

## **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2019**

**TWICKENHAM STOOP – GALLAGHER PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY DOMINATE HARLEQUINS AT THE STOOP  
IN 29-7 WIN**

**HARLEQUINS 7 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 29**

A week after slipping to a disappointing defeat on the road at Bristol, Gloucester Rugby bounced back in the best possible way on Sunday with an impressive 29-7 Gallagher Premiership victory away at high-flying Harlequins.

The bonus point win is an important one to keep Gloucester Rugby's top four hopes alive.

What a difference a week, or rather ten days, makes. Having tasted defeat away at Bristol last Friday, few outside of Kingsholm would have given Gloucester Rugby much of a chance at Harlequins this afternoon.

However, the Cherry and Whites delivered one of their most clinical and efficient performances of the season to comfortably come away from the Stoop with a bonus point victory.

Comfortably because Gloucester Rugby, when they do their analysis this week, will look upon quite a few try-scoring opportunities that they didn't convert.

The hosts fired a few shots in the first half, and will quite rightly feel that it could have been a far different game had they taken advantage of some good field position in the first half. But Gloucester Rugby hung tough when it mattered and gradually took control.

There were plenty of fine individual performances but, on the day, it was a really complete team performance – a massive effort from the pack allied to some fine attacking play from the backs with ball in hand. Combine that with physical defence and you have a winning formula.

And the third win from this block of four Gallagher Premiership matches was much needed. The defeat at Ashton Gate last weekend, plus results over the weekend, meant that the Cherry and Whites badly needed something from today, and five points is just the ticket.

With a week off next weekend, Gloucester Rugby will return to take on Wasps at Kingsholm on Saturday 23 March, and will do so in good spirits.

Conditions were testing come game time at the Stoop. A swirling wind was going to test all the kickers and showers were threatening.

And it was a slightly inauspicious start. The Cherry and Whites overthrew their first lineout, which gifted possession to Quins and led to a spell of pressure in the Gloucester Rugby 22.

A deliberate knock-on led to a close-range lineout, but the home team knocked on in midfield.

However, Gloucester Rugby weathered the storm and took the lead with their first real attack. Nothing looked on for Jason Woodward when he received the ball on the right, but he bumped off Mike Brown and sprinted down the line to score. Billy Twelvetrees converted for a 0-7 lead after 10 minutes.

Ollie Thorley then showed the form that has made him a household name this season, returning a Dave Lewis kick in electric fashion. Tom Marshall and Franco Mostert took the ball on, before Danny Cipriani floated a perfect long pass for Ruan Ackermann to dive over. Twelvetrees again converted superbly into the teeth of the wind for 0-14.

However, Quins almost hit back straightaway as Alex Dombrandt burst through in midfield to split the defence and Tom Marshall was yellow carded for a deliberate knock-on. Quins went to the corner again, but knocked on once more in a promising position.

It had been a good few minutes for the Cherry and Whites, and a Danny Cipriani show and go almost resulted in a third try but his grubber kick through as play went into the Quins 22 was well covered.

The wind was playing havoc with box kicks, and a couple drifted straight into touch to allow Quins to set up camp in the Gloucester Rugby half. But the defence remained solid, and the home team bemoaned more handling errors when well set, and Marshall returned to the field of play.

Cipriani almost opened up Quins again with a cunning grubber as the Stoop crowd started to get frustrated, Nathan Earle just getting back to deny Mark Atkinson, but Billy Twelvetrees extended the lead to 0-17 with a 36<sup>th</sup> minute penalty.

Quins tried desperately to respond before half-time, but the Cherry and Whites fronted up once again in defence to repel what was thrown at them and made it into half-time with their 0-17 lead intact.

Given that they'd played most of the half playing into a strong wind, Gloucester Rugby could feel pleased with the way the game was unfolding. There was a significant increase in intensity from last weekend, and the team was looking dangerous in attack. Indeed, a couple of further scoring chances had gone begging.

There would inevitably be a fight-back from the home team in the second half. Could the Cherry and Whites keep their noses in front?

Quins sent on Joe Marler and Marcus Smith at half time in a bid to change their fortunes, but Gloucester Rugby threatened first as Jason Woodward made a dangerous break, linking well with Tom Marshall only for Smith to come up with an important interception.

Neither team could really gain the upper hand as play ebbed and flowed, but the Cherry and Whites strung together a couple of dangerous backs moves and Joe Marchant was yellow carded for a high tackle on the flying Ollie Thorley.

And the superiority in numbers in the backs paid off. Quins pulled down a driving maul and, with advantage being played, swift hands allowed Jason Woodward to fire out a long pass to Marshall to put the winger over in the corner and extend the lead to 0-22 after 53 minutes.

Gloucester Rugby then turned the screw as they went in search of a try scoring bonus point. A couple of really good chances came and went but, finally, from a five metre scrum, Willi Heinz put Danny Cipriani over. Twelvetrees added an excellent conversion.

Despite the outcome now being resolved, Quins kept going and finally got some reward for their efforts as Nathan Earle touched down a kick ahead for their only try of the game, Marcus Smith converting.

But they had to work awfully hard for it, the Gloucester Rugby defence proving to be a tough nut to crack even in the those final few minutes.

But, overall for Gloucester Rugby, job done and on to the next challenge.