

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2005

TOULON ARE THRASHED

TOULON 3 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 74

Dean Ryan's side produced a clinical performance of forward domination and power coupled with excellent finishing to ransack the French side.

It was a typically full-on experience but Gloucester stuck together when the temperature rose and were far superior in terms of organisation, execution and power.

There were some outstanding performances, particularly from Jonathan Pendlebury in the second row, Jake Boer and Adam Balding up front but once the Kingsholm pack got their claws into Toulon, they were utterly dominant.

Outside the forwards, Terry Fanolua brought his own unique brand of attitude and physicality to a centre partnership alongside the excellent Mike Tindall, scrum-half Peter Richards never stopped running and breaking and Mark Foster relished the space he was afforded on the wing to be one of three players to walk away with a brace of tries.

Gloucester even found themselves 3-0 down early on thanks to a Chris Rossouw penalty but it was not a hint of what was to come.

Ludovic Mercier drilled Gloucester level with three points of his own before they crossed for the first try after 17 minutes. They stole a line-out deep in Toulon territory, Phil Vickery and Boer drove possession forward before Richards and Mercier found Fanolua in midfield who was able to pluck down possession and his pass enabled Olly Morgan to slide Foster home from short range.

A second try soon followed. Again an excellent drive from an attacking line-out allowed Boer to finish off at the bottom of the maul.

The forwards were well on top and after Boer and Balding had driven play on from a line-out, Richards and Mercier combined before Fanolua again made the telling pass that sent Foster over for his second after 32 minutes.

The fourth try was not a thing of beauty but after Fanolua had created a midfield turn-over, prop Patrice Collazo kicked into acres of space downfield and when the ball came right, Marcel Garvey ran home to score the bonus-point try.

At 34-3 ahead at the break, the game was over. Gloucester looked a very useful side when they moved possession out of the contact area so smoothly but for that to happen the big men needed to get the hard yards done first.

And the big men were at it immediately after the re-start. The old catch and drive routine paid off again when Pendlebury snatched the catch and Boer was bundled over for his second score.

Toulon simply failed to live with Gloucester's set-piece expertise and after replacement Gary Powell, Vickery and Fanolua had all smashed play deep inside Toulon territory, Richards snuck over for his first score and Gloucester's sixth try.

Tindall was the next to score after he went after his long pass to Olly Morgan and then looped round on the outside to take Gloucester past the half-century mark.

The points continued to flow and Powell was the next to score – driven on and over from another line-out effort that splintered the Toulon defence.

Number eight James Forrester was next on the act, bumping off two defenders to cruise home down the right and Richards sealed the 10-try victory with the last effort.

It was made by Morgan, who was aware enough to come and collect a little roller and set off on a lovely angled run over half-way. He linked with Fanolua and as the cover converged, he put Richards home for the last try.

Gloucester had been clinical and powerful, united against Toulon's efforts to unsettle them – Balding required attention to a nasty eye injury – but the Kingsholm side were never rattled and took a major step to a place in the quarter-finals.

HT: 3 - 34

Attendance: 4,200

Referee: Hugh Watkins

JC