

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2017**

**KINGSTON PARK – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**GLOUCESTER CONTINUE WINNING RUN WITH BONUS POINT  
VICTORY AT NEWCASTLE**

**NEWCASTLE FALCONS 7 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 29**

Friday night saw Gloucester deliver one of their most polished and professional performances of the season, as they triumphed at a venue which is notoriously difficult to win at, securing a 29-7 Aviva Premiership win over Newcastle Falcons.

Kingston Park hasn't been the happiest of hunting grounds in recent times, but this was a very impressive display from a Gloucester side who went about their task with gusto right from the very first whistle.

To win away at Newcastle isn't easy, to take five points from the game is even rarer but even the most ardent of Falcons fans wouldn't deny the Cherry and Whites the win which takes them up to third place in the Aviva Premiership table once again.

Four tries on the night for Gloucester, but perhaps the most pleasing aspect was the commitment that Gloucester showed on the night, fronting up massively in defence, particularly when down to 14 men in the second half.

That was a crucial period of the game. Newcastle had the momentum and the crowd behind them. But Gloucester made light of the inferiority in numbers, and kept their line intact before moving downfield and clinching the game. It was a statement of intent. Concede at that point and it could have been a different game.

But no-one is getting too carried away. Next week brings another challenge as London Irish come to Kingsholm. It's another important game, but everyone at Gloucester Rugby will be looking forward to it – there are smiles on faces at Kingsholm once again!

On a bitterly cold night, the opening exchanges saw Newcastle have the upper hand in terms of possession, moving the ball wide in search of openings, but the Gloucester defence was well organised in these first few minutes and up to the task in hand.

For their part, the Cherry and Whites were looking to play from deep as has been their tactic of choice in recent months which made for exciting if slightly nervy rugby for the travelling fans.

But Gloucester gradually settled into the game and, as they built some momentum, took a deserved lead after 17 minutes.

Clean lineout ball was spun into midfield where Henry Purdy burst through. A despairing tap tackle by Sinoti denied the winger the try, but Andy Symons crashed over when the ball was recycled. Billy Twelvetrees had an easy conversion for 7-0.

The Cherry and Whites very nearly extended the lead shortly afterwards, Burns' lovely chip over the top finding Twelvetrees in space but a forward pass halted the move as Gloucester looked for the final pass.

But Gloucester did pounce on 24 minutes for their second try. A slick lineout move at the front saw Jeremy Thrush receive the ball unmarked and the big lock powered his way over from the 22. Twelvetrees added an excellent touchline conversion for 14-0 after 26 minutes.

Gloucester didn't exit cleanly from the restart though, and it almost cost them dear as Simon Hammersley was halted just short after a neat backs' move from the home team. A ferocious period of pressure ensued but the Cherry and White defence crucially held out.

And having survived the onslaught, Gloucester moved downfield and moved further ahead. After some powerful ball carrying from the pack, Henry Purdy provided some genuine skill, chipping over the top, kicking ahead and winning the chase to touch down. 19-0 after 36 minutes.

Gloucester looked set for a decent half-time lead, but there was still just enough time for the home team to hit back. A series of penalties led to a five metre lineout and Mark Wilson claimed the score after the catch and drive, Joel Hodgson converting.

It took the gloss ever so slightly off what had been a really good 40 minutes for Gloucester, but the blueprint had been established. Could the Cherry and Whites back it up in the second half and finish off the game?

Things started well as Newcastle allowed the kick-off to bounce and Lewis Ludlow seized possession and tore into the 22. The home team compounded the error by giving away a penalty and Billy Twelvetrees made no mistake for 22-7.

Another period of pressure then followed from the Falcons as they strove to get back into the game.

Gloucester were pinned back near their own line for a lengthy period and a yellow card was issued to Billy Twelvetrees for slapping the ball out of the scrum-half's hands.

The pressure was intense but, crucially, Gloucester's defence and discipline was good and the line held although at the expense of losing Jeremy Thrush to a Head Injury Assessment during this phase of play, Ed Slater replacing him.

Twelvetrees returned from the sinbin without any damage to the scoreboard and, with full numbers once again, Gloucester moved downfield and scored the bonus point try.

It was largely down to patient build-up play, the forwards earning their money as they made some hard yards to take play close to the Newcastle line before replacement prop Gareth Denman powered over. One for the front row union, Denman's first for the club and a key score on the night.

Twelvetrees added a superb touchline conversion and the game was as good as over. Newcastle tried bravely to attack from deep in the closing stages but the Gloucester defence was stifling and in no mood to concede even a consolation score.

The game ended with the Cherry and Whites pressing, and the final whistle saw the travelling fans celebrating long and loud.

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