

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

FRIDAY, AUGUST 26, 2016

KINGSHOLM – PRE-SEASON FRIENDLY

**GLOUCESTER FIGHT BACK TO EARN IMPRESSIVE VICTORY
OVER GLASGOW WARRIORS**

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 33 GLASGOW WARRIORS 19

Match Report By Duncan Wood

If Gloucester were looking for a defensive workout, they certainly got it in the first half. But they cut loose in the second to run out winners by 33 points to 19 to finish preseason on a positive note.

If you'd told anyone at Kingsholm on the stroke of half time that Gloucester would win by two clear scores, having crossed for five tries, they'd have looked at you in a rather strange way.

The Cherry and Whites had spent much of the first half on the back foot, indeed in their own 22, as Glasgow took a stranglehold of possession and tried to batter Gloucester into submission.

To be fair, Gloucester's ambition and a slight lack of precision added to the pressure. Trying unadvisedly to go from deep didn't pay off on a couple of occasions. Handling errors also prevented a clear exit from time to time.

The defensive effort was superb though. An interception try was followed by countless tackles, many near the Gloucester line but scores in the minutes either side of half time looked to be a real body blow.

However, it seemed to spur Gloucester on to greater things. Glasgow started to give away a number of penalties, and Laidlaw's try and conversion edged Gloucester back into the lead before three superb scores showed what they can do when it all clicks.

To their credit, Glasgow didn't throw in the towel. When Sean Lamont took a neat inside pass and sprinted over after 72 minutes, the visitors were back within a score before Elliott Creed scampered home to bring an end to proceedings.

On a beautiful evening at Kingsholm, Glasgow got the game underway and enjoyed the better of the opening exchanges as they dominated possession, giving the Gloucester defence a good workout.

And, after such a stern examination, it was Gloucester who struck first with a try made in Scotland. It actually came from a loose Glasgow pass, Matt Scott picking it off in midfield and running it back all the way. Greig Laidlaw added an easy conversion.

And Glasgow's frustration grew just a few minutes later when Henry Pyrgos dragged a very kickable penalty wide of the uprights.

A strong run from Henry Purdy notwithstanding, Gloucester were struggling to get their hands on their ball and Glasgow continued to throw the kitchen sink at the Cherry and Whites as the first quarter drew to a close.

In truth, Gloucester weren't helping themselves as a number of basic handling errors prevented them from efficiently exiting their own 22 when they did get their hands on some hard-earned possession.

Then, after so much valiant defence, Gloucester nearly scored twice in as many minutes. Purdy bumped off a would-be tackler and went close, while Billy Burns split the defence but his offload found Glasgow hands.

Half time was rapidly approaching and the Cherry and Whites were dealt a blow. The visitors hacked downfield, Gloucester couldn't gather and Charlie Sharples was yellow carded for fielding the ball in an offside position.

Salt was duly rubbed into the wound as Greig Laidlaw was charged down near his own line; the ball sat up nicely in the in-goal area and Alex Dunbar pounced to score. Pyrgos converted with the last kick of the half to level the scores.

In hindsight, Glasgow probably deserved the score as they had very much dominated possession and territory, but ran into a brick wall of a Gloucester defence. Even so, the nature of the score was frustrating after so much solid tackling.

The Cherry and Whites had had precious little ball to work with, but had looked dangerous. Billy Burns had kicked well and the backs were doing positive things with ball in hand.

However, Glasgow struck straight from the restart. Gloucester couldn't stop the offloads, Pyrgos made a searing break as Gloucester were caught napping around the fringes and found Unanivi in support. Marshall felled the big second row, but quick ball saw Peter Horne scamper over.

Gloucester responded well though, forcing a number of close-range line-outs. Their patience was eventually rewarded, when Darren Dawidiuk burst off the back of the maul and popped the ball out to Greig Laidlaw to dive over in the corner. The skipper converted his own try from the touchline and nudged his team in front, 14-12.

The inevitable flurry of replacements from both teams then affected the flow of the game somewhat, but a moment of class eased Gloucester further clear on 64 minutes when Mark Atkinson delayed his pass superbly for Tom Marshall to glide through and score. James Hook converted for 21-12.

And an ever better one followed as the Cherry and Whites broke from deep; an outrageous pass from Symons freeing Marshall. The full-back chipped ahead, Gloucester re-gathered and Dan Thomas put Callum Braley over in the left-hand corner.

However, the game still wasn't put to bed just yet. The visitors piled on the pressure from the restart and, despite more dogged defence, a smart inside pass prised open the door and Sean Lamont needed no second invitation.

At 26-19, Glasgow were back in it. But Gloucester didn't just seek to close out the game. They went back on the offensive and were rewarded when Elliott Creed sprinted clear. James Hook converted and an exhilarating game drew to a close.

Leicester next week will pose a different sort of challenge. But Gloucester got a really [good] test this evening. The commitment in defence was, in particular, something to behold.

It all starts in earnest next Friday evening. But Gloucester will enter the game in good spirits.

Lineups:

Gloucester Rugby

Tom Marshall; Charlie Sharples, Matt Scott, Billy Twelvetrees, Henry Purdy; Billy Burns, Greig Laidlaw; Yann Thomas, Richard Hibbard, John Afoa, Joe Latta, Mariano Galarza, Ross Moriarty, Matt Kvesic, Ben Morgan

Replacements

Darren Dawidiuk, Paddy McAllister, Paul Doran-Jones, Tom Denton, Lewis Ludlow, Callum Braley, James Hook, Mark Atkinson, Alex Craig, Dan Thomas, Andy Symons, Gareth Evans, Elliott Creed, Lloyd Evans, David Halaifonua, Charlie Beckett.

JC