

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2016**

**KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**SECOND-HALF DISPLAY PROPELS GLOUCESTER TO BONUS POINT  
WIN OVER BRISTOL**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 26 BRISTOL RUGBY 18**

Talk about a game of two halves. Things looked grim on Saturday as Gloucester trailed 0-6 to Bristol at half-time. However, Matt Scott's eighth try of the season got Gloucester off and running, and the visitors fell apart as the Cherry and Whites eased to a 26-18 bonus point Aviva Premiership win.

The bonus point win over their West Country rivals means that Gloucester have taken 11 points from the past 15 available and move, for the time being at least, up to sixth place in the table.

However, pragmatism was the name of the game for the players and coaches after the game as they admitted that they had been far from at their best despite running in five tries against the Premiership's bottom side who are still looking for their first league win.

The first-half performance certainly tested the patience of the home crowd as Gloucester just couldn't get going in the face of some spirited resistance and the visitors, to be fair, were pretty good value for their 0-6 lead at half time.

Fortunately, Matt Scott crossed straight after the resumption and it was as if a cloud had been lifted. Gloucester suddenly had that crucial bit of self-belief and, with a bit of momentum, they set about securing the points.

That task was achieved without too much difficulty as Bristol's understandably fragile confidence started to shatter. But the Cherry and Whites will be kicking themselves for conceding two late tries which flattered the score-line somewhat.

But, with players returning from international duty and injury, there is plenty to be optimistic about as attentions now turn to Europe and the double-header against La Rochelle.

There's still obviously plenty to work upon, but momentum and self-belief are crucial attributes and, whisper it quietly, they're building at Kingsholm.

The opening few minutes on Saturday evening were, it's fair to say, scrappy. Plenty of kicking from both sides and plenty of handling errors in what were pretty favourable conditions.

And the visitors, playing at Kingsholm for the first time in over eight years, got off to a decent start as Jason Woodward knocked over a straightforward penalty when Gloucester were penalised at a ruck on their own 22.

And it got even better on 18 minutes as Gloucester's indiscipline again let them down as they struggled to get into the game. Jacob Rowan was singled out for offside as the Cherry and Whites defended their own line and Woodward had an easy kick for his second penalty.

Gloucester simply hadn't got going and the visitors were growing in confidence by the minute. Henry Purdy and Willi Heinz made the first attacking thrusts in the Bristol 22, but the visiting defence held firm as Gloucester were pinged for holding on.

Murmurs of discontent were starting to be heard around Kingsholm as the half hour mark came and went, with Gloucester's box kicking tactics not finding favour with the home support. It was a time for patience.

But those murmurs went up a notch when James Hook pushed a penalty wide on 33 minutes after Bristol pulled down a maul illegally. Everything was going the way of the visitors and the travelling support were loving it.

The Cherry and Whites had a late opportunity as Bristol offended in their own 22 as half-time approached. The kick at goal was turned down as Gloucester went to the corner, but referee Carley penalised the home side as they drove towards the line and the visitors breathed a sigh of relief.

It had been a pretty forgettable first 40 minutes, not that Bristol would give a jot. They were in front and Gloucester simply couldn't get going. There was going to be one heck of a team talk during the interval.

What Gloucester really needed was an early try and they duly got it. Twelvetrees, a half-time replacement, pinned Bristol back and they lost their own lineout. The forwards piled on the pressure before Twelvetrees put Matt Scott over with a lovely flat pass. Hook converted.

The atmosphere around the stadium had suddenly changed, with the home crowd now well and truly into the game and Gloucester piled forward looking for another score, putting on the squeeze near the Bristol line.

Bristol fought hard and repelled the initial surges, but Willi Heinz pounced as the away scrum disintegrated and the ball went loose, scampering over as he snaffled the ball, Hook's conversion making it 14-6.

Gloucester promptly made it three tries. Mariano Galarza took it into contact and his pack piled in behind him. Jamal Ford-Robinson pulled the maul down, was yellow carded for his troubles and a penalty try was awarded. Hook's conversion widened the gap to 21-6.

Bristol threatened to make it an interesting last 15 minutes when replacement fly-half Billy Searle jinked his way through and put Jon Fisher over. However, there had been a block in the build-up and the try was chalked off.

To rub salt into the wounds, Gloucester quickly moved downfield and Henry Purdy showed great feet to round Luke Arscott and then good strength and reach to finish off another good move and clinch the try-scoring bonus point for Gloucester.

Job done, you'd think. However, Gloucester showed how dangerous it is to switch off mentally against any side in this league. Billy Searle floated a neat kick to the left for Jack Wallace to score what looked like a consolation try.

However, there were still a few seconds left, Bristol gathered the restart, threw caution to the wind and, to the frustration of the home crowd, pinched another try, this time from Luke Arscott.

It left things feeling a little flat. But, no matter, the five points were in the bag, local bragging rights secured and the Rifles Cup retained. There have been worse days at the office.

JC