

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2017**

**TWICKENHAM STOOP – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**QUINS WEATHER THE STORM BETTER THAN GLOUCESTER  
AND EASE TO VICTORY**

**HARLEQUINS 28 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 17**

After the highs of last week, it was a lacklustre Gloucester who slipped to a 28-17 defeat at Harlequins on Saturday, poor kick and chase and ill-discipline proving to be the Cherry and Whites' undoing in testing weather conditions at the Stoop.

Gloucester will head home frustrated that they were far from their best on the day. They were feisty and competitive, of that there can be no doubt, but there was a lack of accuracy in their play that left them unable to gain a real foothold in the game.

Quins will also confess that they weren't at peak efficiency. But they just about edged their visitors in enough areas to deserve the win. They returned long kicks downfield and made good metres, they kicked enough goals at key times and kept their line intact when it mattered.

The home team's tactical kicking game was also on point. Carefully weighted touch-finders keeping Gloucester pinned back deep while Danny Care's box-kicking was also on the money.

The Cherry and Whites did have chances, but weren't able to maintain possession for enough phases on several occasions and came away pointless from several visits to the Quins 22.

The key phase of the game was in the final ten minutes before half-time. The game was deadlocked at 3-3 as the weather turned ugly at the Stoop, torrential rain accompanied by thunder and lightning.

As the light faded, the conditions were genuinely gloomy, Quins ran in two tries which completely changed the dynamics of the game and they didn't look back.

Although Gloucester battled hard in the second half, and scored two tries. However, they never quite got back within striking range, cheaply conceded penalties allowing Marcus Smith the chance to keep the scoreboard moving and Gloucester at bay.

Head Coach Johan Ackermann pinpointed errors and lack of accuracy as the main reasons for defeat when he spoke to the media after the game. A lot of work will go into training ahead of next weekend's trip to Leicester.

Gloucester's defence had to be on its toes right from the off as a cunning grubber almost found the flying Marland Yarde just yards from the Gloucester line. But Jason Woodward got across to hack the ball into the crowd and his pack stole the subsequent lineout.

All the early exchanges were taking place in the Gloucester half as Quins dominated possession, but play was mostly around the 10 metre line as neither side could really gain the upper hand.

But it was Quins who took a 10th minute lead when Gloucester were penalised on the deck as they tried to clear up a loose lineout tap. Dimitri Catrakilis knocked over the penalty.

However, Gloucester claimed the restart and piled on the pressure in the home 22, big ball carriers making hard yards around the fringes. Quins were eventually penalised and, after a lengthy delay for treatment to Catrakilis, Billy Burns kicked the penalty to level the scores.

The unfortunate Catrakilis was stretchered off to sympathetic applause and replaced by 18-year-old Marcus Smith. And Smith had a chance to restore Quins' lead when Gloucester played the scrum-half without the ball, but badly missed from head on to the posts.

Charlie Walker then lit up the home crowd with an electric run after Mike Brown fielded an up and under and offloaded smartly. He weaved his way into the Gloucester 22 but had no support and the chance was gone.

The game was still evenly poised as the half-hour mark approached. Both teams received a warning for handbags after the whistle, and both were penalised at scrum time.

However, the home team finally strung together some decent phases of possession after 29 minutes and took the lead. After a series of phases in and around the Gloucester 22, Dave Ward took a wrong-footing inside pass and broke a tackle to score. Smith converted for 10-3.

The heavens duly opened at the Stoop, a downpour of biblical proportions coming down, and the light rapidly faded. Had it been cricket, we'd have been off for bad light but the floodlights stayed off and Quins kept Gloucester pinned back with a series of measured touch-finders.

Amidst the thunder and lightning, Gloucester were then undone by another Quins counter off a kick downfield. Charlie Walker started it, Care and Yarde provided the pace, but it was Walker who finished the move near the posts and Smith added the extras.

So, the teams headed into half time with Quins enjoying a decent lead despite the game having seemed relatively even until the final few minutes. Granted, Quins had enjoyed the majority of the territory but Gloucester didn't really deserve to trail by 14. They've played far worse and been more in touch.

That said, the home team had made the absolute maximum of the two real chances they'd carved out and left Gloucester with an uphill challenge in the second half. Conditions were much improved when play resumed, although there was still the odd flash of lightning. Unfortunately, there were few sparks on the field in the opening minutes for Gloucester who were being forced to play from deep.

The Cherry and Whites needed a break and so very nearly got one as Henry Purdy fielded a kick and broke downfield. He moved menacingly into the 22, but his inside pass to Willi Heinz was intercepted by the retreating Danny Care.

Quins were penalised for obstruction though and Gloucester opted for a 5 metre scrum. A 5 metre lineout followed but, despite a final warning, Quins held out to the delight of the home crowd.

But Gloucester stayed patient and finally got their reward. A powerful catch and drive set up the opportunity and Freddie Clarke powered over despite a hint of crossing. Billy Burns wisely converted quickly and the Cherry and Whites were back in it and 17-10.

Frustratingly, Gloucester didn't make much ground as they cleared the restart. Quins took full advantage, setting up camp in the 22 before forcing a penalty and Smith's successful kick opened up a 20-10 gap. Some of the hard work had been promptly undone.

Quins had a try chalked off for a forward pass on the hour mark, and Smith also missed a kickable penalty as Gloucester hung tough.

But time was now against them as Quins looked to close things out and a 65th minute penalty from Smith made the task that little bit more difficult.

And the game was effectively done and dusted three minutes later as Gloucester failed to deal with a speculative high cross-kick with a penalty advantage being played and Mike Brown put Marland Yarde over.

The weather had improved but things looked gloomy for Gloucester. However, there was still defiance in the Cherry and White ranks and they bravely went looking for a consolation score.

It came with the final play of the game, Quins losing a lineout near their own line and Jacob Rowan pouncing on the loose ball to score.

Twelvetrees converted to bring proceedings to a close as Gloucester left the Stoop with plenty to think about.

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