

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2019**

**KINGSHOLM – GALLAGHER PREMIERSHIP RUGBY**

**SENSATIONAL COMEBACK SEES GLOUCESTER RUGBY  
TAKE WEST COUNTRY SPOILS AGAINST BATH**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 27 BATH RUGBY 23**

Things looked grim at Kingsholm when Bath Rugby took a 0-17 first half lead, but a phenomenal second-half performance saw Gloucester Rugby earn a memorable 27-23 Gallagher Premiership victory over their local rivals in front of a sell-out crowd.

These local derbies seldom disappoint and this one was no exception. In perfect conditions, both teams battled like gladiators, trading blows throughout the 80 minutes, until the home team, in front of a delirious Kingsholm crowd, stood victorious at the final whistle.

It was a game that had everything and, once their team found their feet, the home supporters more than played their part, enthusiastically roaring their heroes on.

The win leaves the Cherry and Whites on the verge of qualification for the play-offs. A few well-earned days off beckon before the team report back and prepare for the trip to Worcester. An exciting end to the season lies ahead.

A victory over Bath at Kingsholm had been a long time coming, and the winning streak for the visitors looked set to be continued as the visitors took total control of the first quarter.

The sheer physicality of the visitors, combined with accuracy with ball in hand had the Cherry and Whites on the back foot for almost all of the first 20 minutes; they literally couldn't get hold of the ball.

The next 20 minutes were much better as the Cherry and Whites worked their way back into the game, but the Bath defence was as physical as their attacking play. Gloucester Rugby simply couldn't break through.

But the game changed just before half-time. Bath were attempting to run down the clock and go into half-time with their line intact, when they were penalised for sealing off at the ruck.

Gifted a free shot, Gloucester Rugby made the most of it, as Josh Hohnock scored. It was a massive boost, particularly as the Cherry and Whites swooped early in the second half. The game had turned on its head.

The rest of the second half was all Gloucester Rugby, with the Bath attacking threat neutered. It was just a case of whether they could claw back the deficit – and they duly did. It was one of those days to be looked back on fondly in the future.

It was a dream start for the visitors who dominated possession from the off.

The Gloucester Rugby defence looked to be holding up well, but a lovely floated cross kick from Freddie Burns found Ruaridh McConnochie on the right and the winger caught it on the full to score. Burns converted from the touchline.

Bath continued to keep hold of the ball, and again threatened the Gloucester Rugby line as they kept the ball alive well and showed accuracy. Burns extended the lead with a 10<sup>th</sup> minute penalty and the Cherry and Whites trailed 0-10 without hardly having touched the ball.

Burns was having a great time at his former stomping ground, and pinned the Cherry and Whites back with a cunning kick that Tom Seabrook had to carry into touch a few metres out. A big defensive set followed and Matt Banahan had to produce a huge hit to take Joe Cokanasiga into touch at the corner.

It was one-way traffic though; one wave of Bath attack after another, with Gloucester Rugby simply unable to slow the momentum, and it came as no surprise when Tom Dunn extended the lead as he powered over, supported by a number of team-mates. Burns converted for 0-17.

Gloucester Rugby duly looked to hit back, and forced a couple of five metre lineouts which were held out, before losing the ball in contact near the line. Ben Morgan then came close with a rampaging run, but the Cherry and Whites couldn't press home their advantage despite laying siege to the Bath line.

The Cherry and Whites continued to throw everything at the visitors, but the Bath defence was tremendous; tackling Henry Purdy into touch at the corner as another chance came and went. Willi Heinz then thought he was over, but play came back for a Gloucester Rugby penalty...

Tempers started to fray as the Kingsholm crowd started to seethe at the seeming injustice of some of the refereeing decisions, and still Gloucester Rugby couldn't break through.

But Bath played a dangerous game as they cynically tried to run down the clock near their own line, and were penalised for sealing off.

It led to one last chance for the Cherry and Whites, and it proved to be crucial as Danny Cipriani found Josh Hohnock with a lovely short pass and the prop went through a gap to open up Gloucester Rugby's account. Twelvetrees added the conversion to make the half-time score 7-17.

It had been a bruising half of rugby, and that score on the stroke of the interval could prove to be pivotal. After being rocked by Bath's opening salvoes, the Cherry and Whites had hammered away continually in the Bath and, to have come away without any points, would have been devastating.

As it was, Gloucester Rugby now had a glimmer of hope and a possible way back into the game. The next score would be crucial.

An overthrown lineout almost helped the Cherry and Whites to a fantastic start. Mark Atkinson gathered well and carried powerfully. Beno Obano put in a no arms tackle and was yellow carded before Ben Morgan was held up off the floor as he drove over.

The five metre scrum saw Bath a man light and the Cherry and Whites pounced. Billy Twelvetrees came close with a surging run, but it was a flat pass from Heinz to Ruan Ackermann that saw the flanker plunge over. Twelvetrees converted to narrow the gap to 14-17 and game on.

However, Gloucester Rugby were duly penalised for tackling a man in the air and Freddie Burns confidently stroked over the penalty to ease Bath a bit further clear at 14-20.

Obano returned from the sinbin, but the Cherry and Whites then unleashed one of their very best backs moves. Cipriani pulled the strings, but Matt Banahan made the clean break before putting Henry Purdy over in the corner.

Twelvetrees couldn't convert from the touchline, and Burns then dropped an important goal to make the score 19-23 on the hour mark.

Still plenty of rugby to be played, and the outcome was still very much in the balance. But Gloucester Rugby had their backs up and they weren't going to let this one get away from them.

Once again Cipriani was involved as Gloucester Rugby took the lead for the first time, and so, once again, was Matt Banahan. The pair linked up and found Tom Seabrook flying down the right wing, the young winger beating Tom Homer's despairing tackle to dive over triumphantly in the corner.

Twelvetrees couldn't convert, but did add a vital penalty with just over 10 minutes to play as the Cherry and Whites closed out a hugely important win and send their supporters off for what will probably be quite some celebration party.