

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECHO

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HAZELL SHOWS HIS INTERNATIONAL CREDENTIALS
OPENSIDE FLANKER SETS TONE IN A DOGGED DERBY

VICTORY AT WORCESTER[*sic*]

GLOUCESTER 28 WORCESTER 16

It is easy to appreciate why England's current head coach is so convinced about the multi-skilled dynamics of Andy Hazell.

He has the same bloodhound instincts, operates as close to the edge of the laws as humanely possible and generally makes himself a right pain in the rear end. All the openside flanker needs to do now is spend the entire game offside in an Andy Robinson mask and the pair would be identical.

All being well, Hazell will win his first Six Nations cap in Cardiff next weekend, primed to carry out all the grim and grotty work that was Robinson's trademark.

Before hobbling off against Worcester on Saturday with a combination of knee and ankle injuries courtesy of a stamp, Hazell had invaded so much space, rearranged so many features with his tackling and covered so much ground that the Warriors will be having nightmares about him for years.

When he was not flaying would-be attackers alive in the wide open channels, he was battering through defenders, linking possession and handing out doses of summary justice that would have had dear old Robbo purring.

Hazell is operating at maximum temperature at the moment and is looking every inch a Test-quality seven – but with more pace than both Robinson and Neil Back combined.

On this evidence – and recent exhibits from matches against Leicester, Wasps and Bristol – he should have little trouble finding gainful employment next season and is in the process of talking about a contract extension at Gloucester.

Should they fail, a thought that is only too grim to contemplate for the Kingsholm faithful, he will have plenty of potential suitors elsewhere.

He was the lead feature in an extremely antagonistic derby, where both packs knocked seven bells out of each other without fear or favour. It was not a thing of beauty but for Gloucester it represented a significant step forward. They have stripped their game back to the bare bones, reverting to the core basics of the set piece, primary possession and field position in order to reignite missing confidence.

And while Hazell was knocking all manner of shades out of Worcester, other players with big reputations were fighting for all they were worth.

Worcester targeted both the scrum and line-out as areas into the game but Tony Windo, on a vengeful mission against anything in red, got precious little change out of Phil Vickery, relishing the thud and blunder of another M5 get-together.

Vickery is likely to be asked to sit on the bench against Wales and is getting back to the sort of health that makes him such a damaging operator.

Somebody who will not be on red rose duty this weekend – unless Matt Dawson fails to mend his twanged hamstring – is Andy Gomarsall.

The scrum-half has spent so long trying to play like Dawson he had forgotten what made him England's number one barely two months ago, but he bossed the game in the first half here, his work-rate was terrific and he also scored a try of real opportunism that he may not have scored four weeks ago.

The score, coming as it did after half-an-hour, virtually sealed the contest. Gomarsall charged down Matt Powell's kick from a ruck 20 metres out, scooped up the bounce and beat Thinus Delpont to the line.

Worcester had been wholly disappointing, despite all their vigour up front. Behind the scrum they hardly raised a gallop, Delpont apart, and even he had serious difficulty locating the ball for the majority of the time.

They are not getting any favours at this time of the year and will be extremely disappointed not to have earned at least a point considering Gloucester's current form.

But they were on the back foot from the start, Gloucester surging ahead with two Henry Paul penalties and a first Premiership try for Seti Kiole after 15 minutes.

Gomarsall took a great catch from a line-out and sent Kiole barrelling up the centre to gain ground off his wing. Duncan McRae and Paul linked when play was switched back to the left, Hazell cut a neat angle and Kiole scored despite the fact Gomarsall and Terry Fanolua ran into each other and could have been penalised for accidental offside.

Worcester were restricted to only two James Brown penalties in the first half, but once Hazell limped off six minutes into the second period, the game lost its structure and went nowhere fast.

And when Vickery and Andre van Niekerk were dispatched to the cooler for a punch-up, the game lost even more shape.

Possession was slowed down just enough to make Gomarsall's job a far more difficult one and consequently Gloucester kicked away more ball than they would have liked.

However, once they got the forward platform right, the home side scored a third try. They swept into an attacking area before Gomarsall found Paul, who checked, kept hold of the ball brilliantly to step through a hole before sending the impressive Terry Sigley diving in for the try. Sigley certainly has a bit about him and is worth a run in the side.

Worcester had the final word when Powell scored on the short side following a sustained attack but it was nothing more than cosmetic.

"The first 20 minutes were crucial for us because we really thought we could get something from today," said Warriors coach John Brain.

"Given Gloucester's recent form we thought we had a real chance."

GLOUCESTER: J. Goodridge; J. Bailey, T. Fanolua, H. Paul, S. Kiole; D. McRae (N. Mauger 76), A. Gomarsall; T. Sigley, M. Davies, P. Vickery, P. Buxton (J. Forrester 68), A. Brown, J. Boer (capt.), A. Hazell (M. Cornwell 46), A. Balding.

WORCESTER: T. Delpont; G. Pieters, D. Rasmussen, T. Lombard, B. Hinshelwood; J. Brown, M. Powell; T. Windo, A. van Niekerk, C. Horsman, T. Collier (P. Murphy 42), C. Gillies, D. Hickey, P. Sanderson (capt.), B. MacLeod-Henderson.

REFEREE : T. Spreadbury (RFU).

ATTENDANCE : 13,000

STAR MAN : Andy Hazell

EIGHT MINUTES: Henry Paul penalty.
Gloucester 3, Worcester 0

11 MINUTES: Paul penalty.
Gloucester 6, Worcester 0

15 MINUTES: Seti Kiole try.
Gloucester 11, Worcester 0

23 MINUTES: James Brown penalty.
Gloucester 11, Worcester 3

31 MINUTES: Andy Gomarsall try, Paul conversion.
Gloucester 18, Worcester 3

34 MINUTES: Duncan McRae drop-goal.
Gloucester 21, Worcester 3

40 (plus 3): Brown penalty.
Gloucester 21, Worcester 6

58 MINUTES: Brown penalty.
Gloucester 21, Worcester 9

70 MINUTES: Terry Sigley try, Paul conversion.
Gloucester 28, Worcester 9

80 MINUTES: Matt Powell try, Brown conversion.
Gloucester 28, Worcester 16

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