

# THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2000

## SARACENS CLOSE TO SNATCHING FIRST LEAGUE WIN AT KINGSHOLM

### GLOUCESTER HOLD ON FOR A VITAL VICTORY

GLOUCESTER 16 SARACENS 15

Gloucester secured three vital Premiership points in a Kingsholm nail-biter but came mighty close to being out-run by Saracens.

Gloucester were asked every question by a depleted Saracens outfit who almost snatched their first ever league win at Kingsholm after tries from Paul Wallace and Robbie Russell threatened to shock the Cherry and Whites.

Gloucester led 16-3 at the break after a try from Tom Beim but went pointless in the second period after a stuttering performance.

Now the real business has resumed. The sideshow of the Tetley's Bitter Cup has been put firmly behind them and Gloucester's first priority of the Zurich Premiership resumed at Kingsholm.

It was time for Gloucester to make up for lost time. Coach Philippe Saint-Andre had already insisted his side pick up at least two wins from their next three games and they made a purposeful start here.

Gloucester were never likely to get a better chance to topple the league leaders with Saracens shorn of eight first choice players.

The loss of so many key performers seriously rattled Saracens and Gloucester made a barnstorming start with a raw intent in the eyes of the forwards.

Jake Boer, rapidly establishing himself in the Gloucester powerhouse, made a searing start with several powerful crashes alongside Junior Paramore, and Byron Hayward stroked Gloucester ahead with a penalty after three minutes.

They were on the attack again almost immediately. Kingsley Jones held the kick off and Hayward launched play to the left that laid the platform for their first try.

Boer and Paramore drove before Jason Little linked with Terry Fanolua and Kingsley Jones on the right. The chance appeared to have broken down, but Tom Beim, acting as scrum-half, collected possession, raced across the face of the posts, shaped to pass, but dashed through a gap to score by the posts.

It was just the start Gloucester needed. An early try to settle the nerves and then Saracens were hit with a blitz.

Gloucester dropped high kick after high kick on Gerald Arasa and from one Hayward bomb, he dropped the ball, but Gloucester could not gather possession.

It was important now Gloucester made the most of their advantage. With the forwards foraging well, Gloucester had plenty of the ball but could not engineer further opportunities apart from a riveting break by Hayward, Chris Catling and Fanolua, who was just bundled away.

Saracens now enjoyed their part of the game and Hayward made a great tackle on Paul Wallace to deny a certain try after Chris Chesney had also gone near, as Gloucester missed far too many first up tackles.

However, after Duncan McRae kicked Saracens first points, Hayward settled Gloucester's nerves with two well struck penalties.

Half-time :  
Gloucester 16 Saracens 3

Gloucester had built their advantage and now it was a case of whether they could build on it.

However, there was very little continuity in their game and they could not hold onto the ball long enough to make any impression.

But they almost extended their lead seven minutes after the re-start. However, it took the guidance of Saint-Andre to call to Jason Little to come to the near side. Little gave a quick pass to Catling who hurtled down the blindside and linked with Beim, who was shunted into touch.

That was as good as it got. Boer was hard working and drove relentlessly as did Paramore, but there was an ill feeling creeping through Kingsholm. Saracens were clawing their way back into the game. Gloucester missed so many first up tackles Saracens attacked from deep with relish.

The anticipated battles between Little and Horan had hardly glimmered until Horan lit up Kingsholm with a fantastic piece of skill. He weaved a way through midfield on an arching break and rounded Catling and seemed certain to score, but for some reason looked to find Chesney with a reverse pass when the line was at his mercy.

But the pressure was building and sure enough after 56 minutes Gloucester cracked. Roche held a line-out and was driven on for Paul Wallace to score.

The tide was turning and Gloucester were facing a huge effort just to stay in the game. You could not fault their application, but their tendency to kick away possession did not help their cause.

Saracens were easily the better side and in the last quarter threatened to snatch the win when Russell was bundled in for the score deep in the far corner to set up a rousing finish.

However, Gloucester held on and in the closing stages for a crucial victory that revives their Premiership ambitions.

GLOUCESTER: C. Catling; T. Fanolua, J. Little, C. Yates, T. Beim; B. Hayward, A. Gomarsall; S. Sanchez, C. Fortey, A. Deacon, A. Eustace, I. Jones, J. Boer, K. Jones, J. Paramore.  
Reps.: I. Sanders, J. Simpson-Daniel, J. Ewens, A. Hazell, J. Djoudi, M. Cornwell, N. Cox.

SARACENS: G. Arasa; T. Shanklin, T. Horan, B. Johnston, D. O'Mahony; D. McRae, N. Walshe; P. Wallace, R. Russell, J. White, B. Davison, K. Roche, K. Chesney, T. Roques, T. Diprose (c).  
Reps.: M. Cairns, S. Phillips, S. Hooper, S. Cheesebrough, B. Hampson, G. Truman, R. Haughton.

REFEREE: C. Rees (RFU)

STAR MAN: Jake Boer

JC