

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2015**

THE RECREATION GROUND – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

GALLANT GLOUCESTER FIND NO DISGRACE IN DEFEAT AT BATH

BATH RUGBY 50 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 30

A young and inexperienced Gloucester side gave it everything at the Rec on Saturday, pushing a strong Bath side hard for well over an hour, before a late flurry saw the home team emerge with a 50-30 win.

On a day when three players made their first Premiership starts, two more did so off the bench, and the matchday 23 contained eight Academy players, Gloucester did themselves proud in terms of their guts and determination.

Dan Robson's late score clinched a try scoring bonus point for the Cherry and Whites who were still very much in the game until three scores in the last 17 minutes gave the score-line a somewhat lopsided look.

Bath were nearly at full strength and were made to really dig deep to finish their regular season on a winning note. Gloucester's first up tackling and sheer cussedness was not what the Bath scriptwriters had penned before the game.

It may be defeat for Gloucester, but the manner of the performance today means that things are still moving forward ahead of next weekend's European play-off against Connacht with plenty of positives to take from this game despite the result.

Gloucester actually stunned the Rec by having the audacity to take an early lead. A good counter saw Brendan Macken free Steph Reynolds down the right. His inside pass just evaded the clutches of Peter Stringer who went for the interception and Lewis Ludlow powered his way to the line.

It had been a bright start from Gloucester, but Bath were quickly back on level terms. A mis-cued Bath lineout actually worked in their favour as Matt Banahan burst through the midfield defence. Gloucester couldn't slow the ball up and Kyle Eastmond made the most of a two-on-one to score. Ford added the extras for 7-5.

Five minutes later and another missed lineout opened up Gloucester. Eastmond turned provider on this occasion as his break took play into the 22 and, despite Steph Reynolds getting a hand to the ball, George Ford was able to touch down in the corner and then convert his own try.

The Cherry and Whites didn't look to be too disheartened despite the double setback, and very nearly snatched a second after some good, patient build up play, Steph Reynolds tackled into touch in the corner.

However, they did get some reward as Bath failed to roll away from the tackle area as the likes of Aleki Lutui and Tom Hicks carried well and Aled Thomas' 25th minute penalty narrowed the gap to 8-14.

But, having fought so hard, Gloucester then paid the price for switching off mentally as a quickly taken tap sent Leroy Houston surging towards the line, before quickly recycled ball sent Sam Burgess crashing over. Ford converted with ease.

Credit to Gloucester, they finished the half on a high. Henry Purdy looked to be running up a blind alley, but picked a superb path through the Bath blindside defence and put Steve McColl over in the corner.

It was reward for a dogged and determined half of rugby from the inexperienced Gloucester outfit. The scrum was a concern, but you could say very much the same about the Bath lineout.

What was pleasing to see, though, was the attitude shown by the whole team. They were fronting up physically, working hard and enhancing their reputations as a result. A tough 40 minutes of rugby lay ahead, but Gloucester had shown that they were up for a battle.

Indeed, powerful ball carrying from the likes of Ludlow and Lutui set up a position from which Aled Thomas kicked his second penalty of the afternoon, but this was swiftly cancelled out as Ford slotted a penalty from long range.

Bath now started to really turn the screw at scrum time, and it came as no real surprise when referee Dean Richards showed the yellow card after a number of infringements; Nick Wood sent to the sin bin.

Bath took immediate advantage, although not through the forwards, as Ford offloaded for Devoto to score but, perhaps over-confident and over-ambitious, a turnover then led to Steve McColl's second try of the afternoon.

However, the efforts of the first hour perhaps started to take a toll and, as Gloucester started to use their replacements, Anthony Watson and Semesa Rokodoguni crossed for the hosts.

The latter was particularly harsh on Gloucester as Tom Hicks had worked brilliantly to rip possession from a Bath rolling maul, only for the ball to spill loose at the ruck for Bath's England winger to pick up and score.

Even then, to their immense credit, the Cherry and Whites continued to press forward and, when Dan Robson scampered over from close range, Gloucester had the try scoring bonus point.

Unfortunately, there was one last sting in the tail as Horacio Agulla scored with the last play of the game to bring up the half century for Bath.

Defeat against a local rival is painful, but Gloucester shouldn't be ashamed of their display. And this was proved emphatically by the terrific reception that the travelling support gave their team as they left the field.