

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2004

VICTORY MARRED BY FORTEY INJURY

GLOUCESTER 24 SALE 14

Gloucester's never-ending injury curse struck again last night when Chris Fortey's season was almost certainly ended by a broken right ankle in their bonus point 24-14 victory over Sale.

Fortey had an X-ray to establish the extent of the damage, which revealed the break to his right ankle after taking a double tackle catching the re-start from Marcel Garvey's opening try.

The 29-year-old has fractured the lower end of the fibula in his right leg, and stayed in hospital last night.

He was scheduled to undergo surgery this morning to stabilise the ankle area.

Director of rugby Nigel Melville said: "I thought the players were fantastic. With the constant injuries the players have got better each week. They're much stronger now.

"The bonus point was very important, and the moral and spirit was fantastic going into this game.

"We really got stuck in, and the crowd played a big part in that, they got right behind the team.

"It's been hard for some of the players, we've pointed the finger at a few, but they've taken everything on board and just got better."

The month of November has turned into a ruinous one for Melville and his squad, now crippled by injuries.

They will return to the perils of the Heineken Cup next week with as many as eight first choice players uncertain of their fitness and with rookie hooker James Parkes entrusted with the set-piece duties.

Rob Elloway is now the only understudy available to Melville after Olivier Azam underwent shoulder surgery in Paris to remove a piece of floating bone on Monday and will not return until February.

JC