

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2018**

**KINGSHOLM – GALLAGHER PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**SECOND HALF EFFORT FROM GLOUCESTER RUGBY ENOUGH  
TO DOWN THE BEARS**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 35 BRISTOL BEARS 13**

Gloucester Rugby took a long time to get going against Bristol Bears at Kingsholm on Friday evening and a half-time deficit was a worry. But the Cherry and Whites turned things around after the interval and ran out 35-13 in this Gallagher Premiership encounter.

At half-time, things were certainly not going according to plan. The Cherry and Whites lacked nothing in the effort department, however their execution was way off where it needed to be.

Bristol, for their part, dug deep in defence and looked lively with ball in hand, often attacking from deep within their own 22. They created one good chance, took it and went into half-time with a deserved lead.

At that point, the Gloucester Rugby players had to take a long hard look deep within themselves. But, crucially, they struck right at the start of the second half, Bristol's indiscipline finally caught up with them and the Cherry and Whites didn't look back.

The visitors did lose the influential John Afoa to a head injury and the similarly important George Smith to a yellow card, but they unraveled in spectacular fashion. The Cherry and Whites ran in five second half tries, to total 32 unanswered points, and were comfortable winners in the final reckoning.

The victory takes Gloucester Rugby to the top of the Gallagher Premiership table, for the time being at least, and maintains the unbeaten record for now. Tougher tests await but it's job done for now.

Bristol actually started the game brightly, looking to keep the ball in hand as they sought to attack from their own 22. A couple of charged down kicks caused alarms for the visitors but they remained composed in the face of some dogged defence.

But it was Gloucester Rugby who opened the scoring, a 9th minute penalty from Billy Twelvetrees the reward for some patient build-up play. However, this was immediately cancelled out by an 11th minute effort from Ian Madigan.

It was nip and tuck, but the visitors had an escape on 15 minutes as they were driven off their own scrum in front of their posts but Gloucester Rugby couldn't capitalize and lost the ball in contact.

But the visitors stunned Kingsholm as they took an 18<sup>th</sup> minute lead. A cunning grubber from Madigan found Steve Luatua on the right wing and his offload inside sent Luke Morahan sprinting to the line unopposed. The Shed thought it was forward but the score stood and Madigan converted for 3-10.

Bristol were certainly playing with some abandon, and gleefully countered from just outside their own 22 when a Gloucester Rugby lineout misfired, Ryan Edwards showing good pace on the left flank only for the home defence to get back and nullify the threat.

The play from the Cherry and Whites was error-strewn at this point, and it was playing into Bristol's hands. A counter from deep ended up in the ball carrier holding on in the tackle and Madigan had an easy penalty for a 3-13 lead after 29 minutes.

Gloucester Rugby turned down a number of kickable penalties in the red zone, and the Bears somehow escaped a yellow card. The Cherry and Whites were desperate for the try but came away with nothing. It was a big moment as the Bears held out.

And, despite one late surge down the left wing from Banahan which ended in the ball going forward as the winger offloaded, that was it for the scoring at half-time with the visitors good value for their lead.

It has been a wasteful 40 minutes for the Cherry and Whites, who were guilty of turning over possession on multiple occasions while the visitors had converted the one good chance they had created and defended heroically, albeit pushing the letter of the law all the way.

Would Gloucester Rugby live to regret turning down kickable points in the minutes leading up to half-time? Should Bristol have had a man sinbinned. One thing was for sure, the Cherry and Whites would have to up their game in the second 40 minutes.

And Gloucester Rugby started brilliantly, claiming the restart and powering into the Bristol 22. Jake Polledri came close but it was Gerbrandt Grobler who forced his way over under the posts from close range. Billy Twelvetrees converted for 10-13.

Gloucester Rugby suddenly had self-belief and poured forward again. Bristol had been walking a tightrope in terms of discipline, and yet another penalty near the line saw George Smith finally yellow-carded.

The Cherry and Whites wasted no time in taking advantage, as slick hands saw Charlie Sharples loop around Cipriani and score under the posts. Twelvetrees had an easy conversion for a 17-13 lead.

And the third try wasn't long in coming. The Gloucester Rugby pack launched a powerful catch and drive and, with advantage being played, Callum Braley went down the blindside and put Charlie Sharples over in the corner. 22-13 and the home crowd breathed a sigh of relief.

Smith returned from the sinbin, but the damage was done. Ed Slater pounced from close range for the bonus point try and Bristol's goose looked to be cooked.

The visitors rallied to keep the damage to a minimum, but shot themselves in the foot on the stroke of full-time, knocking on when attacking from their own line and Gloucester Rugby made the most of it, Matt Banahan showing nice feet to touch down in the corner and complete the 35-13 win.

JC