

THE CITIZEN

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2001

GREENSLADE-JONES' TRY IS NOT ENOUGH AS STRUGGLING 'QUINS SNATCH VICTORY

SAINT-ANDRE FACES A PREMIERSHIP PROBLEM

HARLEQUINS 21 GLOUCESTER 19

Gloucester discovered last night that not even the rarefied dignity of a place in the semi-finals of the Heineken Cup is enough to ignite their Premiership ambitions.

Their domestic form is a far cry from the hustle and bustle that has taken them to just one swipe away from a potential European Cup final.

These are stark times in the Premiership.

It is almost as if they have forgotten how to pick up league points – here they were ripe for the taking.

It is their fourth Premiership defeat in five starts. Philippe Saint-Andre has a problem and he is not sure how best to solve it.

He watched his side establish control, both territorially and in possession but still they were still unable to win [*sic*].

He was desperate to put some sleek, pacy verve to his game plan and Gloucester did their best to capitalise on it, but when he and his team keep it simple, they win games.

Here they did not and he is finding it bitterly disappointing.

It is a vexing conundrum – how should he approach Gloucester's remaining six matches when winning is of the utmost importance?

Paul Burke's injury time penalty finally separated the teams, but it should never have come to that.

In a Premiership game that was littered with mistakes, the finale was barnstorming.

As Burke was chaired off the field by his Harlequin team-mates who had not tasted a league victory since September, Gloucester could look back at a host of glorious attacking chances that should have been enough to win them the game.

Although they were desperate to spread play wide whenever they could, they did not have the foundations to fall back on and they spilled too many passes and made too many fundamental errors.

There was no killer instinct or composure to match their good intentions.

The dynamism of their driving and line-out that so destroyed Cardiff were stifled and consequently, although they were in control for long periods, had no real alacrity to their play.

They did not look convinced enough in their own minds to suggest they could win.

Twice in the first 10 minutes Tom Beim got round and behind his marker in a passage of play that was one of Gloucester's most open for a time.

But even then, there was just the horrible sense Gloucester would not capitalise on their advantage.

And when, in the second half, Gloucester spoiled a great attacking opportunity with a spilt pass, Saint-Andre's kick at the advertising board could be entirely understood.

Credit should be given to Quins for the way they disrupted Gloucester in the line-out and were niggly in the scrummage. They toughed out a result and showed backbone for a fight.

Quins set off at a barnstorming rate and hit the ground running with an opening try inside two minutes.

Scrum-half Matt Powell was involved twice as play moved firstly to the left before Ryan O'Neill made a telling intervention, swung infield and Pat Sanderson burrowed over for the score.

It was the worst possible start for Gloucester, and although Byron Hayward kicked a penalty soon after, it was Quins who attempted to put pace on the ball.

They scored again after 15 minutes when they attacked from a line-out when Chris Catling kicked straight out.

Powell made the initial break and Burke's long pass was collected by Ben Gollings who shuffled inside Beim and over.

But Gloucester haemorrhaged back. Hayward kicked his second penalty before they went ahead with a try.

Quins had disrupted Gloucester in the line-out, but when they get it right, it is almost impossible to stop.

When Quins were penalised for bringing down the maul, they opted for the same driving tactic and Rory Greenslade-Jones, built like a forward, was barged over for the try.

This was easily Gloucester's best spell, but they failed to hammer home not only their territorial advantage, but also their numerical advantage.

Harlequins were reduced to 13 men when David Wilson was sinbinned for pulling down a second maul and in a matter of minutes Nick Burrows followed soon after for abuse of referee Geraint Ashton-Jones after obstructing a highly promising attack in midfield.

But even with a two man advantage, Gloucester could not press home their superiority and actually lost that period of play 3-0 to a Burke penalty.

Steve White-Cooper had an excellent game for Quins in the line-out, and although Gloucester's forwards had established a platform at the set play, Harlequins, through the ice-cool Burke, remained ahead.

He dropped a goal before Gloucester camped themselves in the Quins half for their final onslaught.

But although they could not make much headway from their foothold, seemed destined to nurdle the points.

Gloucester got one hell of a push on in the scrum and Quins were penalised in front of their own posts.

Simon Mannix duly did the rest, before they made a hash of the re-start.

Gloucester were penalised for crossing and Burke, who had been outstanding, held his nerve to strike the kick true and steal the points in the most dramatic fashion.

HARLEQUINS: R. O'Neill; B. Gollings, N. Burrows, N. Greenstock, B. Daniel; P. Burke, M. Powell (P. Richards 55); J. Leonard, K. Wood, A. Olver, A. Codling, S. White-Cooper, P. Sanderson, D. Wilson (R. Jenkins 73), R. Winters.

GLOUCESTER: C. Catling; R. Greenslade-Jones, T. Fanolua, J. Little, T. Beim; B. Hayward (S. Mannix 55), A. Gomarsall; T. Woodman, C. Fortey (J. Djoudi 60), A. Deacon (P. Vickery 52), R. Fidler (M. Cornwell 72), K. Jones (A. Hazell 55), J. Paramore (S. Ojomoh 66).*

Rep. not used: C. Yates.

REFEREE: G. Ashton-Jones (Portsmouth)

ATTENDANCE: 4,000 (Est.)

STAR MAN: Trevor Woodman

* *NB Starting forwards as published*

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