

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2005

GLOUCESTER CRASH AT IRISH

LONDON IRISH 25 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 10

The Kingsholm chief blamed a lack of leadership for a performance that was high on endeavour and attitude but short on direction and quality for a defeat that leaves Gloucester seventh in the table.

Not only did the line-out suffer at the expert hands of Bob Casey and Nick Kennedy, but the key decision makers could not engineer the field position Gloucester required to get back into the game and their efforts crumbled in a fog of confusion.

They were also hampered by injuries to Jake Boer and Patrice Collazo, who were both withdrawn in the first quarter, as the Irish built the momentum they would not lose.

“We lacked the direction and leadership from our decision makers and that is pretty disappointing,” Ryan said. “We need some of those guys out there to step up and become leaders and direct the way we want to play.

“That is the only thing we can take out of it. We were not good enough in a number of key areas and that is what frustrates me. At times we looked like a young team looking for direction.

“We need to take this on board collectively, regroup and move on.”

Gloucester found themselves 9-0 down early on thanks to three Barry Everitt penalties and they did not threaten in a first-half when the line-out crumbled and too much ball was kicked away.

Their best opportunity in the first half came when Haydn Thomas kicked a little roller behind the Irish defence that Delon Armitage took into touch following a scrum.

From the line-out, Peter Buxton, the epitome of Gloucester's effort, thundered up the middle, Boer added his weight to the attack but Terry Fanolua couldn't get his pass away under pressure and possession was turned over.

Gloucester's first points came when Ludovic Mercier kicked a 23rd minute penalty to reduce the deficit to 9-3 but Everitt was successful twice more before the break to establish a 15-3 interval lead.

Ryan reacted immediately and introduced Peter Richards at scrum-half. He was always inventive and industrious, full of running and cunning but he was working without much of a platform to kick-start the recovery.

Gloucester then lost Adam Eustace to the sinbin and Everitt landed yet another penalty to stretch the lead to 18-3 before the visitors had their best period of the game.

They were at last able to keep the ball long enough to carve out some pressure and momentum deep in Irish territory and when Everitt dallied over a clearance, Richards steamed through, charged down his kick and scored.

Mercier's conversion left Gloucester trailing 18-10 with 17 minutes remaining and with renewed hope they could escape with a losing bonus point at the very least. They started to drive and maintain possession through their forwards and James Simpson-Daniel and Anthony Allen both attempted crucial breaks.

But their momentum didn't last, even though Everitt missed a comfortably kickable penalty after 66 minutes, the Irish dug in and dominated the last throws of the match.

After Buxton was sinbinned for hauling down a maul, Gloucester were a man light at a last minute scrum and replacement Ryan Strudwick thundered through to score and complete a miserable afternoon for Ryan's men.

HT: 15 - 3

Attendance: 9,027

Referee: Ashley Rowden

JC