

THE CITIZEN

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1983

MORE LIKE IT, GLOUCESTER !

The patient is responding to treatment very nicely, thank-you.

Spectators, like concerned relatives, gathered round Kingsholm last night to see whether a perfect summer, a new captain and all the close season talk, could heal the wounds of last season's disastrous campaign.

Was the patient so ill that the will would be read ?

Happily, no.

In fact Stroud – splendid local opponents and the perfect test for the season's opener – will willingly testify to Gloucester's greater commitment and refreshing, if not totally convincing, back play.

PROFICIENT

The forwards looked proficient, better at rucking than mauling, and full of endeavour. There was good support play, especially leading up to Orwin's final try, while the set pieces – the beginning and end of rugby – went very much in favour of the Cherry and Whites.

There were four Gloucester tries, each excellent in their own right, but supporters will, of course, reserve judgment until the final whistle at St. Helen's tomorrow. Then a true assessment may be made.

Stroud, as anticipated, provided a stern test. Totally outplayed in the first half and lucky to still be in contention when trailing by 15 points to six at half-time, responded splendidly in the second half and camouflaged the shortcomings of their pack by making the best use of poor possession to put Gloucester under some pressure.

Davis and Parsloe worked industriously to make chances for Bird and Breeze and twice Mogg had to cover his winger when an overlap threatened, to cut out potential try scoring moves.

There were sound performances by Mike Camm at full-back while the front-row did well and Wynter did his best against mounting odds.

STERN TEST

But it was difficult to make headway against a stern Gloucester front five. They scrummaged soundly and there was little to be seen of them in the loose – a sure sign, old forwards say, that they are doing their jobs. Gadd played particularly well in the back-row.

It is early days, but Baker and Hamlin might yet make a good partnership. Baker made several decisive breaks, one of which led to an excellent try by eel-like Pritchard.

Hamlin showed excellent touches but needs to take the ball on the burst to exploit the deceptions of Taylor and the fleetness of Mogg.

Smith gave an excellent performance at full-back, ever willing to make the extra man, but is again in need of a quicker ball to make the best of Price and Pritchard.

While the game never reached great heights there were four excellently constructed tries and particularly good performances from Orwin and Brain.

They had obviously scrummaged well and dominated the line-outs with Orwin being the outstanding player. He has all the attributes to play at the highest level – he is not only skilful but aggressive – and would be my man to have a go at the Welsh when the chips are down. We will have to wait and see what happens tomorrow !

SCORERS

Gloucester: Tries, Price, Pritchard, Smith and Orwin. Conversions: Smith (two). Penalties: Smith (two).

Stroud : Penalties: Bird (two).