken, Steve McColl; Aled Thomas, Callum Braley; Nick Wood (capt), Aleki Lutui, Shaun Knight, Tom Hicks, James Hudson, Elliott Stooke, Dan Thomas, Lewis Ludlow

Replacements:

Darren Dawidiuk, James Gibbons, Yann Thomas, Sam Underhill, Jacob Rowan, Dan Robson, Lloyd Evans, Mark Atkinson

Unavailable for selection:

Matt Kvesic, Bill Meakes, Ross Moriarty (all suspended)

John Afoa, Joe Batley, Billy Burns, Gareth Evans, Mariano Galarza, David Halaifonua, Sione Kalamafoni, Shane Monahan, Ben Morgan, Dan Murphy, Tom Palmer, Sila Puafisi, Henry Trinder (all injured)

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