

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2000

BATTLING GLOUCESTER PULL OFF TREMENDOUS VICTORY
OVER LLANELLY

HAZELL TRY SEALS HEINEKEN WIN

LLANELLY 20 GLOUCESTER 27

Kingsley Jones led Gloucester to a massive Heineken Cup victory at Llanelli to make it a golden European opening for the Cherry and Whites.

Hundreds of supporters streamed onto the pitch to acclaim their heroes after tries from Jason Little and Andy Hazell set the seal on a fine victory that throws Pool Five wide open.

The drooling anticipation for Gloucester was now over.

The wait was history as they made their Heineken Cup debut at Stradey Park.

A debut at European semi-finalists Llanelli was an onerous place to start, but vocally roared on by a large, travelling contingent from Kingsholm, Gloucester made a terrifically determined start.

Adam Eustace held a good ball and Gloucester drove on with pace.

Chris Yates and Phil Vickery clattered up the centre, but Tom Beim could not hold on to possession.

Junior Paramore broke up a threatening move with a great tackle on Salesi Finau after Guy Easterby had sniped through a gap, but he knocked on and Gloucester gathered themselves.

Gloucester took the lead after seven minutes when the hosts were penalised for pulling down and Simon Mannix landed the penalty.

Defence, however, was the name of the game for the Cherry and Whites in the early stages, but they almost broke their shackles after a Stephen Jones penalty had hit the bar.

Gloucester took play to the right through Chris Catling and Terry Fanolua, who chipped infield, but Matt Cardey was pinned by Jason Little and Mannix struck Gloucester further in front.

However, Gloucester were almost caught from the kick-off when the impressive Dafydd Jones linked with Phil Booth, but Cardey was thumped into by Paramore to relieve the danger.

It was frenetically never ending, the pace was unrelenting, but it was the hosts who held the attacking balance and asked Gloucester to defend. However, it was up front that Gloucester stamped their mark with some ferocious driving play.

Quinnell and Ian Boobyer instrumental, drove Llanelli back into the game and Stephen Jones got them on the board with two penalties.

However, Gloucester's eye remained clear and two minutes before the break, the visitors unleashed all their firepower. They drove play infield, Olivier Azam straightened play and Gomarsall switched the ball to the right.

Little, replacing the injured Mannix at stand-off, surged through midfield, slicing through two tackles, rounding Cardey to score a wonderful try.

It was a start far better than in any Gloucester dream, but Llanelli, roared on, poured back. Easterby spun it out to the left and Dafydd James put Mark Jones in to score. The conversion left Gloucester with a slender 14-13 lead at the break.

It was now up to Gloucester to repel more Llanelli fire at the start of the second period, a task made even more difficult with the news Mannix would not return because of a fractured wrist.

Gomarsall missed an early penalty, a third miss in a row but Gloucester refused to lie down.

It was now the visitors who were dominating in the forwards. Azam simply refused to be knocked over, while Phil Vickery and Serge Simon were in bruising form in the scrummage and it was set pieces that proved to be Gloucester's bedrock for attack.

Gloucester were now attacking from anywhere and from a scrum deep inside their own half, Gomarsall arched a break down the right and linked with Catling, but Gloucester could not find the final pass.

Gomarsall missed a penalty from in front of the posts, but Gloucester simply refused to die.

Llanelli were clearly rattled and Gloucester were now getting Yates ploughing massive furrows through midfield.

It would have been a nightmare if Gloucester's possession had not yielded some points and again it was Yates who created Gloucester's second try.

He received possession and ripped through midfield, bursting away from tacklers.

Such was his break there was initially no support, but Gomarsall found Little who looked inside to see Andy Hazell on his shoulder and he roared in under the posts.

It was all Gloucester deserved and for once Gomarsall landed the conversion and minutes later a penalty to stretch Gloucester away to 24-13 in front.

But it was now real heroes were called for as Llanelli ripped back for one final assault.

Both teams were making mistakes now, ominously, in the scrum for Gloucester, but their midfield proved to be outstanding.

The pressure had to tell, however, and Quinnell tapped a quick penalty and Chris Wyatt was on his shoulder to score next to the posts.

Jones converted for a grandstand finish.

The score was cut to just four points, but Llanelli were penalised for crossing and Fanolua, Gloucester's third kicker of the night, landed the three points for a 27-20 lead.

Still the drama was not finished but when Elton Moncrieff's kick rolled dead Gloucester had won and real celebrations could begin.

LLANELLI: M. Cardey; M. Jones, D. James, S. Finau, G. Evans; S. Jones, G. Easterby; P. Booth, R. McBryde, J. Davis, C. Wyatt, C. Gillies, D. Jones, I. Boobyer, S. Quinnell (c). Reps: M. Thomas, V. Cooper, M. Buckingham, R. Moon, N. Boobyer, A. Lawson, A. N. Other.

GLOUCESTER: C. Catling; T. Beim, J. Little, C. Yates, T. Fanolua; S. Mannix, A. Gomarsall; S. Simon, O. Azam, P. Vickery, A. Eustace, I. Jones, S. Ojomoh, K. Jones (c), J. Paramore. Reps: E. Moncrieff, F. Schisano, S. Sanchez, A. Powles, R. Fidler, J. Boer, A. Hazell.

REFEREE: G. Morandin (Italy)

STAR MAN: Chris Yates (Gloucester)