

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2016**

**KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**LACKLUSTRE GLOUCESTER PAY THE PRICE FOR INACCURACY  
AGAINST DOGGED NEWCASTLE**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 13 NEWCASTLE FALCONS 18**

A desperately disappointing afternoon for Gloucester who, despite dominating possession and territory, were guilty of failing to make the most of it against a resolute Newcastle defence before the visitors pounced to snatch the win in the second half.

Making the most of chances was the name of the day. Gloucester were guilty of failing to come away with points whenever they got into the red zone. Newcastle scored points from virtually every one of the chances they created.

It all added up to a deeply disappointing afternoon for players, coaches and supporters alike. It was a game which the Cherry and Whites know they should have won. Credit to Newcastle, whose defence was incredibly committed on the day, but Gloucester will know that they created enough chances to have put this one to bed.

In fact Gloucester looked bright in the early stages. They scored one well-worked try and others looked certain to follow. However, handling errors and kicking away possession in the Newcastle 22 saw many opportunities slip away.

As time ticked on in the second half, the sickening feeling grew that it was going to be one of those days – so many chances squandered and the opposition would go down the other end and score. And so it proved to be.

Kingsholm was a very sombre place to be at the final whistle. A losing bonus point was not what was expected from this game for the home side and a big reaction will be expected ahead of next weekend when Bath come to town.

It was actually a lively start for Gloucester, only the outstretched hand of Falcons full-back Simon Hammersley denying Henry Purdy a run to the line after a slick backs move.

However, the visitors drew first blood, turning Gloucester over at a lineout on their own 22, before Delany and Socino moved the ball out neatly to Waldouck who ghosted home unopposed. Delany added an easy conversion.

Gloucester hit straight back though. Burns drifted sideways before slipping a nicely delayed flat pass for Ross Moriarty to blast through and score. Burns added the conversion to level matters after 13 minutes.

The Cherry and Whites were obviously feeling confident. A kickable penalty was put to the corner on 19 minutes, the drive was halted and Atkinson's grubber hit the upright and was carried over by a Newcastle defender.

From the 5 metre scrum, Heinz almost darted through and Atkinson almost jinked his way over, crawling almost to the line. But Gloucester had to settle for a Billy Burns penalty and their first lead of the afternoon at 10-7.

After the shock of the Waldouck try, Gloucester were slowly but surely starting to get on top, but the game took an unexpected pause when referee Dean Richards got cleaned out off the ball and required lengthy treatment. Kingsholm was understandably sympathetic!

The only frustrating element at the moment for Gloucester was that they weren't quite clean enough in their execution, a number of good attacking positions being squandered due to handling errors.

Newcastle still posed a threat though, and when a loose kick from Marshall was returned well by Tait and Socino, a good tackle from Heinz and steal at the ruck from Rowan saved the day. However, Delany levelled the scores with a 37th minute penalty.

So, half time came with nothing to choose between the two sides but with Gloucester having enjoyed marginally the better of things but not having been able to convert that advantage into points.

The pack were creating a decent platform and the backs making some good initial breaks. But the try conceded was a soft one and there had been too many handling errors. Hopefully, the second half would see things click for the Cherry and Whites.

They certainly started well, patiently building pressure in the Newcastle 22. A cunning Burns chip almost found the outstretched fingers of Purdy, but the winger couldn't quite hold on and the visitors were able to clear.

The first ten minutes were all Gloucester, but there were no clear-cut try-scoring chances, and when a Burns penalty from long range fell just short and wide, the frustration levels went up a notch.

Gloucester responded by throwing several replacements into the fray, but it was Ben Morgan who almost broke the deadlock, steaming into the 22 only for his offload to go forward out of contact.

The errors continued to come, and Gloucester paid the price on 59 minutes when they were penalised at a scrum and Delany's penalty nudged the Falcons in front at 10-13. It was a real smash and grab raid into the Gloucester half.

The Falcons had their noses in front and their confidence up. A couple of penalty awards moved them into Gloucester territory and a neat blindside attacking move saw Alex Tait fight his way over in the right-hand corner. It was a body blow to Gloucester hopes.

Greig Laidlaw kicked a 74th minute penalty to get Gloucester back within losing bonus point range and give the home faithful a glimmer of hope.

However, Newcastle proved to be incredibly streetwise in the final few minutes, keeping the ball close to the forwards and efficiently running down the clock.

The visitors celebrated long and hard at the final whistle, and so they should. It's an excellent win on the road for them.

Gloucester have some thinking to do....

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