

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2000

HENDERSON TREBLE SINKS GLOUCESTER
GLOUCESTER FAIL TO GET BASICS RIGHT
AND FLOUNDER IN SECOND HALF

WASPS 43 GLOUCESTER 23

Out manoeuvred and out-played. That is the cold realisation rising over Kingsholm this morning after Gloucester's faltering performance at Wasps yesterday[*sic*].

Stand-in stand-off Rob Henderson cut Gloucester to pieces with a bulldozing hat-trick as Gloucester floundered to a worrying disjointed defeat – their fourth of the season.

It is so painfully frustrating because when they get it right, Gloucester can be devastating. But when the pressure mounted the mental resolve seemed to disappear, almost draining away after each Wasps attack.

The unerring basics with which Gloucester cemented their game plan last season have been disrupted.

They failed to keep the ball with any conviction and their play was littered with indiscipline, which was at the root cause of their defeat. Their play just descended into a disorganised clinging-on as the Wasps assault mounted in the second half.

The platform, which so malfunctioned against Bath last Saturday, again looked worryingly vulnerable.

The set scrum in particular is proving an exposed weak spot and is not allowing Gloucester to establish any momentum.

That has bred a fiery, misdirected aiming of venom and Gloucester conceded far too many penalties in fragmented play.

Simon Mannix returned at stand-off and it was refreshing to see him play with confidence and conviction, especially in the tackle, despite not being fully fit.

Defensively, he is one of the best in the Premiership and knows how to get Gloucester moving as they did last season, but he is always going to have problems stringing Gloucester along when the forwards cannot ensure a quality supply of ball.

Coach Philippe Saint-Andre must also now realise that Terry Fanolua must play in the centre and Chris Catling at full-back as two quality performers have been negated from their rightful positions.

But for all their second half misfiring, Gloucester made a superb start. In a planned move Chris Yates, who in the first period was back to his rampaging best, lined up behind Mannix and took Andy Gomarsall's pass to thunder through Wasps' midfield and send Tom Beim skirting away for a comeback try after just five minutes.

That showed what Gloucester could do when they got things right, but Rob Henderson was in bruising attacking form and he got Wasps on the board seven minutes later. Lawrence Dallaglio won the line-out and Henderson powered through Mannix to score, despite Gloucester's protests for an infringement.

It was a frantically full-paced opening, rich in attacking flair and it was Gloucester who held sway.

They attacked with vigour after Simon Shaw had knocked on and then kicked the ball away as Joe Ewens hacked through. Junior Paramore and Andy Deacon were all involved before Gomarsall's inviting line sent Yates exploding through under the posts.

The points just kept coming. Martyn Wood and Josh Lewsey linked superbly on the right and fed Shane Roiser who skipped past Gomarsall and had an unopposed run to the line.

Gloucester's nervousness now began to show. Yates was caught in possession attempting to burst out of defence. Wasps fed it back through Lewsey and Rosier and quick ruck ball allowed Henderson to take Adam Eustace and Andy Hazell with him to score.

But it was in the second period Gloucester floundered when the going got tough. The game became scrappier as an increasingly desperate Gloucester battled to stay afloat.

The game changed when Ian Jones was sin-binned for a line-out offence against Dallaglio. Against a pack of such quality, Gloucester were always going to struggle, but there seemed a lack of collective unity.

What was even more amazing was that for lengthy spells Wasps' handling disappeared, but Gloucester could still not break free from the shackles.

Two penalties from Kenny Logan, who finished with 18 points, stretched Wasps ahead to 29-23 as Gloucester became marooned in defence.

It was inevitable that Wasps' pressure would tell and from a surging attack close to the line, Henderson picked up and barged over. The worst thing was all three of his tries were almost identical. Short range bursts exposing Gloucester's first line of defence.

Gloucester's afternoon was rounded off by Simon Shaw, who collected Gomarsall's long pass to hitch-kick away under the posts to complete Gloucester's miserable afternoon.

WASPS: J. Lewsey; S. Rosier, F. Waters, M. Denney, K. Logan; R. Henderson, M. Wood; D. Molloy, P. Greening (T. Leota 78), W. Green, A. Reed, S. Shaw, J. Worsley, P. Volley, L. Dallaglio (capt.).
Reps. not used: A. Page, L. Scarse, P. Sampson, J. Beardshaw, R. Birkett.

GLOUCESTER: T. Fanolua; C. Catling (R. Jewell 58), J. Ewens, C. Yates, T. Beam; S. Mannix, A. Gomarsall; S. Simon, O. Azam (C. Fortey 67), A. Deacon, (A. Powles 52), A. Eustace, I. Jones (M. Cornwell 67), J. Boer (E. Pearce 39), A. Hazell, J. Paramore.
Reps. not used: I. Sanders, J. Simpson-Daniel.

REFEREE: E. Morrison (Bristol)

ATTENDANCE: 4,277

STAR MAN: Simon Mannix (Gloucester)

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