

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECHO

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GOMARSALL KEY AS GLOUCESTER TRIUMPH

ANDY IS THE MASTERMIND AS FALCONS ARE BROUGHT CRASHING

DOWN TO EARTH

GLOUCESTER 31 NEWCASTLE 17

While Matthew Dawson contents himself with an extended stay in make-up before a joke or two with Sue Barker, Andy Gomarsall is proving himself almost unbeatable 'home and away' just now.

Dawson, the diary-writing team captain on 'A Question of Sport' and occasional mitten-wearing scrum-half who plies his trade with Wasps, lost his rank as England's premier number nine last week for choosing television commitments over a red rose training session.

The coach Andy Robinson, who never took much messing from pesky half-backs as a player, hasn't altered his approach simply because he wears a tracksuit these days and insisted Dawson's priorities must change before earning back his England spurs.

Gomarsall meanwhile, the sharpest passer in the business and a Dawson rival for what seems like eternity, has always insisted his priority is to earn regular international recognition and the way he set about pulling Newcastle apart on Saturday suggested he has few legitimate rivals for the position.

Under England's previous hierarchy, there always appeared a manufactured reason why Gomarsall was never given an extended run at international level, despite never flinching from the cause under Sir Clive Woodward.

But anything other than immediate inclusion in England's autumn international plans would smell like a conspiracy because if there was an end to his talents, he did not arrive at them against the Falcons.

As sharp as a tack in the awareness stakes, with an array of positional kicking subtleties unmatched even by Jonny Wilkinson and a level of distribution stratospherically superior to any other contender, Gomarsall was all energy and determination as Gloucester's convincing start to the season gathered more pace with a fourth successive victory.

It was his eagle-eyed routine at a penalty 13 minutes into a quite terrifying start from the home side that resulted in a try for Marcel Garvey as Newcastle fatally dozed off to one of the most alert players when opportunity knocks.

Matt Burke was penalised and then offered a slice of back-chat that earned 10 further yards and realising no full-back was at home, Gomarsall kicked long into vast open space for Garvey, more alert this season than at any stage of his career, to chase down and score.

Seriously sizzling, Gloucester's opening half-an-hour of work was truly sensational, chivvied along by Gomarsall.

The hard-headed Jake Boer and his cronies, noticeably Alex Brown and Pete Buxton, who had stirred up the competition in the second row, wrapped up the fundamentals of the scrum, line-out and ferocious driven possession, as Newcastle were mangled up front.

Away from the heavies, Gloucester played with such pace from the breakdown, it was truly frightening.

When Garvey and the instinctive aggression of Terry Fanolua charged down the right on another raid, a long, arcing pass found the energetic Andy Hazell and the vastly gifted Henry Paul coming left, as the angle of the attack changed.

Although Adam Balding was tackled into touch, Newcastle had come up off-side and they paid the ultimate price from the line-out.

Balding, called into action because of James Forrester's ankle injury, was located at the back of the queue and the big, big, big shunt that followed sent Brown to the depths and away with the try.

It was not beyond the realms of possibility for a Gloucester bonus point before half-time and they will be distinctly disappointed they took their boot off the Newcastle jugular and drifted during the third quarter.

Newcastle deserve some credit for not caving in totally but where Gloucester threatened through short and long distance, forwards and backs, only the sweetly swinging left boot of Jonny Wilkinson kept the Falcons in touch.

With Phil Vickery hurtling towards fitness and Christo Bezuidenhout arriving on Tuesday, a prison sentence is distinctly more appealing than an afternoon's hard labour at Kingsholm and had Boer not dropped the ball in a tackle with Matthew Tait, the floodgates would have opened.

But the workrate remained remarkable and the effort fierce. Defensively, apart from a sloppy final minute, they were once again outstanding.

Newcastle had nobody to match Hazell and Boer in the art of scavenging for possession or the accuracy of Gomarsall behind the scrum.

Gloucester did drop off noticeably after the break, a lull that will infuriate Boer and his chums, but probed by Duncan McRae and ahead up front, where Newcastle's back row was virtually anonymous, they did steal a third try.

Wilkinson had closed the gap to 21-12 before James Simpson-Daniel picked off a pass from England's premier number 10, stepped out of Tait's tackle and sped off to the line.

Paul's conversion glided through the posts and although the precision at the line-out evaporated late on, the points were safe.

Newcastle did earn themselves a face-saving score at the end, Michael Stephenson stepping narrowly away from the cover after Wilkinson's pass before bursting clear to score.

Wilkinson's conversion hit the post – the chance for one last cheer from the biggest Kingsholm crowd in the professional era.

There are only two unbeaten teams remaining a month into the season and nobody would bet against Gloucester continuing the run at the Rec of all places next week.

MATCH FACTS.

GLOUCESTER: J. Goodridge; M. Garvey (J. Bailey 37-40), T. Fanolua, H. Paul, J. Simpson-Daniel; D. McRae, A. Gomarsall; N. Wood (S. Emms 58), O. Azam (C. Fortey 55), T. Sigley, P. Buxton, A. Brown, J. Boer (capt.), A. Hazell, A. Balding (A. Eustace 49).
Other reps.: S. Amor, L. Narraway, A. Page.

NEWCASTLE: M. Burke; T. May, J. Noon, J. Shaw (M. Tait 22), M. Stephenson; J. Wilkinson, J. Grindal (H. Charlton 53); I. Peel (J. Isaacson 40), M. Thompson (A. Long 40), M. Hunter (I. Peel 62), L. Gross (C. Hamilton 74), S. Grimes, M. McCarthy (C. Chivers 40), S. Setiti, P. Dowson.

REFEREE: A. Rowden (RFU).

ATTENDANCE: 13,000

STAR MAN: ANDY GOMARSALL's awareness created the first try for Marcel Garvey and his workrate never dropped. Built on his performance against Northampton with another fine display.

TIMELINE

EIGHT MINUTES: Henry Paul kicks an opening penalty.
Gloucester 3, Newcastle 0

13 MINUTES: Andy Gomarsall kicks long from a penalty and Marcel Garvey scores. Paul converts.
Gloucester 10, Newcastle 0

17 MINUTES: Alex Brown scores from a line-out.
Gloucester 15, Newcastle 0

26 MINUTES: Jonny Wilkinson kicks a penalty.
Gloucester 15, Newcastle 3

31 MINUTES: Paul kicks a penalty.
Gloucester 18, Newcastle 3

33 MINUTES: Wilkinson kicks a penalty.
Gloucester 18, Newcastle 6

39 MINUTES: McRae penalty.
Gloucester 21, Newcastle 6

40 MINUTES: Wilkinson penalty.
Gloucester 21, Newcastle 9

57 MINUTES: Wilkinson penalty.
Gloucester 21, Newcastle 12

73 MINUTES: Paul penalty.
Gloucester 24, Newcastle 12

75 MINUTES: James Simpson-Daniel try. Paul conversion.
Gloucester 31, Newcastle 12

80 MINUTES: Michael Stephenson try for Newcastle. Wilkinson misses conversion.
Gloucester 31, Newcastle 17