

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2017**

**WELFORD ROAD – ANGLO WELSH CUP**

**GLOUCESTER'S GALLANT EFFORT COMES UP AGONISINGLY SHORT  
AT TIGERS**

**LEICESTER TIGERS 26 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 24**

Ben Vellacott's second-half try followed by one from Tom Hudson gave Gloucester real hope of a rare win at Welford Road, but a late Adam Thompstone try earned Leicester a narrow 26-24 Anglo-Welsh Cup victory.

Controversy late on as Gloucester had a late chance to win it as Lloyd Evans lined up a penalty, but loud feedback from the PA seemed to put the fly-half off as he approached the ball and the kick drifted wide.

It was tough on Evans as he'd more than played his part in a terrific effort on the day. Wins at Welford Road are as rare as hens' teeth, and Gloucester came so close to getting their Anglo-Welsh campaign off to the best possible start.

It was such a spirited second-half fightback from such a young side that the Cherry and Whites will be gutted to head home with only a losing bonus point to show for their efforts.

There was hardly anything to show between the two sides throughout and, after a fairly even first half, it looked as though the Tigers had taken a decisive advantage when they opened up a 21-10 lead after 50 minutes.

But Vellacott stretched over after 58 minutes, quickly followed by Tom Hudson scoring a memorable try at a ground where it all started for him.

The unlikely win looked on but Adam Thompstone's late try proved decisive.

The late controversy was unfortunate. The Gloucester pack produced one of their biggest shoves of the game to win a penalty 30 metres out and head on to the posts. Evans had been striking the ball well but the noise from the PA was unfortunate to say the least.

It shouldn't detract from a massive team effort by the Cherry and Whites, but to come so close to a memorable win will hurt badly on the way home.

In the long term, the experience gained from playing so well at such a tough venue will serve the young players well. But, for now, it hurts...

Gloucester's pack in fact won an early psychological battle as they forced a penalty at the game's first scrum but, from long range, Lloyd Evans was just off target with the shot at goal.

The home team dominated the next few minutes of possession, but the Gloucester half-backs showed their talent on 10 minutes as Lloyd Evans broke with Ben Vellacott taking it on, but the scrum-half hesitated as he considered his options and was tackled.

The turnover cost Gloucester dear as Carwyn Penny had to cover a kick downfield and couldn't make much distance with the kick. It gave the Tigers great field position and patient build up play saw Charlie Thacker touch down when he wasn't held in the tackle.

Gloucester responded positively, forcing a turnover in the home half which forced the Tigers to concede a penalty on the floor. Lloyd Evans stepped up and slotted his first penalty of the afternoon.

However, Joe Ford restored the five-point cushion on 23 minutes as Gloucester were penalised at a scrum just inside their own ten metre line, and the Tigers fly-half made no mistake from almost head on to the posts.

The Cherry and Whites then stunned the home crowd with a well-worked try. Lloyd Evans made the key break, taking play close to the Tigers line.

The forwards stayed patient, probing for an opening at close range before Paddy McAllister burrowed his way over. Evans converted for an 8-10 lead.

It was developing into quite some battle up front as half-time approached, but the Tigers got a nudge on at a couple of scrums on their own put in, forced a penalty and Ford made it 11-10 on 36 minutes.

And Gloucester's willingness to play from deep hurt them on the stroke of half-time, losing possession on their own 22 before failing to roll away from the tackle area quickly enough; Ford's third penalty making the score at the turnaround 14-10.

It had been an evenly fought opening 40 minutes and the game was still very much in the balance. Neither team really had the upper hand up front and both sets of backs were looking lively. It was all to play for.

The home team started the second half the better, obviously looking to try and open up a decisive lead. But there was a lengthy and worrying delay as Gareth Evans stayed down after tackling Fred Tuilagi. The medics treated the incident cautiously before the number eight was helped off, thankfully under his own steam; Will Safe taking his place.

A period of intense pressure followed from the home side, and Gloucester looked to be coping pretty well. But a neat inside pass saw wing Jonah Holmes in off his wing to break through the defensive line to score. Ford had an easy conversion for 21-10.

Credit to Gloucester, they hit back immediately. Hanson, Clarke and Polledri all carried strongly, but it was scrum-half Vellacott who darted off the back of a catch and drive to touch down. Evans added a good conversion to narrow the gap to 17-21 on the hour.

There was suddenly a spring in Gloucester's step, and the Cherry and Whites took the lead on 64 minutes as Tom Hudson hit a great line off Ben Vellacott to break a tackle and score. The TMO was called upon to check a potential block and also the final pass, but it stood and Evans converted for 21-24.

The partisan home crowd was incensed and made their feelings clear. Their team responded and it was all hands to the pumps in defence for the Cherry and Whites to keep the green tide at bay.

But a key penalty call went against Gloucester on 71 minutes. Ford put the kick into the corner and, although Gloucester stopped the forward drive, the ball went wide for Adam Thompstone to touch down. 26-24 after 73 minutes.

Showing real spirit, Gloucester didn't let their heads drop and went downfield looking for the win. The scrum effort to win the penalty was massive, but the penalty attempt drifted just wide and Gloucester's hopes disappeared into the night with it.

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