

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1983

A GIFT FOR THE TIGERS

LEICESTER 30 Pts., GLOUCESTER 20 Pts.

Christmas came a little early at Welford-rd. as Gloucester made a seasonal gift of this match to the Tigers.

Gloucester's impressive forwards dominated the game to a great extent, but by a series of mistakes and tactical blunders they let slip a match which was well within their grasp at half-time.

Far too much quality possession was pumped downfield at Dusty Hare. He is an international full-back of considerable competence and was rarely ruffled on Saturday by the barrage of high balls.

Gloucester also played into Hare's hands with a number of penalties they conceded and he took full advantage with six successful kicks.

Worst of all were two astonishing breakaway tries within minutes of each other which ruthlessly exposed Gloucester's defensive frailties.

What is remarkable about Leicester is their ability to live on the slightest amount of possession and still take the chances whenever they arise.

SCRAP

Gloucester gave them every opportunity to once again demonstrate that skill. The home forwards were well and truly outplayed, but every scrap of ball they won was run or kicked to telling effect.

The tremendous performance of the Gloucester forwards may well be overlooked by the inquest into the defeat. Their pressure and control made all four tries and it is a rarity that Leicester are outscored by four tries to two at home.

Phil Blakeway's return added steel to the scrummaging, John Orwin was a tireless worker and the back-row, with Mike Teague in the vanguard, cleaned up in the loose.

Gloucester's best moments came when Baker linked with his number eight in back-row moves which always threatened the Leicester cover.

There was little opportunity for Nick Youngs to take on the back-row with those sniping runs which sorely tested New Zealand, and Les Cusworth with the overbearing presence of Spencer in evidence, rarely made a break, acting only as a link man.

The pace of the wingers Evans and Underwood, plus the highly tuned understanding of Dodge, Woodward and Hare, make the Tigers a threat when they have the ball, no matter where they are on the field.

UPSET

At 12-10 at half-time, and all the early second-half play in their favour, Gloucester were threatening to upset the Tigers.

But two tries by Underwood from deep within home territory and another Hare penalty took the score to 27-10 within five minutes. Despite Gloucester's brave fightback, it was all over but the shouting.

Gloucester now face a similar task next Saturday when they take on Bath at Kingsholm in a vital South West Merit match.

The Bath pack probably has the edge over the Tigers' forwards and the back-line on their day can be every bit as exciting as the Leicester threes. Gloucester must not repeat their mistakes of Saturday.

Leicester: Tries; Underwood (2), Conversions; Hare (2), Penalties; Hare (6).

Gloucester: Tries; Teague, Taylor, Orwin, Penalty try, Conversions, Hamlin (2).

Man of the Match: Dusty Hare – punished Gloucester mistakes with six penalties.

JC