

# THE CITIZEN

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2000

LAST GASP EWENS IS GLOUCESTER'S HERO  
GUTSY DISPLAY WILL LEAVE BATH'S STARS  
QUAKING IN THEIR BOOTS

NEWCASTLE 18 GLOUCESTER 19

An astonishing game and an astonishing conclusion. The belief is returning and the confidence is beginning to flood back at Kingsholm.

Joe Ewens' injury-time try rounded off a thoroughly excellent overall performance in which Gloucester showed huge appetite to succeed.

They only went ahead once, but crucially, that was in the third minute of injury time and it superbly summed up their grinding, heart-thumping, second period display.

The reaction of the players at the final whistle was testament to their achievement and they were cheered off the field by their elated supporters who poured onto the field.

Make no mistake, Gloucester won this game, Newcastle did not lose it. The fact they outscored the hosts two tries to nil summed up their will to win.

Losing, however distressing a thought, was a serious possibility and would have seriously deflated the side ahead of their game against Bath.

But the whole club will be significantly lifted by this result and performance. Winning teams never feel the knocks as much and Bath will now be shuddering at the thought of visiting Kingsholm despite a full week's rest.

The victory was even more remarkable when you consider Gloucester were trailing 12-3 at half-time thanks to the boot of Jonny Wilkinson.

But there was a specific game plan and Gloucester stuck to it. Their work rate in defence and sheer commitment to the cause was outstanding and they carried it off superbly.

They knew they had to stop Gary Armstrong, Wilkinson and John Leslie from forming Newcastle's attacking platform.

Steve Ojomoh, Andy Gomarsall, Byron Hayward and Chris Yates were Gloucester's defensive fulcrum but everybody produced sterling work in close quarters. Everyone contributed.

Newcastle stretched into the lead through the boot of Wilkinson after a first-half display from Gloucester that creaked from one set piece to another.

The line-out did not function well enough and Gloucester were given a testing time in the scrummage.

It allowed Wilkinson to open up a 12-3 lead and Gloucester, for all their good intentions, never really threatened to score, despite a good break from Franck Schisano who was stopped by Liam Botham.

And that was in spite of attacking with vigour against 14 men when Tongan winger Epi Taione was sent to the sinbin for a high tackle on Serge Simon. There was no hint of what was to follow.

But the Falcons were to fall down running into a Gloucester wall. Their reliance on Wilkinson's boot and Gloucester's blanket second period defence strangled the life from them and they rapidly ran out of ideas.

Crucially, Gloucester secured the edge up front in the second period. Andy Hazell, returning after a five month absence was simply outstanding.

It is a measure of his ability that he can turn in such a performance after such a long break and along with the sniping breaks of Gomarsall, Gloucester cranked up their attacking momentum and got amongst the Newcastle pack with vigour.

They attacked in waves down the left and then forced play right to Frank Schisano. He had been given little opportunity to run, but snaked inside and when the ball came back, Hazell jinked right and burst over the line to score.

The danger lights were now flashing for Newcastle, but there was always the terrible realisation that Wilkinson's boot may just keep the home side tantalisingly out of reach.

Gloucester's play, however, became more frantic and Byron Hayward reduced the arrears to 15-11 with a penalty, and then cut the deficit to just one point after Gloucester caused mayhem in a line-out and Newcastle strayed off-side with 13 minutes to go.

Then it was Gloucester's turn to lose a line-out to Hugh Vyvyan and although Leslie was held under the posts, Wilkinson landed his sixth penalty.

Time was ebbing away but Gloucester spirit remained true and strong. It had to be Gomarsall who instigated Gloucester's 80 metre breakout with Terry Fanolua and Junior Paramore in injury time and when play came to the near side, Hayward's long pass found Ewens who showed tremendous speed to surge infield and score. Utterly breathless.

NEWCASTLE: M. Stephenson (J. Noon 46); L. Botham, T. May (V. Tuigamala 55), J. Leslie, E. Tainoe; J. Wilkinson, G. Armstrong; G. Graham (M. Ward 69), R. Nesdale, I. Peel, S. Grimes, D. Weir (H. Vyvyan 55), R. Arnold, A. Mower, J. Jenner (R. Beattie 52).

GLOUCESTER: T. Fanolua; F. Schisano, J. Ewens, C. Yates, D. Loughheed; B. Hayward, A. Gomarsall; S. Simon (S. Sanchez 59), O. Azam (C. Fortey 41), A. Powles, R. Fidler, M. Cornwell (A. Eustace 76), S. Ojomoh (J. Boer 64), A. Hazell, J. Paramore.

REFEREE: A. Rowden (Berkshire).

ATTENDANCE: 2,615.

STAR MAN: Andy Hazell (Gloucester).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Bn	Pts
Leicester	4	4	0	0	108	81	2	18
Sale	4	3	0	1	101	90	0	12
Bath	3	2	0	1	106	67	3	11
Saracens	4	2	0	2	130	100	3	11
Newcastle	4	2	0	2	94	78	2	10
Gloucester	4	2	0	2	86	110	2	10
Northampton	4	2	0	2	94	90	1	9
Wasps	4	2	0	2	87	101	1	9
London Irish	3	2	0	1	59	65	0	8
Harlequins	4	1	0	3	84	100	3	7
Bristol	4	1	0	3	76	113	1	5
Rotherham	4	0	0	4	74	104	2	2