

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 1984

A TALE OF WASTED CHANCES

NORTHAMPTON 17 Pts., GLOUCESTER 14 Pts.

Gloucester had enough forward firepower to eclipse the Saints. . . but they wasted their chances.

Despite three second-half tries, all from rolling scrums on the Northampton line, Gloucester never came close to realising their full potential.

All too often they gave away needless penalties – and behind the scrum hardly a single move was created by the backs in the icy, gale force wind.

But the match was memorable for the Gloucester tries which, remarkably, all arose from scrums on Northampton's line.

All three were laid on by the driving force of the pack and the skill of No. 8 Mike Teague. Each time he controlled the ball superbly to dribble it over the line as the pack steamrollered the Saints.

Teague scored the first and third tries himself, dropping on the ball when he got into range.

In between, he graciously supplied Steve Baker with the ball and the scrum-half was quick to spot Tim Smith on the wing and send him over unopposed.

Mike Hamlin converted the first of the tries but he and Paul Webb missed the other two conversion kicks.

In the closing minutes Hamlin had two penalty chances which could have drawn or even won the game, but both went wide.

However, Gloucester should never have been in the position of having to rely on penalty kicks for a result.

In the scrums and loose they reigned supreme, and in the line-out John Fidler gradually got the edge over Northampton's big locks.

The two problems were that the forwards kept getting themselves needlessly penalised, or sent back for dissent, while the backs seemed unable to string together any incisive passing.

Northampton's task when they faced the wintry wind in the second half was simply to try to hang on to a 17-0 lead they had amassed before the interval.

And this they did admirably, especially in the final 20 minutes when Gloucester were only three points behind.

The veteran Saints scrum-half, Jacko Page, came into his own, quickly kicking for touch at every opportunity to frustrate and disrupt Gloucester's last-ditch efforts.

So, although Northampton scored only two tries to Gloucester's three, their tactical play was rewarded with their first win over the Cherry and Whites since 1974.

And it was an encouraging debut for the new Saints' outside half, Mike Poulson, who dropped a goal and landed two penalties although he missed the conversions of tries by Vince Cannon and Nigel Underwood.

MAN OF THE MATCH : Mike Teague again, for his superb scrummage.