

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2016**

**KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**GLOUCESTER RESTORE PRIDE BUT BATH POUNCE LATE  
FOR NARROW WIN**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 12 BATH RUGBY 17**

After two disappointing away defeats, Gloucester gave it everything in the West Country derby against Bath on Saturday. It could have gone either way, but the visitors scored a late try to pinch a 12-17 win.

It was a bitter blow for Gloucester who had led at half time and battled back to draw level at 12 points apiece going into the final quarter, only to see Bath snatch the win with a late try from Semesa Rokodoguni.

After two setbacks on the road, the Cherry and Whites had come into the game desperate to bounce back and keep their top six ambitions alive.

And there was certainly no questioning the collective commitment as they fought tooth and nail, in front of a magnificent sell-out crowd, in a bid to make it a memorable Aviva Premiership double over their local rivals.

However, while the passion and endeavour was there, and the home support was top notch, the composure and execution at key moments was absent.

On the day, there was very little to choose between the two sides, but Bath capitalised on the key moments and that proved to be the difference.

That was certainly evident in the second half when Gloucester spent what seemed like an age in the Bath 22. A couple of five metre lineouts came up short, so did a five metre scrum. A penalty was the only reward.

Contrast that to Bath's late foray into Gloucester territory. There was a smidgen of luck involved, but it resulted in Rokodoguni's second try of the evening, a fine solo effort, and it swung the game Bath's way.

Losing to Bath is always painful. Doubly more so when it's a defeat like this. The challenge now is to regroup before the trip to Leicester next week. It'll be a tough week in training.

After a cagey start for both sides, Gloucester took a fourth minute lead. Bath failed to handle an up and under, Francois Louw handled it in an offside position and Greig Laidlaw slotted the penalty.

It could have been an even better start as Jeremy Thrush picked up a loose ball and galloped downfield, but just couldn't free his arms to offload to Steve McColl outside him.

However, Laidlaw doubled the lead after nine minutes with a straightforward penalty as George Ford was rightly penalised for failing to roll away from the tackle area on his own 22.

Bath though hit straight back. Anthony Watson made one dangerous break, but prop Henry Thomas broke a couple of tackles before putting Chris Cook over. There looked to be a forward pass in the build-up but Ford's conversion made it 6-7.

It was a blow after some really good defence up to that point, but the Cherry and Whites chased the restart hard, won another penalty and Laidlaw had no problem making it 9-7. It had been a pulsating opening quarter.

The second quarter was equally as gripping but, with defences ruling the roost, there were no real scoring chances.

Both teams moved menacingly into the other half at times, but poor execution and discipline hampered both attacks.

In fact, Bath had the only real chance as George Ford had a tricky penalty chance, from the touchline in front of the Shed with no time remaining, but hooked the kick wide to the delight of the home crowd.

On the balance of things, Gloucester just about deserved to have their noses in front, but it was a close-run thing. Watson and Rokodoguni looked threatening at times, while Gloucester's was more of a team effort. But it was definitely all still to play for.

The second half began badly for the Cherry and Whites though. They turned over possession in their own half and paid a dear price, as a long floated pass gave Rokodoguni enough room to squeeze over in the corner and give his side a 9-12 lead.

It was a blow and Gloucester were forced to dig deep as the first ten minutes ticked by with the visitors very much in control. However, a spell of sustained pressure in the Bath 22 led to a penalty and Laidlaw duly levelled the scores.

However, the feeling at the time was that three points wasn't enough of a reward for that period of dominance, and so it proved to be in a tense final few minutes.

A couple of key moments went against Gloucester and they struggled to move out of their own 22 as the final whistle grew closer. Mariano Galarza nicked a Bath lineout near the Gloucester line, but it ran agonisingly dead in goal.

Gloucester then seemed to disrupt the Bath scrum and the ball ran loose. However, Rokodoguni scooped it up and navigated a route somehow through a pile of bodies and had enough strength to make the line.

Ford was off target with the conversion and, try as they might to regain possession, Gloucester couldn't quite do so. Chris Cook hoofed the ball over the Shed and Bath had the win.

JC