

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2018**

**SIXWAYS – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**ERRORS HAUNT GLOUCESTER AS WORCESTER TAKE THE WIN  
AT SIXWAYS**

**WORCESTER WARRIORS 25 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 15**

A missed opportunity for Gloucester to cement a top four place at Worcester on Saturday afternoon, as a strong first-half display from the Warriors paved the way for a 25-15 Aviva Premiership victory.

The Cherry and Whites came into the game knowing that a win would open up a gap between themselves and some of the other teams chasing a top four spot.

But the first 20 minutes were completely dominated by the home side who were high on confidence having won at Exeter last week. The Warriors threw the kitchen sink at Gloucester in those opening stages and had run in three tries in the first 19 minutes.

Gloucester were also forced to regroup as they lost Tom Marshall to an early injury, but dug deep to keep things relatively close at half-time, the home side leading by 22 points to 10.

And the Cherry and Whites were a different team after the resumption, playing the vast majority of the second half in the Worcester half. A try from Henry Trinder got Gloucester back into it and conjured up hopes of an unlikely comeback.

However, Chris Pennell made it a ten point margin again with a 66th minute penalty, only for Gloucester to lay siege to the Worcester 22. However, composure and accuracy proved to be lacking in the red zone and a hatful of chances were wasted.

The feeling on full time was one of what might have been. Worcester had certainly been the better team early on, but Gloucester did more than enough in the second half to get back on terms.

In the final reckoning, it wasn't to be though and everyone will know that the performance will have to be better at home to Wasps next weekend.

It was a dream start for the home side and most certainly for testimonial celebrant Jonny Arr. After a series of big ball carries took play into the Gloucester 22, the scrum-half found a gap around a ruck and scurried through to score despite referee Foley checking a potential block with the TMO. Chris Pennell converted for 7-0.

Arr then drilled a clearance kick into his own man to give the Cherry and Whites good field position. Gloucester couldn't create anything with ball in hand, but Worcester gave away a penalty and Billy Twelvetrees made no mistake.

However, Gloucester were quickly breached again. Clean lineout ball was moved quickly to the right where Bryce Heem made good ground. The Cherry and White defence was at sixes and sevens and Jamie Shillock cut back against the grain for the second try, Pennell converting again.

Gloucester were dealt a further blow as they lost Tom Marshall to injury, but benefitted from a stroke of luck after the restart. The Warriors spilled the ball in midfield and Matt Scott pounced to hack on, re-gather and power his way over under the posts. Twelvetrees converted for 14-10.

Worcester were looking really lively with ball in hand though and immediately powered their way towards the Gloucester line. Henry Trinder was yellow carded for not rolling away, and the home side took advantage of the superiority of numbers, a long pass from a five metre scrum exposing the narrow defence and finding an unmarked Josh Adams for the third try and a 19-10 lead.

Gloucester did have a couple of half chances in the minutes that followed, but couldn't finish them off and Trinder returned from the sinbin without any further changes to the score-line.

The Warriors were still looking the more likely to score though, and Gloucester were indebted to a fine tackle from Jason Woodward to prevent Josh Adams from causing further damage. However, Chris Pennell extended the lead on the stroke of half-time with an easy penalty.

It had been a tough first 40 minutes for the Cherry and Whites against an opponent who had looked fast, skilful and hungry. The early loss of Marshall had been a factor, leaving Gloucester with two men playing out of position on the wings and the home team were keen to take advantage of that fact.

But, to be fair, the Warriors deserved their half-time advantage and Gloucester were going to have to dig deep and pull out a big second 40 minutes to get back into this one.

Both teams made changes at half time. James Hanson was replaced by Motu Matu'u for Gloucester, while Donnacha O'Callaghan exited for Worcester, which would be a blessed relief for those listening in with Reflink!

Gloucester came out strongly and played with more cohesion than they had at any point before the break. The forwards carried well, before Billy Burns took the ball to the line before offloading to Henry Trinder who showed good strength to fight his way over. Twelvetrees couldn't convert from the touchline but Gloucester were back in it at 22-15.

And the Cherry and Whites almost stunned the Sixways crowd as the hour mark approached, a cross kick finding Jake Polledri whose inside pass sent Lewis Ludlow powering into the home 22, but the ball was lost in contact as Gloucester pressed.

And the home team almost rubbed salt into the wound by moving downfield and applying real pressure to the Gloucester 22, only for the final, potentially try-scoring, pass to be spilled with the line beckoning. But Pennell did extend the lead to 25-15 with a long-range penalty on 65 minutes.

Gloucester pushed hard in the final 15 minutes, and created several good scoring opportunities, but a lack of composure in and around the Worcester 22 cost them dear – on two separate occasions, kicks were turned down in favour of kicking to the corner only to lose the lineout.

Quite how important the missed losing bonus point will prove to be remains to be seen. For now, there is only the feeling of a missed opportunity on the day.

JC