

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1983

GLOUCESTER REIGN SUPREME AS DARK BLUES BOW OUT

GLOUCESTER 45 Pts., OXFORD UNIVERSITY 12 Pts.

It was a black day for the Dark Blues as Gloucester handed out a real drubbing at Kingsholm.

They scored eight tries and there could have been many more, but for an heroic defence and wasted opportunities.

Reluctantly, it appears that the Oxford authorities have asked to be released from Gloucester's fixture list and end fixtures dating back to 1911.

They feel that they can no longer offer strong enough opposition, particularly in the forward battle, and that the fixture serves either side little purpose.

It certainly would be sad because there is surely a place for the Varsity's wholehearted approach, endless running and keen tackling, on Gloucester's list.

Saturday's game reinforced the view that these days Student packs are set for an uphill struggle against forwards in the first class game.

Gloucester, as expected outscrummaged, out jumped and outflanked the Dark Blues.

With little possession, Oxford were forced into the defensive for much of the match.

On a good day for running rugby, Gloucester did their best to keep the game open and their support play throughout was excellent.

Not quite so good was some of the passing and several promising movements broke down through poor handling and mistimed passes.

Never in trouble, Gloucester really made their superiority count when Oxford had been reduced to 14 men by injury.

It was Oxford's own fault. They had travelled with only one replacement and in the first-half lost British Lions full-back Hugo MacNeill with concussion.

Outside-half Stuart Barnes suffered a shoulder muscle injury in the second-half and would have come off but for the loss of flanker Steve Swaffield. He was stretchered off but happily suffered nothing worse than a severe knee strain. There was a slight injury scare for flanker John Gadd in the first-half. Gadd, out to impress England selectors Derek Morgan and John Finlan and coach Dick Greenwood, had to have a badly swollen hand strapped up.

Afterwards, though, Gadd confirmed that the injury was nothing more than bruising and would not keep him out of action.

For Gloucester, there were one or two bonuses to emerge. Centre Paul Taylor gained a great deal more confidence from his performance and his direct running was always a danger to the Oxford defence.

And outside-half Mike Hamlin surely established himself as a regular goal-kicker after a 100 per cent success rate of five conversions and a penalty.

Gloucester's haul comfortably took them past 300 points for the season although Saturday will chiefly be remembered for the final appearance of the Dark Blues.

Fittingly, it was Oxford who had the final say with a consolation try a minute from the end scored by replacement Domenic Hogg.

Gloucester: Tries, T. Smith (2), Baker, Boyle (2), Price (2), Taylor.
Cons.; Hamblin (5), Pen.; Hamlin.

Oxford University: Try, Hogg. Con.; Barnes. Pen.; Barnes. Drop-goal,
Barnes.

Man of the Match: Paul Taylor, a sure and confident performance.

JC