

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2018**

**ASHTON GATE – PREMIERSHIP RUGBY CUP**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY SLIP TO DISAPPOINTING PREMIERSHIP  
RUGBY CUP DEFEAT AT BRISTOL**

**BRISTOL BEARS 21 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 13**

It was a Premiership Rugby Cup encounter low on quality and moments of excitement at Ashton Gate on Friday evening, but the Bristol Bears had enough of an edge up front to secure a 21-13 victory.

It was a disappointing evening for the Cherry and Whites as they came into the game looking to build on last weekend's excellent win over the Wasps. However, they never really got going on the night.

Bristol were similarly sluggish in the first half and very little rugby was played in either 22. But one key line break from Ryan Edwards was enough to give the home side a 7-0 half time lead.

What was apparent though, even in that first half, was that the home pack had the advantage up front and that was a key factor as the game wore on and the Bears opened up a winning margin.

Gloucester Rugby did finish well, but it wasn't quite enough to earn a losing bonus point and the trip home will give plenty of opportunity to think about what might have been.

Next week though provides an immediate chance to bounce back. Northampton Saints come to Kingsholm in round three of the Premiership Rugby Cup and a home win would keep hopes of a semi-final spot alive.

The first few minutes were very much all about the teams sizing each other up.

Bristol enjoyed more possession, but it was very lateral and the Gloucester Rugby defence was up to the job as most of the game was played in the middle third of the pitch.

The Cherry and Whites had a couple of half-chances, one promising catch and drive came to nothing as did a break down the blindside from Henry Purdy, but the accuracy to convert the chances wasn't quite there. The first quarter came and went without any score.

However, Bristol finally created a bit of space on the left as Callum Sheedy freed Ryan Edwards after a turnover on halfway. The winger showed his pace as he cut inside and swerved towards the posts, but the Gloucester Rugby defence got back to snuff out the threat at the expense of a penalty.

The home team opted for an attacking scrum in the shadow of the posts, and swiftly forced another couple of penalties and, after a warning was issued by the referee, number eight Nick Haining picked up from the base and drove over. Callum Sheedy converted for a 7-0 lead after 29 minutes.

Gloucester Rugby simply hadn't got into the game at this point, handling errors hurting them badly, and were certainly not getting on the right side of referee Adam Leal as the penalty count started to rise and the home team stayed on the front foot.

The Gloucester Rugby scrum was also starting to come under real pressure and, when another scrum went down on 34 minutes, former Bristol prop Kyle Traynor was yellow carded.

The Cherry and Whites survived the immediate danger while down to 14 men, and did finally spend some time in the Bristol 22, but there was no hint of a score and half time came with the home team still up by 7 points to nil.

It had been a very subdued first half. Bristol had dominated possession and territory but, apart from the Edwards break that led to the try, had not looked like creating much.

They did have the advantage at the break, though, and Gloucester Rugby were going to have to lift things in order to get back into the game.

The Cherry and Whites did start the second half in more promising fashion, Owen Williams slotting an early penalty. Unfortunately, Ben Vellacott was then lost to injury but replacement Charlie Chapman did make a couple of early breaks.

Gloucester Rugby were now finally starting to ask some questions in attack, and a prolonged assault in the Bristol 22 resulted in a second penalty for Williams on 50 minutes which narrowed the gap to 7-6.

A spell of open play followed, with both teams spending time in the opposition half, but no further score came from it and as flurry of replacements took place including Bristol introducing Charles Piutau for his first taste of action at Ashton Gate.

Unfortunately, the former All Black's first carry saw Owen Williams bravely take him low and then stay down for a worryingly long period of time before being able to continue after treatment.

Jaco Kriel was then sent on to make his Gloucester Rugby debut, and the Springbok was swiftly into the action as he won a penalty at the breakdown which Williams unfortunately couldn't land from long distance. Callum Sheedy then proceeded to miss a much easier effort for the home side.

Frustratingly though, Bristol were still getting the edge at scrum time and two penalty awards set up the position from which a catch and drive resulted in the Bears' second try, scored by Dan Thomas. The visitors thought that the ball was held up, but the score stood and Tiff Eden converted for a 14-6 lead with 12 minutes left.

Gloucester Rugby tried to respond, and created a good attacking opportunity, but a loose pass was picked off by Ryan Edwards and it took a superb chase from Olly Thorley to bring him down. However, Aaron Hinkley was adjudged to have killed the ball at the following ruck and was yellow carded.

Gloucester Rugby were once again a man light in the scrum; the Bears needed no second invitation and drove over for Jake Heenan to score, Callum Sheedy adding the extras.

The Cherry and Whites did have the final word as they spent the final few minutes in the Bristol 22, finally earning a penalty try as Ryan Edwards barged Henry Purdy off the ball as he looked to touch down a chip from Dom Coetzer.

Overall though, a disappointing evening at the office.

JC