

# THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, AUGUST 21, 2000

RAMPANT SARACENS SHOCK GLOUCESTER

SAINT-ANDRE'S MEN LEFT POINTLESS  
AFTER OPENING DAY THRASHING

SARACENS 50 GLOUCESTER 20

A look of undiluted shock hung heavy on the face of Philippe Saint-Andre after he struggled to come to terms with Gloucester's opening day humiliation at Saracens yesterday.

The Gloucester coach was in a state of utter disbelief after his side were swept away in an avalanche of pace and power to leave them the only Zurich Premiership side without a point and at the foot of the table.

It was a hugely dispiriting start for Gloucester, who were made to look distinctly second class by a side oozing quality, precision and raw pace.

Saracens scored six tries, the crucial burst, a magical spell of 21 points in four minutes just before half-time that suffocated Gloucester into submission.

The final nails were added by French star Thomas Castaignede, who landed 20 points with the boot after a memorably free-running debut.

Although recriminations will reverberate around Kingsholm this morning, Saracens will never have a better chance of beating Gloucester.

Saint-Andre, who bemoaned the loss of 12 first choice players before the start, was forced to add another two to his list when Steve Lander's whistle eventually sounded.

Simon Mannix was forced to leave the field after barely three minutes with a suspected broken hand, while Jawad Djoudi faces a possible 60-day ban for his sending-off for butting Darragh O'Mahony.

But that can be used as only a partial excuse. Gloucester, who opened up with a fire stoked in their bellies during the opening quarter in which they matched Saracens stride for slugged out stride, lacked the composure and flair out wide to hurt the irrepressible hosts.

They lacked cohesion, incisiveness and pace, despite carving out a good deal of territory in the opening 30 minutes.

Gloucester opened with a real zest and Terry Fanolua held a spiralling high catch and sent Junior Paramore away. He found Chris Catling, who set off on a dangerous run to set Gloucester's pulses racing.

Byron Hayward, on for Mannix, gave them the lead with a penalty after nine minutes, but that was cancelled out by Castaignede after a high tackle from Chris Yates on Kevin Sorrell.

That stirred Saracens, and Kyran Bracken, who broke menacingly twice in the first 20 minutes, enabled Castaignede to hand Saracens the lead with his second penalty, before Hayward, via the left upright, brought Gloucester level.

However, the danger signs were already beginning to flash.

Richard Hill and Tony Diprose linked with Bracken who again skirted away only for Sorrell to drop the ball.

It was no surprise when Bracken, relishing his role as Saracens captain, grabbed their first try.

He pounced from the base of a scrum close to the line after 27 minutes, but it had been born out of a Gloucester mistake.

Ironically, their defence had been outstanding in the opening quarter, but Fanolua knocked on handing Saracens possession and the opportunity to score.

Castagnede landed a further penalty before Saracens stamped out Gloucester's resolve with a tremendous scoring sequence.

It was hard to see any side living with Sarries in that four minute spell which started when Bill Davison was on hand to score from a lovely break by Dan Luger.

A minute later Bracken sent Duncan McRae away and his pass found Sorrell, who had tracked his break well, and he beat Fanolua under the posts.

What followed was the best of all. Luger, tall and full of blistering speed arched a run infield through Gloucester's crumbling defence, Castagnede fed the impressive Sorrell and he gave the scoring pass to Scott Murray.

It was awesome stuff, but Gloucester missed a succession of first-time tackles amid the onslaught and two of Saracens' tries came from Gloucester re-starts.

During the carnage, Gloucester's ball had just dried up, and when it did come it was so slow, Yates and Joe Ewens were starved of space in midfield and Saracens just beckoned them into tackle.

It was typical, that their most dangerous runner Catling was so frequently out of the game on the wing.

Luger, fittingly got on the score sheet after the interval when Sorrell's break had enabled Diprose to find the England man wide on the right.

Saint-Andre introduced Serge Simon and he got on the score sheet when he collected a Fanolua pass after 54 minutes.

However, that could not stem the tide and Luger and Sorrell fed Ben Johnson who scored.

Djoudi was then dismissed for butting, before Yates, collecting another wayward pass superbly, scored, but Gloucester were simply blown away, dejected and chastened for the experience.

SARACENS: T. Castaignede; D. O'Mahony, B. Johnston, K. Sorrell, D. Luger; D. McRae, K. Bracken; P. Wallace (D. Flatman 56), M. Cairns, J. White, B. Davison, S. Murray, K. Chesney, R. Hill, T. Diprose.

GLOUCESTER: T. Fanolua; C. Catling (R. Greenslade-Jones 67), J. Ewens, C. Yates, R. Jewell; S. Mannix (B. Hayward 5), I. Sanders; A. Powles (S. Simon 40), O. Azam (J. Djoudi 55), A. Deacon, R. Fidler (M. Cornwell 60), I. Jones, S. Ojomoh (A. Eustace 55), J. Paramore (O. Azam 67), J. Boer (H. Gregoire 72).

REFEREE: S. Lander (Liverpool).

ATTENDANCE: 7,682.

STAR MAN: Olivier Azam (Gloucester).

JC