

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECHO

SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2005

SALE PILE ON THE AGONY

SALE 35 GLOUCESTER 17

Out-of-form Gloucester crashed to another disappointing Zurich Premiership defeat.

Sale fly-half Charlie Hodgson returned from injury last night to inspire his side to victory with an almost flawless kicking display.

Two tries from Steve Hanley were followed by efforts from Mark Cueto and John Carter, three of which were converted by Hodgson, who also landed three penalties as Nigel Melville's men were outclassed at Edgeley Park.

Philippe Saint-Andre's side had lost their last four league matches but were always in control and never looked likely to let Gloucester back in the game after establishing a lead.

Hodgson had been out for three weeks with a groin injury but showed no signs of rustiness when presented with an early chance.

He despatched a simple penalty in front of the posts to give his side a third-minute lead – and the hosts grew in confidence after they nudged themselves in front.

Gloucester, in contrast, lacked cohesion in the opening stages. Scrum-half Andy Gomarsall, who will join Worcester at the end of the season, looked nervous and dropped a simple catch in his own territory.

Brad Davies missed an early chance to restore parity with a penalty from 35 yards – and he was swiftly punished as Sale scored the opening try through Hanley. Hodgson converted and added another two penalties before the interval to give his side a 16-point half-time lead.

Gloucester started the second period with more resolve but could not find a way through the Sale defence.

Brad Davies landed a long-range penalty, but Cueto soon scored his side's second try and Hodgson converted.

Carter scored his try after 62 minutes after Brad Davies dropped the ball just behind his own try line and Hodgson converted.

Davies reduced the arrears by converting a penalty try, but Hanley broke with seven minutes remaining and ran more than half the length of the pitch for the fourth try.

Peter Buxton went over for a try for Gloucester in the dying moments.

SALE: Robinson, Cueto, Baxendell, Todd, Hanley, Hodgson, Redpath, Sheridan, Bruno, Turner, Lobbe, Schofield, White, Carter, Chabal.

Reps.: Titterell, Stewart, Jones, Lund, Martens, Wigglesworth, Rhys Jones.

GLOUCESTER: Goodridge, Foster, Simpson-Daniel, Mauger, Kiole, B. Davies, Gomarsall, Wood, M. Davies, Powell, Eustace, Brown, Boer, Narraway, Balding.

Reps.: Azam, Sigley, Buxton, Forrester, Page, McRae, Morgan.

REFEREE: Steve Lander.

JC