

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2000

BEIM, LITTLE AND CORNWELL MAKE SURE OF
A HAPPY CHRISTMAS

CRUCIAL KINGSHOLM WIN FOR GLOUCESTER

GLOUCESTER 28 NEWCASTLE 13

Gloucester got their Christmas bandwagon rolling at Kingsholm by sweeping Newcastle aside by three tries to one to batter themselves to a crucial Premiership victory.

Tries from Tom Beim, Jason Little and Mark Cornwell were the backbone of a far sounder Cherry and Whites display that at times enthralled a 7,500 Kingsholm crowd.

Philippe Saint-Andre had stated defeat was not an option and his only gripe will be that Gloucester failed to collect a bonus point.

Fireworks greeted the players and the pyrotechnics obviously rubbed off as Gloucester made an earth shattering start.

Gloucester knew they had to win to start a three-game Christmas period in which they could not afford to drop any points.

It took them two minutes to stamp down their intentions with two of the players brought into the side. Chris Fortey threw to Mark Cornwell and Gloucester ripped through midfield.

Jason Little was involved as was Jake Boer as play swung to the left. They recycled to the right where Terry Fanolua and Kingsley Jones dragged play on and Mannix reversed his ball inside to Tom Beim, who, although stopped in the initial move, hurtled in to score.

Mannix converted for the perfect start and added a penalty shortly after when Newcastle collapsed a scrum for a 10-0 lead.

Already Mannix has seen more of the ball than he had done at Northampton and Gloucester were buzzing. They seemed desperate to keep the ball alive, but the Falcons defence had wised up considerably since their early breach and despite probing breaks from Little and Fanolua, Newcastle held firm.

However, a Fanolua special on Michael Stephenson, deemed to be late, allowed Newcastle a foothold, but Jonny Wilkinson opted not to go for goal.

Gloucester were just beginning to kick away too much ball and Newcastle responded by driving them back. But this was fast developing into Gloucester's best 40 minutes of the season.

There was a spring in the step of Little and the whole of the pack were strong, committed and relentless in their driving play, particularly Jake Boer and Junior Paramore.

Just when Gloucester needed a score, they got it. They forced a line-out deep inside the Newcastle half and Fortey's throw found Paramore at the back of the line and Gloucester drove powerfully infield.

When the forwards had done their work, Andy Gomarsall slipped possession to Mannix who found Little on a beautifully angled run. Although he was half-stopped, he had pace enough to reach to score a superb try.

Gloucester were humming, and Newcastle were struggling, although Wilkinson did get them on the board with a penalty.

However, Mannix put Gloucester 20-3 ahead with a penalty as Gloucester continued to drive at Newcastle.

What was important now, was that Gloucester kept going and transformed their advantage into five points. They stated their intentions with a rousing end to the half.

Wilkinson's penalty drifted to the left and Gloucester attacked. Fanolua found Joe Ewens on a cracking run, who linked inside to Catling down the right.

Play dramatically opened up and roared on [by] a large and expectant crowd, Gloucester could not find a way through, despite a sensational break.

Half-time:
Gloucester 20, Newcastle 3

Mannix and Wilkinson exchanged penalties, but there was not the same cutting edge to the Gloucester back play.

They worked hard when they did not have the ball, but were desperate to snatch two more tries for bonus points.

Both teams were reduced to 14 men when Kingsley Jones and Marius Hurter were sinbinned after a fight involving all the forwards after Jim Jenner's feet connected at the bottom of the ruck.

However, it affected Newcastle more. Ewens was close to touching down Fanolua's chip, but Gloucester did not release the pressure and after Mannix had moved play from beneath the posts, his long pass found Mark Cornwell was on hand to plunge over to score. Mannix missed the conversion, but Gloucester were 28-6 ahead.

There was more to Gloucester. Just one try away from a bonus point, but it had been a far more cohesive performance all round. They had tackled and driven well, when Newcastle had not tried to pull down their driving and it was just the tonic they needed.

Gloucester had not been as mobile as they had been in the first half, but there was plenty of variation and still the unforgiving, rough approach but without straying too often on the wrong side of the laws.

Newcastle were disappointing, and they only really threatened at the last but Stephenson was stopped by a terrific tackle from Catling.

Gloucester still sought their fourth try and Beim made a superb break only for Gloucester to be denied the put in at the scrum. Newcastle responded and referee Tony Spreadbury incensed coach Philippe Saint-Andre by awarding a series of late penalties that finally allowed Wilkinson over for the try.

GLOUCESTER: C. Catling; J. Ewens, T. Fanolua, J. Little, T. Beim; S. Mannix, A. Gomarsall; T. Woodman, C. Fortey, P. Vickery, R. Fidler, M. Cornwell, J. Boer, K. Jones, J. Paramore.
Reps.: I. Sanders, B. Hayward, J. Djoudi, A. Eustace, A. Deacon, S. Ojomoh, C. Yates.

NEWCASTLE: D. Walder; R. Cook, L. Botham, I. Tuigamala, M. Stephenson; J. Wilkinson, G. Armstrong; I. Peel, R. Nesdaile, M. Hurter, S. Grimes, D. Weir (c), R. Arnold, J. Cartmell, J. Jenner.
Reps.: M. Howe, M. Ward, G. Graham, J. Rule, R. Beattie, H. Charlton.

REFEREE: T. Spreadbury (RFU)

STAR MAN: Mark Cornwell

JC