

COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Gloucestershire v Kent
Saturday 23rd May 2015
County Championship Division 1 South
Cleve RFC, Mangotsfield, Bristol

Gloucestershire 20 Kent 11

Gloucestershire were too strong for a dogged Kent side and retained their place in the top division of the County Championship. In so doing they sent Kent back to Division 2.

In the first County Championship game played at Cleve RFC, and the first in the south of the county in twenty years, Gloucestershire dominated the second half but were unable to convert countless half-chances into points and although they never looked like losing the final quarter was nervous and frantic.

Mike Wilcox opened the scoring with a fine try after 54 seconds. Kent kicked off and Gloucestershire ran the ball back, forwards and backs combining in a sweeping movement which the Cinderford fullback rounded off. Callum Sheedy's conversion hit the bar.

Gloucestershire piled on the pressure and on 13 minutes the forwards mauled from a lineout in the Kent '22'. Danny Hodge charged out of the maul and fed the supporting Danny Pointon who crashed over in the corner. The conversion missed but Gloucestershire were well worth their 10-0 lead.

As the first quarter ended Alex Gallagher kicked a penalty for Kent. Cinderford wing Leo Fielding was close to scoring but the next try was claimed by Kent centre Fred Tila. The try went unconverted but Kent enjoyed a period in control. Close to half time Sheedy and Gallagher exchanged penalties and Gloucestershire went into the break leading 13-11.

Gloucestershire attacked from the start of the second half and the forwards dominated the Kent pack. Virtually the entire half was spent in the Kent '22' yet handling errors and well-organised defence prevented Gloucestershire increasing their lead.

Ten minutes after the restart a crosskick found Fielding close to the Kent line but his pass inside was intercepted and the visitors raced to the Gloucestershire line. The scare was averted but it indicated the fragility of the Gloucestershire lead.

Nerves were eased shortly afterwards when Fielding finished off a multi-phase move. Showing great determination he cut inside his opposite number and powered through three defenders to reach over for the try. Sheedy converted to put Gloucestershire two scores ahead.

Gloucestershire squandered several chances in the final quarter but held out for a satisfying if not entirely convincing win. The performance didn't matter as much as the result and there was great relief at the final whistle that Gloucestershire had avoided relegation for the fourth successive season.

Scorers:

Gloucestershire:

Tries – Wilcox (1), Pointon (13), Fielding (54)

Conversions – Sheedy (55)

Penalties – Sheedy (32)

Drop Goals –

Kent:

Tries – Tila (27)

Conversions –

Penalties – Gallagher (20, 37)

Drop Goals –

Teams:

Gloucestershire: Mike Wilcox (Cinderford); Nevaro Codlin (Coney Hill), Sam Hanks (Cinderford), George Boulton (Hartpury College), Leo Fielding (Cinderford); Callum Sheedy (Cinderford), Danny Pointon (Cinderford); Joe Smart (Cinderford), Chris Bundy (Cinderford), Tim Brockett (Hartpury College), Dan Hodge (Cross Keys), Gavin Curry (Clifton), George Mills (Cinderford), Marcus Brown (Cinderford), George Evans (Cinderford) (Captain).

Replacements used: Sam Wilkes (Cinderford), Mike Flook (Hartpury College), Ed King (Cinderford), Loti Molitika (Coventry). Not used: Ryan Roach (Cleve), Stefan Hawley (Cinderford), Alex Frame (Cinderford)

Kent: Jonathan Murray (Tonbridge Juddians); Temi Okenla (Gravesend), Ben Hough (Westcombe Park), Fred Tila (Medway), Kieran Leeper (Westcombe Park); Alex Gallagher (Blackheath), Charlie Edwards (Old Elthamians); Jimmy Green (Canterbury), Neil Wakefield (Canterbury), Terry Read (Charlton Park), Royce Cadman (Canterbury), Dale Bellinger (Westcombe Park), Tom Bird (Gravesend), Hamish Barton (Westcombe Park) (Captain), George Oram (Blackheath).

Replacements (all used): Bill Sandison (Medway), Bob Nanson (Aylesford Bulls), Nick Porter (Old Elthamians), Richard Corr (Canterbury), Greg Smith (Dover), Guy Hilton (Canterbury), Ryan Fuller (Richmond)

Referee: Anthony Woodthorpe