

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2016

KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

**GLOUCESTER HAVE WAY TOO MUCH FOR NEWCASTLE
AND EASE TO IMPRESSIVE WIN**

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 32 NEWCASTLE FALCONS 6

Gloucester had to wait until the 76th minute to clinch the bonus point, but a pulsating first half display had already put the final outcome beyond doubt; 32-6 the final score at Kingsholm.

Newcastle have been a much-improved outfit in 2016, but were dealt a blow before the game when influential pivot, Andy Goode, withdrew from the starting line-up.

However, just how much Goode would have been able to affect proceedings had he started is open to conjecture as, for the first half at least, the Falcons were almost blown away.

Gloucester started strongly and kept their feet on the pedal. Three tries were in the bank by half time, and a 25-6 lead at the interval meant that the final outcome was beyond any real doubt.

But, as has happened several times so far this season, a good first half was followed by a largely frustrating second 40 minutes. Indeed, it very much looked as though the try scoring bonus point was going to elude the Cherry and Whites until Tom Savage's late score.

So, a five point return for Gloucester and an impressive reaction after the disappointment of last week. It also keeps Gloucester in the hunt for a top six finish as they keep pace with the teams around them.

As impressive as today was, however, the performance will have to be that much better against Wasps next weekend. The Coventry/Twyford Avenue based outfit are in impressive form and will present a tough challenge.

It was an eventful opening minute today. Jacob Rowan left the field with a head injury when he tackled Simon Hammersley as the full-back gathered the kick-off and Rowan came off worse, while James Hook dragged an early penalty wide.

The Cherry and Whites were looking lively and a great break by Twelvetrees immediately created another chance from the kicking tee and Hook made no mistake on this occasion.

It was all Gloucester at this stage, with Kvesic at the heart of nearly everything. His break took play into the Newcastle 22 and Willi Heinz's grubber was perfectly weighted for Bill Meakes to run through and score. Hook added the extras for a 10-0 lead.

The Cherry and Whites kept up the pressure in the minutes that followed, without ever quite carving out a gilt-edged scoring chance, and Hook was off target with a long-range 18th minute penalty chance.

However, the second try wasn't long in coming and it was James Hook, with the score his third in three home games, fighting his way to the line after a spell of concerted pressure.

The fly-half converted for 17-0 after 21 minutes and followed up with a superb kick from hand to take play deep into the Newcastle 22, a position from which he was able to add his second penalty and 20-0 lead.

It had been a rough opening half hour for the visitors, but they were still fighting; one powerful run from Venditti evidence of that, and Craig Willis opened their account after 32 minutes with a penalty.

However, it simply served to provoke Gloucester into action. Mariano Galarza took play into the Newcastle 22 where Ross Moriarty took a great line off him to straighten up, beat the last man and score for a 25-3 lead.

The visitors were staring down the barrel and opted to kick for the corner when awarded a penalty from the restart, in a desperate bid for a try.

However, despite several close-range lineouts and five metre scrums, Gloucester just about held out and Newcastle had to settle for a second Willis penalty.

So far, so good for the Cherry and Whites who had taken the game to Newcastle from the off, admittedly with the wind at their backs, and kept up the momentum.

Newcastle had enjoyed a few positive moments, enough to keep Gloucester focused, but the main question now was whether Gloucester could get the bonus point and close out the game against the wind.

They nearly did so immediately as Billy Twelvetrees was inches away from a try-scoring interception but, by and large, the next 20 minutes were frustrating as the Cherry and Whites simply couldn't crack the Newcastle defence again.

The visitors weren't offering much in attack themselves, but they were doing enough in defence to thwart Gloucester's best efforts. If anything, the Cherry and Whites were perhaps trying a bit too hard, forcing things rather than allowing them to develop.

Time ticked by, and murmurs of disgruntlement started to be heard around the stands. But there was one last sting in the tail as Tom Savage came steaming on to a flat pass, ran over the top of Michael Young and reached for the line.

He made it, and the sigh of relief around the stadium was palpable.
Job done and now on to next week.

JC