

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, JANUARY 2, 1984

AN ILL-FATED DAY AT BRIDGEND

BRIDGEND 32 Pts., GLOUCESTER 15 Pts.

It was yet another ill-fated day in Wales for Gloucester as their forward power was neutralised by the brilliance of two Bridgend players.

International Number 8 Gareth Williams and centre Richard Griffiths were the downfall of a Cherry and Whites team which looked capable for the first hour of snatching a rare win at the Brewery Field.

Williams was a superb inspiration to the Welshmen in the loose and also in the short line-out, where he excelled. He shared with Griffiths an ability to create momentum from nowhere – a quality absent in Gloucester's play.

With the support-play typical of Welsh rugby to back them up Williams and Griffiths were instrumental in providing five Bridgend tries to Gloucester's one.

It could have been a different story, however, if Gloucester had not been caught napping at the end of the first half when Bridgend's first try came – and if they had not lost Dave Spencer, injured during the second half.

Until the first half injury-time Gloucester had virtually matched Bridgend, despite facing a strong wind. Young Roger Fowke, making his senior team debut, had kicked a 22 yard penalty for Gloucester while Bridgend full-back Howell Davies landed two.

Prospects looked good for the second half – but the situation changed dramatically when many Gloucester players appeared to think the ball had gone into touch on their 22.

Gareth Williams realised it had not and snapped up the ball for a devastating break which put winger Tony Lewis over in the far corner. Davies converted to give Bridgend a 12-3 interval lead.

Mike Hamlin landed a Gloucester penalty early in the second half but Gloucester then suffered several minutes of intense Bridgend pressure on their line. It ended with Williams going over for an unconverted try.

Paradoxically, although now 16-6 behind, Gloucester never looked more capable of winning than at this stage. For their pack, at full strength with Blakeway's power evident in the front row, began to dominate the tight.

Gloucester won a line-out well, ran the ball swiftly, and got another line-out, this time inside Bridgend's 22. Mike Teague took it at the back, charged to the Bridgend line, and put flanker Jeremy Bennett over beneath the posts. Fowke added the conversion and Gloucester were looking good.

Then came Dave Spencer's arm injury, which severely hampered Gloucester's loose play and Griffiths raced over for a try which Davies converted.

Hamlin struck another penalty for Gloucester, but three minutes later Griffiths handed off a weak tackle and sped away to put Lewis over for a second try, this time unconverted.

Almost immediately Spencer went off and Gloucester replaced him with Rob Wilmott, normally a scrum-half. The possibility of a Gloucester revival now seemed remote and in a lengthy injury period Bridgend prop Alan Edwards dropped over for their fifth try after a break by outside-half Jeff Stephenson. Davies converted.

It was a disappointing result, although not completely unexpected, but at least the match was won by positive Bridgend play rather than lost by negative Gloucester tactics.

BRIDGEND: Tries; Lewis (2), Williams, Griffiths, Edwards. Conversions; Davies (3). Penalties; Davies (2).

GLOUCESTER: Try; Bennett. Conversions; Fowke. Penalties; Hamlin (2), Fowke.

Man of the Match: Gareth Williams – a sheer inspiration.

JC