

THE CITIZEN

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1983

GLOUCESTER HIT BACK TO SNATCH VICTORY

GLOUCESTER 21 Pts., CHELTENHAM 16 Pts.

Cheltenham looked well set for their first win over Gloucester since 1978 midway through the first-half at Kingsholm last night.

Gloucester's smallest crowd of the season had seen Cheltenham, playing with commitment and confidence, open up a 12 points lead by the 22nd minute.

Gloucester, for their part, looked ill at ease and were playing without drive or determination. Their game was riddled with mistakes and Cheltenham looked more interested in winning.

But in the second-half it all went wrong for the Town as Gloucester put their game together. They played some good pressure rugby, with Paul Webb kicking sensibly for position and running the ball from close in.

Cheltenham's discipline cracked under the pressure and they started to give away penalties. Full back Paul Ford took full advantage.

In contrast to their ragged opening, Gloucester's pack exerted some pressure in the second-half. They proved more durable than the Cheltenham eight, were quicker to the loose ball and used their advantage through Fidler in the line-out.

Cheltenham looked a well beaten side by the final whistle – a dramatic change from a confident opening which saw them score a try four minutes into the game.

Gloucester were in an awful muddle in midfield, centre Paul Keegan raced clear and Nick Price, chasing back, was unable to clear up a loose ball and Keegan grabbed the touchdown.

It was another dreadful error two minutes into the second-half which gave Cheltenham their second try. A wild pass from Rob Wilmott put the defence under pressure, Ford could not tidy up a rolling ball and flanker Chris Scot scored.

That was Cheltenham's last flourish, however. Ford's second and third penalties pulled the Town's lead back to 16-15 and it became a matter of time before Gloucester took over.

The pressure told as Gloucester swept the ball across the Cheltenham defence and Cormack O'Donoghue went over in the corner – although there was a suspicion of a knock-on in the final stages.

Gloucester scored the best try of the night in the first-half when Paul Taylor raced over from a scrum close in as the defence were covering Price.

Cheltenham may well count themselves unlucky for in injury time in the first half left wing Withcombe rounded off a flowing move, but lost the ball as he crossed the line.

It was another below par performance for Gloucester but to their credit they came back when things were looking bleak.

Dave Spencer had a lively game in the loose, Bob Phillips scrummaged effectively and Webb and Taylor had their moments in the backs.

Gloucester: Tries, Taylor, O'Donoghue. Cons., Ford (2). Pens., Ford (3).

Cheltenham: Tries, Keegan, Scott. Con., Minett. Pens. Minett (2).