

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECHO

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GLOUCESTER TURN UP THE HEAT ON CAERPHILLY

CAERPHILLY 16 GLOUCESTER 47

Only five tries this time but Gloucester were still far too classy for Caerphilly as they ground out another convincing Parker Pen Shield victory over the Welshmen.

At Kingsholm the previous week it had been 15 home tries in a 98-14 romp but this time Caerphilly provided a far sterner test for the Cherry and Whites.

Buoyed by their own crowd at Virginia Park, Caerphilly had learnt lessons from their previous humiliation and were in no mood for an early capitulation again.

They began with far more vigour and verve and presented Gloucester with some hard hitting defence in the early stages.

At half-time the Cherry and Whites were only 16-6 ahead having crossed the home line just once when hooker Chris Fortey broke through from the 22 after a well executed lineout move.

The Caerphilly defences could not hold out forever, however, against the superior forces of Gloucester's international line-up. In the second half Gloucester added four more tries although once again the Welsh part-timers were able to snaffle two of their own, as they had done at Kingsholm.

The final score left Gloucester convincingly at the top of pool seven at the half way stage of the competition – and on this form that is where they will stay.

While it was Gloucester's former rugby league superstar, Henry Paul, who punished Caerphilly with 28 points in their first meeting, this time it was the kicking machine Ludovic Mercier who rattled up the points.

The on-form Frenchman landed all five conversions and added four penalties for a tally of 22.

Although he may not have figured on the scoresheet, however, Paul again oozed class and speculation increased that he will be getting in on the action for England against Australia on Saturday.

He has been selected in the squad but his Gloucester team-mates expect to see him contribute to the game and then be started against Romania the following week.

Paul himself, however, was playing down the possibility of him running out against Australia.

"It's a big learning curve for me at the moment and maybe the Australia game is one match too soon," he said.

However, his partner in the centre against Caerphilly, Samoan Terry Fanolua, said: "I don't think he is being rushed. He can be a match-winner for England.

"The only way he will learn is to be put under pressure – it will be a big task for him to play against Australia but I think he is up to it."

In the second half, Gloucester's forward power brought home the goods against the Welshmen as the 3,000 travelling Kingsholm crowd watched in delight.

Cracks appeared in the Caerphilly defence as winger Robert Todd, number eight Junior Paramore, scrum-half Dimitri Yachvili and replacement Joe Ewens all went through.

Before Ewens' score, Caerphilly had rallied to claim tries from Andrew Jacobs at scrum-half and former Welsh full-back Justin Thomas to add to two first-half penalties by Luke Richards.

PARKER PEN SHIELD
POOL SEVEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts.
Gloucester	4	4	0	0	227	50	8
La Rochelle	4	3	0	1	117	112	6
Caerphilly	4	1	0	3	110	219	2
GRAN Parma ..	4	0	0	4	74	147	0

JC