

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 2006

FOSTER'S TRY DOUBLE SINKS WORCESTER

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 27 WORCESTER WARRIORS 16

I am thrilled for the young guys – they kept playing and got what they deserved, said Gloucester's head coach Dean Ryan.

It was break-neck stuff and had a capacity crowd enthralled but Gloucester secured four crucial Guinness Premiership points against Worcester at Kingsholm.

Mark Foster's second half try double secured a cherished victory – Gloucester's youthful get up and go and inventiveness getting the better of Worcester's more powerful set-piece and forward effort.

Gloucester were full value for their victory and it gives a huge vindication to the youngsters still cutting their teeth in the Premiership.

Ryan Lamb, the luxuriously gifted stand-off, is getting better with every game. We have known for some time he has wonderful natural ability and when he kept the ball in hand and used Anthony Allen and Mike Tindall outside him, Gloucester were a real handful.

Allen, with his terrific foot work and even quicker brain was sensational. Three times in the first half he cut lovely attacking lines through Worcester's defence to create glorious openings and he was always a threat with ball in hand.

Tindall is the cement that keeps it all together. His experience, positional sense and hard-nose carrying are crucial, while James Simpson-Daniel and Foster got enough ball to be serious threats.

Worcester, who attacked the set-piece throughout, made a physically draining start. Tony Windo was a pain in the rear-end at scrum-time, while Gloucester's line-out creaked at times.

And it was the visitors who took the lead when Shane Drahm nailed a 30-metre penalty but Lamb hit back immediately to level the scores after 30 minutes and six minutes later he handed Gloucester a 6-3 lead with his second penalty.

The two stand-offs were then dispatched to the sinbin for a spot of punching – the bantam weight nature of the contest belied the feeling behind it – but Gloucester suddenly rose to the challenge.

Allen, the wonderfully tough and full-on Peter Richards, Andy Hazell, Simpson-Daniel and James Forrester were all heavily involved in some wonderful, free running rugby. They should have scored when Allen created a move and when possession was dragged to the right, Simpson-Daniel put Olly Morgan over but the pass was forward.

But two minutes before the break, Gloucester got the try they needed. Tindall and Morgan were initially involved before another critical Allen break and with Worcester stretched, Lamb found Peter Buxton and he drew the last defender for Simpson-Daniel to score.

The secret for Gloucester was to keep away from Worcester's withering set-piece work but it was the visitors who dominated the third quarter.

Drahm nailed penalties after 55 and 60 minutes to drag them to 14-9 behind and with the pressure mounting on Gloucester, Andy Gomarsall made a telling break from the base of a five metre scrum and scored on an angled break.

Drahm's conversion took Worcester 16-14 and all of a sudden, the hosts were staring at a fifth successive league defeat.

But the kids dug in. Lamb landed a 67th minute penalty to raise the roof and with a sell-out crowd at fever pitch, Gloucester scored twice in the last 10 minutes.

The first owed everything to Tindall's power and a lovely pass under pressure from Ludovic Mercier – on for Morgan – who put Foster into space and he used his strength to score.

It was the critical moment of the match. Gloucester had slugged themselves to the bitter end all afternoon – Hazell and Mefin Davies had very big games in the loose – and suddenly they were 22-16 ahead.

It took the sting out of Worcester and when Terry Sigley and Jack Forster mowed big holes into Worcester's defence, Richards came again and Foster scored in the corner to seal a vital Gloucester victory.

HT: 11-3

Attendance: 12,500

Referee: David Rose

JC