

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 2018

KINGSHOLM – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY

**BATH GATECRASH KINGSHOLM PARTY ON DIFFICULT AFTERNOON
FOR GLOUCESTER**

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 20 BATH RUGBY 43

Gloucester bade farewell to Kingsholm on a painful note on Saturday afternoon, little going right as Bath punished every error that the Cherry and Whites made on their way to a 20-43 Aviva Premiership victory.

It was a day when, despite a massive amount of effort being put in, Gloucester just couldn't quite get it right on the day and deliver in front of a sell-out crowd.

At one point in the first half, a TV graphic pointed out that Bath had been in the Gloucester 22 for 2% of the half – yet they'd scored four tries. The Cherry and Whites were ruthlessly punished for not looking after the ball well enough.

It was a professional job done by Bath who took an early lead and defended it comfortably in the final reckoning. Gloucester did threaten to fight their way back into the game on a couple of occasions, only for the visitors to respond.

In hindsight, having to chase the game from so early on played right into Bath's hands and the visitors certainly took full advantage.

It's certainly a missed opportunity for Gloucester. With Sale losing down at Exeter, the door was open to clinch a top six place, but it was slammed rudely shut and Bath are now right back in the mix as well.

The challenge next week is a big one, away at Saracens, but Gloucester have been known to rise to the big occasion and will be looking to right the wrongs of today and finish the season on a positive note.

The crowd had barely taken their seats on the day when Bath struck. Rhys Priestland made the initial inroads when he wasn't held in the tackle, Matt Banahan made good ground but it was hooker Tom Dunn who smashed over from close range, Rhys Priestland converting.

It was a blow, but Gloucester thought they'd responded straight away after a series of assaults on the Bath line. However, Lewis Ludlow was penalised for a double movement, much to the dismay of the home crowd. It was a pivotal moment.

The Cherry and Whites enjoyed more good pressure in the minutes that followed, but couldn't break through and Jason Woodward was perhaps lucky to escape a yellow card when he took Kahn Fotulai'I out in the air when the Bath scrum-half caught his chip ahead.

And Bath then extended their lead on their second visit to the Gloucester 22. Charlie Ewels set the tone with a big hit on Henry Trinder, but it was sleight of hand from Priestland that put Francois Louw through a gap and the flanker returned the favour for the fly-half to score and then convert his own try.

It just wasn't happening for Gloucester at this point; they were getting into good positions only for handling errors to halt their momentum. However, they finally got some reward when Twelvetrees slotted a 22nd minute penalty after strong scrummaging from the Gloucester pack.

Gloucester got straight back on the front foot, but were then dealt a hammer blow. Moving dangerously towards the Bath 22, a loose pass was picked off by Aled Brew and the winger ran it back from 60 metres. Priestland converted for 3-21.

The Cherry and Whites badly needed a response and got one two minutes later as Ed Slater saw a gap a few metres out after the backs made good ground down both flanks, and the skipper powered over. Twelvetrees added the conversion.

However, Bath promptly stunned Gloucester once again. Tom Homer received the ball in midfield after Gloucester kicked loosely ahead, and scythed his way through a couple of half tackles to score a memorable solo try for 10-26.

Twelvetrees narrowed the gap to 13-26 with a late penalty, but it was a shell-shocked Kingsholm crowd as the teams went into half-time.

The most frustrating aspect of the game was that Bath had scored almost all their points off Gloucester turnovers. The Cherry and Whites looked to have points in them, but their accuracy, or lack of, was hurting them.

The intangibles also seemed to be going against the home team, the disallowed try for Ludlow a case in point. But that was history, Gloucester needed a massive second half.

However, it was Bath who drew first blood, a couple of soft penalties giving Priestland a shot at goal and the Welsh international made no mistake for 13-29.

Gloucester made several changes in a bid to change the momentum, but it was a brilliant run from Ben Morgan that opened up Bath on 51 minutes. The number eight powered into the 22 before a long floated pass put Jason Woodward into the corner. Twelvetrees converted magnificently from the touchline.

But, once again, Bath struck immediately. Gloucester didn't exit well from the restart and Bath were able to apply the pressure in the 22 until they managed to get Cooper Vuna one on one with Ben Vellacott and the winger was just too strong. Priestland did like Twelvetrees and converted from the touchline.

Things became desperate for Gloucester as the clock ticked on, and it was no real surprise that the final Bath try was an interception, for James Wilson, as the Cherry and Whites attacked from their own line. Freddie Burns converted to round off the 20-43 win.

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