

# THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2004

FIVE-POINT HAUL COULD BE ONE TO CHERISH

PARKES' PERFORMANCE PROVES IDEAL TONIC  
AFTER FORTEY'S HORROR INJURY

GLOUCESTER 24 SALE SHARKS 14

The casualty count is still nudging double figures, they are down to their last two hookers – both without Heineken Cup experience – have a brace of locks out of commission and will be praying their premier outside-half is fit enough to resume full-on duty next week despite a month of inactivity, but Gloucester still managed to turn water into Premiership wine on Friday.

They will cherish these five points like no other this season, arriving as they did to end a three-match losing sequence to keep them holding manfully to the coat-tails of the leading trio at the top of the table.

Their nadir was the sickening injury to Chris Fortey, who broke a bone in his ankle and will almost certainly be out for the rest of the season after a double tackle left him immobile in the same area of Kingsholm where Phil Vickery shattered his eye socket against Wasps, Mark Cornwell broke his arm and Conor O'Shea, the former London Irish full-back, ended his career after breaking his leg.

Having been sensational in his commitment during a November period that stretched the bounds of Gloucester's competitiveness to the limit, Fortey is still waiting for an operation to pin the bone in his ankle.

It will deprive the Cherry and Whites of one of their figureheads but the response of James Parkes, his replacement who arrived in the summer from Saracens, was as warming as Fortey's injury was heart-breaking.

He was heavily involved in a forward performance of such determination and effort that it formed the foundations of a thoroughly deserved victory.

The returning Jake Boer was tremendous and Adam Balding, who had played his rugby in the same vein for weeks, namely full frontal, was savage in his determination and outstanding in his commitment. He drove himself into the ground and is easily one of the form number eights in the business.

The front row was dominant and Adam Eustace marshalled the line-out well, considering he was without both Mark Cornwell and Alex Brown.

But here, they also had greater control behind. Scrum-half Alex Page, who has worked as hard as anybody, had his best game of the season, Simon Amor is a right box of tricks and Terry Fanolua tackled and carried himself to a standstill.

"We have had a hard three weeks," admitted Boer, who was back after a groin injury. "Some guys have been under pressure, we make no excuses for that, but they can take great heart from this win.

"I thought the pack were outstanding and achieved a lot of go forward. With Wasps losing, it keeps us in touch with the teams at the top. I really hope this can be a turning point in our season and when we look back in March and April, we can pinpoint these five points as being crucial.

"This was a big game for us and I am delighted with how the guys responded."

Once again, it took some winning, but the avalanche of territory and possession meant Sale hardly got a look-in, particularly in a one-way second half. They are even more deprived of key men than Gloucester and had little in the way of forward momentum or cutting edge behind a back-peddling pack.

They did though take the lead with a Byron Hayward penalty after five minutes and when Amor struck an upright 20 metres out, the match was developing in exactly the same format as the previous two, with Gloucester capable of everything bar scoring.

But Amor, always a pocket-sized threat and with enough confidence to try things, got Gloucester moving at the end of the first quarter. He aimed a cross-field kick towards Marcel Garvey on the right after a period of sustained pressure.

On the face of it, the move carried a sizeable amount of risk, particularly with the giant frame of Steve Hanley marshalling Garvey. But Hanley was sucked under the flight of the ball and Garvey squirmed in to score close to the dead-ball line.

Fortey then departed with his broken ankle and Parkes was plunged into action. But he was able to watch as Fanolua snaked after his own chip ahead and carried on his run as Garvey palmed back the ball from Chris Rhys Jones to give the centre a clear run to the line for Gloucester's second try.

Sale did hit back with a try for Robert Todd, who picked out James Forrester's leap in the defensive line and powered home to score. It made the score 12-8, but Sale's coach, Philippe Saint-Andre, admitted his side were out-manoeuvred and out-gunned.

"When you don't have the ball, you cannot play," he shrugged. "I think Gloucester perhaps have a better squad than us. I hope the players who have lost three games learn from their mistakes.

"This is not a place to come and lose the ball, make mistakes and defend for long periods. Gloucester deserved to win."

They sealed the victory with a line-out drive and shunt for Parkes to claim a debut score and a lovely try that was initiated by a break from Page.

Eustace came in another wave of support. Fanolua and Nathan Mauger arrived and Jon Goodridge sped over to the left of the posts.

It produced a bonus point – something beyond the wildest dreams of most inside Kingsholm – and with Wasps under-estimating the challenge of Worcester to get their behinds spanked 30 miles up the road, Gloucester remain in the hunt.

GLOUCESTER: J. Goodridge; M. Garvey, N. Mauger, T. Fanolua, S. Kiole; A. Page, S. Amor; C. Bezuidenhout (N. Wood 80), C. Fortey (J. Parkes 20), A. Eustace, P. Buxton, J. Forrester, J. Boer (capt.), A. Balding.

SALE SHARKS: B. Hayward; C. Rhys Jones (J. Moore 69), J. Taumalolo, R. Todd, S. Hanley; J. Baxendell (capt.), S. Martens (B. Redpath 44); S. Turner (S. Bozzi 59), J. Roddam, B. Stewart, C. Day, D. Schofield, P. Caillet (M. Lund 54), J. Carter, P. Anglesea (H. Perrett 71).

STAR MAN: Jake Boer.

REFEREE: A. Rowden (RFU).

ATTENDANCE: 12, 365.

TIMELINE:

FIVE MINUTES: Byron Hayward penalty.

Gloucester 0, Sale 3

12 MINUTES: Simon Amor missed penalty.

17 MINUTES: Marcel Garvey try.

Gloucester 5, Sale 3

26 MINUTES: Terry Fanolua try, Amor conversion.

Gloucester 12, Sale 3

36 MINUTES: Robert Todd try.  
Gloucester 12, Sale 8

50 MINUTES: Hayward penalty.  
Gloucester 12, Sale 11

56 MINUTES: James Parkes try.  
Gloucester 17, Sale 11

62 MINUTES: Hayward penalty.  
Gloucester 17, Sale 14

75 MINUTES: Jon Goodridge try, Amor conversion.  
Gloucester 24, Sale 14

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