

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2005

DEAN HAILS YOUNG GUNS

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 27 NEWCASTLE FALCONS 20

A backline with an average age of 23 were instrumental in providing the dash in a performance that was too much for Newcastle.

Anthony Allen, making his Premiership debut, produced a display of outstanding maturity in the centre alongside James Simpson-Daniel.

He carried ball, made his tackles and played with an authority that belied his inexperience and formed a genuine edge with Simpson-Daniel, who looked far more at home at number 13.

There was also an excellent carrying and positional performance from full-back Olly Morgan, who looked as accomplished as Newcastle's Matthew's Burke, a Wallaby international of some renown.

The victory was crucial for Gloucester in a month that sees them without their internationals. The only downside for Ryan was that it took Gloucester an age to put Newcastle away and with time ticking down, the Falcons were only seven points adrift.

"I thought some of the young guys were simply outstanding," said Ryan. "When you look at their inexperience and the company they were keeping, they were superb.

"It was a big victory for us in terms of what we have to come this month. I am delighted with the four points."

It was as tight and tense as anyone could have wished for in the first half. Clear-cut opportunities were as rare as a gold dust as both teams traded kicks, possession and territory between both 22s.

Gloucester just about had the edge in terms of pressure but found themselves languishing seven points behind thanks to a smash and grab try from flanker Cory Harris, who ran through the referee to score.

The home side had been robust but were determined to give the ball plenty of width. Simpson-Daniel, Allen and Morgan all saw a good deal of the ball without being able to produce the killer pass or break.

They could have scored as early as the second minute when Simpson-Daniel and Peter Buxton sustained a move head on to the posts but James Forrester spilled Ludovic Mercier's pass.

Newcastle opened the scoring after 27 minutes when Toby Flood and James Hoyle sustained a move down the left and James Grindall's pass sent Harris racing away to the sticks.

It was the wake-up call Gloucester desperately needed. Three minutes later, the powerful Quinton Davids clung onto a line-out and from the drive, James Forrester scored on the short side.

Mercier then nudged Gloucester ahead with a 36-minute penalty to establish a one point lead at the break but it required all the persuasive techniques of the outstanding Andy Hazell, the relentless Adam Eustace and the workaholic Peter Buxton to keep Gloucester on the go forward.

Mercier landed three penalties in the first 10 minutes of the second half to take Gloucester 17-7 ahead but Newcastle immediately bundled themselves back into the match with a second try.

Owen Finegan controlled the ball at the tail of a line-out, Grindall linked with Wilkinson before Hoyle sent the number 10 through a gap and in for a lovely try.

It got Gloucester's pulses racing. From the re-start, Finegan fumbled forward under pressure, Buxton and Simpson-Daniel kept the move going and Newcastle under the cosh.

When possession came close to the posts thanks to Adam Balding and the livewire Peter Richards, Allen and Eustace got close to the line before Richards dived over to complete the move.

It put Gloucester far enough ahead to virtually cement the victory but it took them an age to seal the contest. Wilkinson got matters back to 24-17 before Mercier's final penalty 16 minutes from time sealed the points.

HT: 8 - 7

Attendance: 12,500

Referee: Ashley Rowden

JC