

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2017

KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

**GLOUCESTER MAKE IT FIVE IN A ROW WITH COMFORTABLE
HOME WIN OVER EXILES**

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 39 LONDON IRISH 15

Five tries paved the way to Gloucester making it five Aviva Premiership wins in a row on Saturday as they took advantage of a red card for David Paice of London Irish, the Cherry and Whites securing a 39-15 win.

Gloucester teams of a recent vintage have followed up decent wins with a disappointing defeat in a game they really should have won. So, today's game against bottom placed London Irish, off the back of good wins against Saracens and Newcastle had banana skin written all over it.

However, despite not being at their best and while still missing a host of players due to injury, the Cherry and Whites delivered a professional performance to take the five Aviva Premiership points on offer today and temporarily move up to second place in the table.

The Exiles came to Kingsholm fighting for their lives and, in the case of David Paice, were a little too physical. The Irish skipper was sent off just before half-time for an ugly late hit on Willi Heinz and left his team-mates facing an uphill battle.

Gloucester did what they had to. They ran in five tries and could have scored several more, laying siege to the Irish line in the final ten minutes. A combination of over-complicating matters and some incredibly brave Irish defence kept the score-line respectable.

Accuracy in the red zone will be just one of a number of work-ons for Gloucester in training this week. They were far from perfect, but it's heartening to know that there is still so much to come from this group of players.

This last tranche of Premiership games has been a positive one, Gloucester will now look to take that momentum into Europe for the double-header against Zebre before rounding off 2017 with games against Wasps and Sale.

The first few minutes on Saturday passed by in a flurry of tactical kicking, up and unders and grubbers both utilised, but the most significant incident was Irish losing Luke McLean to a Head Injury assessment.

But the visitors were slightly unlucky after 5 minutes when a sweeping move down the left flank saw Scott Steele fall onto a loose ball in the Gloucester in-goal area. But the TMO spotted a knock-on by Tom Fowlie as he tried to gather the scoring pass.

There had been a hint of obstruction on Andy Symons in the build-up, so perhaps justice was done. But it was certainly a let off for the Cherry and Whites.

And they duly took full advantage. Billy Burns took the ball right up to the defensive line, almost slipped through a gap but offloaded superbly to Lewis Ludlow who cut a great line to break through before beating the last man to score. Billy Twelvetrees converted for 7-0.

The Exiles responded immediately. Wings Cokasaniga and Lewington combined well to take play into the Gloucester 22 where James Hanson was penalised for side entry at a ruck. Tommy Bell had an easy penalty for 7-3.

However, exactly the same offence, this time by an Irish player, gave Billy Twelvetrees the chance to respond in kind on 18 minutes and the Gloucester centre made no mistake as he restored the seven point gap at 10-3.

The visitors then made a hash of a high kick to allow Gloucester to bring more pressure. Hanson and Ackermann carried powerfully into the 22, Irish killed the ball and were perhaps lucky to escape a yellow card as Twelvetrees slotted his second penalty.

Discipline, or lack of it, continued to be the order of the day. From the restart, Josh Hohnneck was penalised for a high tackle but the usually reliable Tommy Bell dragged his penalty left of the uprights.

Gloucester continued to concede penalties though and it gave Irish the chance to launch a couple of five metre lineouts. The second proved to be efficient enough and Petrus du Plessis touched down for the Exiles first try of the afternoon.

It was developing into a fractious affair, there were two separate sets of scuffles after the whistle had blown and referee Tempest was forced to issue warnings to both sides.

As half-time approached, it was the Exiles' turn to be penalised, and Billy Burns drilled his kick close to the Irish line. The forwards came close but, when the ball was released, Burns was able to ghost outside his man and dive over. Twelvetrees added the extras for 20-8.

There was little time left, but still time for some drama. As Gloucester looked to attack, David Paice took out Willi Heinz with a high, late tackle off the ball. It was an ugly tackle and the referee had no option but to issue a red card.

It was a disappointing end to what had been a competitive half of rugby, and the Exiles were now obviously up against it. But adversity sometimes galvanizes teams and Gloucester's challenge was to take full advantage of the situation.

The Cherry and Whites had actually looked quite flat in the opening 40 minutes, not quite as on their game as last Friday at Newcastle but they had every incentive to take things up a notch.

And they wasted no time. Henry Purdy fielded a loose kick for touch and found Billy Twelvetrees. His long pass gave Billy Burns room to run, and he fended off a weak tackle to break clear and go under the posts. Twelvetrees' conversion made it 27-8.

Gloucester huffed and puffed for a while as they went in search of the bonus point try, but superiority of numbers finally counted, but it was a great angle taken by Jake Polledri to break clear having accelerated between two defenders and sprint untouched to the line. Twelvetrees had another easy conversion.

With the bonus point in the bag, perhaps Gloucester switched off a touch. They dropped the restart and gifted Irish A1 field position. It wasn't squandered as Teofilo Paulo drove over from close range with Bell converting for 34-15.

It was a brief respite for the visitors as Gloucester were quickly back on the front foot and Billy Burns dipped into his bag of tricks as he floated a perfectly-weighted cross-kick for Henry Purdy to catch and score.

That was it for the scoring despite Gloucester hammering away at the Irish line for the last ten minutes or so. There was a touch of white line fever taking place as the Cherry and Whites wasted a number of good openings but the job had already been done.

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