

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2004

STUNG BY WASPS

GLOUCESTER 17 WASPS 27

Wasps ended Gloucester's 14-match winning run at Kingsholm last night with a priceless Premiership victory forged by three second half tries.

Despite the sheer effort and gut-busting determination, Gloucester simply could not break through a remarkable Wasps defence and were out-gunned thanks to scores from Simon Shaw, Ayoola Erinle and Edd Thrower.

As competitive as humanely possible, Gloucester simply failed to make the most of their chances in the first half.

Galvanised by the remorseless hunter-gatherer techniques of a forward pack operating at high temperature, Gloucester stuck to their task impressively. They made such a mess of Wasps at the breakdown, where turnovers reached double figures, and put so much pressure on Phil Greening at the line-out, they will have been seriously aggrieved to have been held 0-0 at the break.

Thanks to Jake Boer, Adam Balding and the rest of the Cherry and White forward army, the home side created enough field position to do some damage but they lacked precision behind to finish their chances, and despite the best efforts of Terry Fanolua, who was forcefulness personified, could not break through.

Brad Davies missed both penalty attempts after 13 and 23 minutes to only increase the anxiety but Edd Thrower also missed Wasps' only attempt before the break as they sucked in everything Gloucester could throw at them.

Gloucester also lost Phil Vickery, the tighthead prop, who was doing such a good job against Craig Dowd. He was helped from the field in some distress with a head injury after Richard Birkett ploughed into him on the floor and his knee connected with Vickery's head.

The altercation affected Gloucester more and five minutes after the re-start, Mark van Gisbergen returned Davies's kick with interest, slipped an inside pass to Peter Richards who sent Simon Shaw in for the game's first points.

It was a telling moment because with points so hard to come by, Wasps' advantage was a significant one. But back stormed Gloucester. Fanolua led the assault with a head-down surge and Wasps were forced to defend superbly close to the line as Gloucester drove two line-outs to within sniffing distance of the score.

But their only points were a Simon Amor penalty and Wasps took their lead out to 14-3 when Ayoola Erinle, the great bull of a centre, charged through to score.

However, the home town pressure had to tell and from a series of drives close to the line, Balding dived over in the far corner to bring the house down. Amor converted and Gloucester trailed 14-10.

They came again, pouring all over Wasps but it was so frantic and quick paced neither team provided the cutting edge to go with all their intent.

Van Gisbergen kicked penalties after 66 and 75 minutes to increase the lead to 10 points and in the final minute Thrower came onto Erinle's short pass to score and cement the victory.

There was still time for the impressive Amor to bundle his way through and convert but it was only academic.

GLOUCESTER: J. Goodridge; M. Garvey, N. Mauger, T. Fanolua, J. Bailey; B. Davies, A. Page; C. Bezuidenhout, C. Fortey, P. Vickery (G. Powell 40), A. Eustace, M. Cornwell, P. Buxton (J. Forrester 56), J. Boer (capt.), A. Balding.

WASPS: M. van Gisbergen; E. Thrower, P. Richards, A. Erinle, T. Voyce; J. Brooks, M. Dawson; C. Dowd, P. Greening, T. Payne, S. Shaw, R. Birkett, J. Hart, T. Rees, L. Dallaglio (capt.).

REFEREE: S. Lander (RFU).

ATTENDANCE: 13,000.

STAR MAN: Adam Balding.

JC