

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2017**

RECREATION GROUND – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

**GLOUCESTER HAVE NO ANSWER TO BATH'S SECOND-HALF SURGE  
AT THE REC**

**BATH RUGBY 44 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 20**

Gloucester turned around in touch at the Rec, trailing only 10 points to 8. However, they were blown away by a rampant Bath side in the second half who ran out 44-20 winners.

After the heroics in La Rochelle last weekend, it was back down to earth with a bump for Gloucester on Sunday afternoon at the Rec. However, even the most fervent Bath supporter wouldn't have anticipated the final score-line after a tight opening half.

The first 40 minutes were actually pretty cagey, with neither side really deserving to lead. One smart kick from Kahn Fotuali'i had created the Bath try, one from Henry Trinder had fashioned Gloucester's.

So, it was certainly game on when the teams re-emerged for the start of the second half. However, two quick fire tries from the home side gave them a flying start, and opened up a gap that Gloucester couldn't claw back.

The Cherry and Whites fought to get back into the game, but couldn't make anything happen and were ruthlessly picked off as time ticked by, by an increasingly confident Bath side. Taulupe Faletau finished off with a hat-trick while Gloucester crossed late for two consolation scores.

The defeat finally ends Gloucester's lingering top six hopes, although they will still harbour hopes of a top seven finish and a play-off spot. That will depend on next weekend's game at home to Exeter, on Saturday (kick off 4pm).

For now, however, credit to Bath. They were the better team on the day, particularly in the second 40 minutes, and have the local bragging rights for the time being.

The opening few minutes passed by in a blur of tactical kicking, neither side really able to gain much territory or an advantage. The weather didn't help handling either with a steady drizzle falling and both sides made mistakes in the early tussles.

As such, there was precious little to report after the first 15 minutes with no scoring opportunities created and neither side on top.

But the home team earned the first shot at points as Gloucester were penalised twice in succession. Rhys Priestland went for the posts from wide out on the left and drew the ball in nicely for a 3-0 after 22 minutes.

The Cherry and Whites had been showing signs of getting their game going but were running into some stern defence. But a Bath mistake, a lost lineout, gave Gloucester a route back into the game as James Hook slotted a penalty.

Parity was short-lived. Watson rose high to claim the restart and establish great field position. Kahn Fotuali'I then dinked a smart kick over the defensive line and Taulupe Faletau gathered to score. Priestland added a good conversion for 10-3.

Gloucester tried to respond, the forwards carrying well and forcing a five metre penalty. The catch and drive was held up as Bath fronted up in defence, but Gloucester stayed patient and a sublime chip from Henry Trinder found an unmarked May to score. Burns couldn't convert from wide out but Gloucester were back in it at 10-8.

Bath had an immediate chance to extend the lead again as Gloucester came in at the side of a ruck but, from head on to the posts, Priestland dragged his kick wide much to the disappointment of the home crowd.

So Bath took a slender advantage into half-time, but Gloucester wouldn't be too disappointed with the breeze seemingly at their backs in the second half. One moment of magic from Fotuali'i was separating the two sides; there was genuinely very little in it.

But the home team came out strongly after the resumption and quickly extended their lead. The pack made the hard yards before the ball went swiftly left and Aled Brew had enough power to make the left-hand corner. Priestland converted well again for 17-8.

Gloucester swiftly made two changes, sending on McAllister and Matu'u, while there was also a scare when Henry Trinder stayed down before requiring lengthy treatment.

Bath then took a real grip on proceedings as Max Clark hit a great angle onto a flat pass in midfield to break the defensive line before stepping the last man to score. Priestland's conversion extended the lead to 24-7.

Two tries in ten minutes had shattered Gloucester's challenge, and the task became that bit harder on 56 minutes when Priestland kicked his second penalty. The home crowd had belatedly found their voice and were loving every minute.

Bad went to worse for Gloucester as Robbie Fruean replicated what Clark had done and burst through to score off a flat pass, Priestland converting, while Taulupe Faletau finished off another flowing move to make it 39-8.

There was a glimpse of what Gloucester are capable of as Charlie Sharples produced an arcing run before putting Jonny May in for the wing's second try of the day, but Faletau pounced for his hat-trick as the Cherry and Whites turned the ball over when running from deep.

Gloucester did have the final word as David Halaifonua cut a good line to score in the final minute, Greig Laidlaw adding the conversion, but it was scant consolation on a tough day at the office.