

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2000

CHERRY AND WHITES ARE BLOWN AWAY IN THE
FINAL 10 MINUTES

GLOUCESTER HIT BY COLOMIERS STORM

COLOMIERS 30 GLOUCESTER 19

There was not a cloud to be seen at the outset but perhaps the sign a local storm was brewing. For at the end the sky had turned distinctly darker above Gloucester's Heineken Cup hopes.

The sun had earlier shone brightly down on the last remaining unbeaten English record in the competition; by the end it had been shredded up and tossed deep into the European Cup qualification mixer.

This was a strange match because it appeared to evolve in reverse.

In an ebb and flow game that was disconcertingly even, Colomiers finished the game how Gloucester would have expected them to start, wrapped up by passion-fuelled forward play and iced off with some inspired running led by Fabien Galthie.

It was a thunderous conclusion that yielded 19 points in 10 frantic minutes.

It would be easy to question Gloucester here, but better teams than them would have been undone by a typically meaty collision stirred by red-raw French pride.

What the defeat does do is emphasise the importance of their win at Stradey Park, but more so their failure to beat Colomiers at Kingsholm last week.

Coach Philippe Saint-Andre made it clear it was passion and heart Gloucester needed and in the toe-to-toe dust-up, Gloucester displayed it until the last 10 draining minutes – they were together and committed.

Both teams were forced to play a wind ruined kicking game, but it was simply Colomiers who dealt with it better.

Gloucester attacked with the elements in the first period and almost waited for the home assault to unravel and it never came.

It was here they needed to cement their authority, but although they enjoyed a good deal of possession and territory, continuity and ball retention let them down dramatically. There was very little quality in a terribly one-paced game.

What made it all the more frustrating was that Gloucester's forwards laid a concrete foundation. The scrummage and line-outs were cohesive, hard and menacing, but they were profligate with the ball from this solid base.

Andy Deacon and Phil Vickery were excellent, while Ian Jones added precision to the graft of skipper Kingsley Jones, who began as if his life depended on it.

When Gloucester got it together up front, the pattern was set in sniping triangles of attackers and defenders in short-sharp drives, but they were forced to go in level at half-time.

Arguably Gloucester's tempo for the game was set from the kick-off when Andy Gomarsall kicked dead. From there it never really clicked.

Laurent Marticorena kicked Colomiers in front with a penalty and he cancelled out a Simon Mannix kick with a drop-goal to stem a period of Gloucester pressure.

That should have started the warning lights flashing.

The ease at which Colomiers scored was in direct contrast to Gloucester's struggle; they missed out on three occasions when well placed to hammer home their advantage.

Gloucester were not helped by the fact Chris Yates was suffocated in midfield.

Marticorena, who carried the ball like a back rower, tackled hard and kicked the ball miles, allowed both centres to pincer Yates' straight-line attacks.

Mannix missed a penalty just after the re-start in a treacherous wind, but although the pace had slowed dramatically, the desire to win from both sides burned bright.

The pace suited Gloucester, especially with their forwards engraving themselves on the game and Mannix nudged them in front with his third penalty.

This was fast establishing itself as Gloucester's best spell and they burst into life on the hour with a try that ripped the game open. Sebastien Roque spilled the ball in midfield and Rob Fidler dived to get it away.

Chris Catling found Little who set Tom Beim off and with much to do he cruised 40 metres, stepped off his right foot to go past Galthie, and reversed his pass inside to Catling who hurtled in behind the posts.

The conversion took Gloucester 10 points ahead and now it was up to them. Could they stomach the onslaught.

Their passion could not have been doubted up until then, but the game changed after the introduction of Elton Moncrieff, it had the reverse affect to what was hoped.

He is a feisty competitor and was desperate for some action.

He thundered into Marticorena and then pounced on the number 10 again after mixing with Jean-Luc Sadourny. That forced Marticorena to grab Moncrieff by the throat and that was the catalyst to stir up the home pack for their fierce retribution.

Colomiers added a penalty before Yannick Jauzion burst through a gap in midfield to take Laurent Giolitti's pass eight minutes from time to scorer after a break from Galthie.

It was now Galthie who ran the show and Marticorena pounced for a try wide out to complete a full set after a first-half drop-goal, six penalties and a conversion.

Gloucester were in tatters, blown away by an astonishing 18 point blitz in 10 minutes.

Their destiny is still in their hands.

But don't fade now Gloucester, you have come too far for that.

COLOMIERS : J-L. Sadourny (c), B. Lhande, S. Roque, Y. Jauzion, L. Giolitti, L. Marticorena, F. Galthie, W. Begarie (S. Delpuech 40), C. Laurent (T. Algret 9), J. F. Meslier de Rocan, G. Moro, J-M. Lorenzi (S. Hephher 58), B. de Giusti, H. Manent (P. Magendie 54), F. Ntamack (S. Peysson 56).

GLOUCESTER : C. Catling, T. Fanolua, J. Little, C. Yates (F. Schisano 76), T. Beim, S. Mannix, A. Gomarsall (E. Moncrieff 68), P. Vickery, O. Azam, A. Deacon, R. Fidler (M. Cornwell 64), I. Jones, S. Ojomoh (A. Hazell 46), K. Jones (c), J. Paramore.

REFEREE : D. Tyndall (Ireland)

ATTENDANCE : 4,500

STAR MAN : Ian Jones (Gloucester)