

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2006

AGEN STUN KINGSHOLM WITH VICTORY

GLOUCESTER RUGBY 26 SU AGEN 32

For the second week running, Gloucester were dealt a Heineken Cup lesson as Agen's extreme brand of physicality and expert finishing produced a momentous result at Kingsholm.

Gloucester were shown up to be exactly what they are at the moment; young, inexperienced in certain areas and unable to manipulate the game to their advantage when things are against them.

There is certainly plenty of ability in the likes of Olly Morgan, Anthony Allen and Ryan Lamb but Gloucester are not used to this level of exposure, particularly physically, and they paid a heavy price for failing to make the most of their opportunities in the first half when they controlled the ball for long periods.

Agen were more than the sum of their parts. They were wonderfully well served by the likes of flankers Peio Som and Colin Yukes and marshalled brilliantly by half-back combination Nicolas Morlaes and Jerome Miquel. And any team who possess a broken field runner of the quality of Rupeni Caucaunibuca are always capable of breaking out from nowhere.

Quite where this leaves their Heineken Cup hopes is anyone's guess but having been buffeted throughout, Gloucester actually got within a strike of winning a game that always appeared beyond them once Agen scored.

Gloucester made a bright start – Anthony Allen – who produced yet another high-class midfield performance and was well worth his two tries – hit up the middle immediately and Gloucester chugged into a 6-0 lead thanks to two Ryan Lamb penalties.

But everything was hasty and at times predictable. Against Leinster, Gloucester made the mistake of not kicking enough in the first half but here they simply didn't kick well enough.

Agen's first try came after 10 minutes and it was a beauty. James Bailey chased Peter Richards' kick but Pepito Elhorga collected the high ball and ran back, combining with Caucaunibuca, who off-loaded brilliantly in the tackle.

Gloucester threw themselves into rucks but left space in the wide areas and Manu Aho Ta'e'iloa and Dave Vainqueur combined brilliantly under pressure to send Arnaud Mignardi in for the score in the far right corner.

A hushed tone descended on Kingsholm and the concern was almost deafening, despite the fact Lamb kicked a 16th minute penalty to make it 9-6.

However, it was Agen who looked more threatening, particularly from deep and when Caucaunibuca sped onto Morlaes' pass, Gloucester were staring into space again.

They regrouped quickly enough to stop the initial surge but the scrum-half arrived to feed play to the left where prop Pieter van Niekerk bundled over to make it 15-9.

The warning lights were beginning to flash now. Gloucester hit back, the hugely impressive Jake Boer led the charge with a series of pounding carries and when Peter Buxton also slammed into Agen's defence and Richards linked twice in the move, Allen's wonderful sense of space and quick feet took him through the cover for the try after 35 minutes.

If that was supposed to be the wake-up call for Gloucester, it didn't arrive. Only five minutes into the second half Agen were in for their third try when number eight Thomas Soucaze burst onto a short midfield pass to go the distance.

And only nine minutes later, Agen claimed the bonus point of all things with a try of such quality it came from nothing.

They used off the top line-out ball on half-way, Miquel took play infield before sending that man Caucaunibuca racing through an alarming gap and he was able to send replacement Conrad Stoltz in for the fourth try and establish a 29-14 lead.

The game was virtually up and it was not until Olivier Azam added his weight and power to Gloucester's loose play that they began to create some momentum.

It was Azam's midfield turnover that created Gloucester's second try after Luke Narraway had taken up the reigns through the middle.

The ball was recycled to Allen and he danced a magic trick or two to beat the cover and go in for his second try.

Five minutes later Azam collected his own try when he was bundled over from a line-out and suddenly, Gloucester only trailed by three points – 29-26.

But it would have been rough justice had Agen not won the game and Francois Gelez sealed the victory with a 74th minute drop-goal that leaves Gloucester's European dream in tatters.

Gloucester Team

15. Olly Morgan 14. James Bailey 13. Jack Adams 12. Anthony Allen
11. Iain Balshaw 10. Ryan Lamb 9. Peter Richards 1. Christian Califano
2. Mefin Davies 3. Carlos Nieto 4. Jonathan Pendlebury 5. Marco Bortolami
6. Peter Buxton 7. Jake Boer 8. Luke Narraway

16. Olivier Azam 17. Patrice Collazo 18. Adam Eustace 19. Adam Balding
20. Rory Lawson 21. Willie Walker 22. Rudi Keil

SU Agen Team

15. Pepito Elhorga 14. David Vainqueur 13. Manu Aho Ta'e'iloa
12. Arnaud Mignardi 11. Rupeni Caucaunibuca 10. Jerome Miquel
9. Nicolas Morlaes 1. Pietman Van Niekerk 2. Ace Tiatia 3. Alessio
Galasso 4. Adri Badenhorst 5. Sorin Socol 6. Peio Som 7. Colin Yukes
8. Thomas Soucaze

16. Eusebio Guinazu 17. Laurent Cabarry 18. Willem Stoltz 19. Fabrice
Culine 20. Billy Fulton 21. Francois Gelez 22. Conrad Stoltz

HT: 14 - 15

Attendance: 10,134

Referee: Malcolm Changleng

JC