

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2001

GLOUCESTER BEATEN BY ON-SONG WASPS

PREMIERSHIP DREAMS ARE DESTROYED
BY KINGSHOLM MAULING

GLOUCESTER 3 WASPS 28

Gloucester were subjected to a Kingsholm ransacking as Wasps piled on yet more Premiership misery with a victory of absolute dominance.

Philippe Saint-Andre's men were cut down three tries to nil to continue their horrendous league run. It was their 10th league defeat of the season and their sixth in seven games. Wasps scored tries through Paul Volley, Joe Worsley and Rob Henderson, while Gloucester could manage just a penalty from Byron Hayward.

It will leave Saint-Andre's men as Premiership also-rans and some serious questions will have to be asked next week, despite the dominance of their forwards.

Philippe Saint-Andre's weary eyes at Harlequins told a story of Premiership under achievement and he knew Gloucester would have to win five of their remaining six games to have the slightest hope of qualifying for the Heineken Cup.

They would start with the visit of Wasps to a saturated Kingsholm and to conditions that would have the Gloucester eight rubbing their hands with glee.

They were hardly conditions to inspire running rugby, but probably represented the best chance Gloucester could have of obtaining victory.

Defeat at the Stoop had brought their own casualties – Terry Fanolua being replaced by Joe Ewens and Elton Moncrieff for Andy Gomarsall.

Gloucester made a punishing start with a couple of early line-outs and driving through the mud with conviction.

Hayward missed an early chance with a penalty – slipping his kick wide after Joe Beardshaw had come into a maul from the wrong side.

It was a hugely physical start. Twice in the opening stages the referee was called in to resolve confrontations, but although Gloucester had sneaked the solidarity of a solid platform, they could not make the best of their ball. They could not keep it long enough to cause any serious problems in midfield and seemed unsure of themselves and drastically short on confidence.

There was some good work by Rob Fidler in the line-out and in the scrum Gloucester looked menacing, but it was not bringing them any points.

The game was still pointless after 20 minutes, when Wasps emerged and started to cause Gloucester some concern.

Kenny Logan missed a penalty when Andy Hazell was penalised for pulling, but hooker Dugald Macer charged down the kick and although Olivier Azam was blocked from making the tackle, he arrived from the side of the maul and Logan made no mistake.

Wasps extended their lead minutes later when Rob Henderson chipped over the Gloucester rearguard and Junior Paramore was harshly penalised for blocking.

Gloucester had discovered that although they dominated in the set-piece, they had nothing to show for it, while Wasps had managed to collect points when deep in Gloucester's half.

It was still decidedly physical, but Lawrence Dallaglio and his men were establishing a foothold and disrupting the home side.

But they exploded from their shell with a breathtaking run from Woodman who smashed his way through midfield and ran straight through Paul Sampson.

Although the England prop looked for support, Gloucester, through Moncrieff and Jason Little could not arrive in time. But Gloucester managed to keep the pressure on and won a penalty. Hayward slotted comfortably.

However, if they thought that would be the platform for a response, they were wrong. From a line-out inside Gloucester territory, Dallaglio hammered an excellent path through midfield and Paul Volley was on hand for the try.

Although Logan missed the conversion, Gloucester were now considerably adrift and Saint-Andre would have been quite entitled to throw some china around at the break.

Half-time:
Gloucester 3, Wasps 11

Gloucester faced the biggest 40 minutes of their season. It started with a scything break from Hazell who was just tap-tackled, but it breathed life into their charge and they proceeded to dominate, both territorially and with possession.

The biggest cheer of the day greeted a yellow card for Dallaglio when he pulled down a maul, but even against 14 men Gloucester could not score.

They have developed a serious shyness when anywhere near the try line.

Referee Goodliffe then reduced Wasps to 13 and Gloucester to 14 when Hayward and Volley were dispatched to the cooler. It allowed Gloucester to camp themselves in Wasps territory, but they wasted a great opportunity when Boer, one of Gloucester's best ball carriers, opted to run straight into contact rather than use men outside him.

Wasps saw off the Gloucester threat and broke out to score a wonderfully simple try and made it look all too easy.

Paramore turned over the ball on the back of a scrum, and when play came back on the right, Alex King's kick fell straight into the hands of Joe Worsley who galloped over.

It was a body blow to Gloucester. You could sense it around the ground and in the hanging expressions of the players as Wasps emphasised their fragile status in the Premiership.

Wasps had their tails up now and were subjecting Gloucester to a Kingsholm ransacking. They belied the conditions and ran in their third try to cement their position.

Gloucester had seriously struggled to get the ball back when Wasps had held it and Mark Denney's inside ball allowed Henderson to streak in off his wing to score. Logan's conversion and a penalty took Wasps 18-3 ahead and reduced Kingsholm to virtual silence.

It was a defeat every bit as comprehensive as the scoreline suggests. To be fair to Wasps, they had tackled themselves to a standstill and although Gloucester had dominated in the tight, Wasps' overall control was hugely impressive.

Gloucester looked a broken and shell-shocked team in the end, shattered, mentally and physically. They are seriously lacking inspiration and confidence in crucial areas and have now, with this defeat, virtually kissed goodbye to their last remaining Heineken Cup hopes.

GLOUCESTER: C. Catling; R. Greenslade-Jones, J. Ewens, J. Little, T. Beim, J. Hayward, E. Moncrieff; T. Woodman, O. Azam, P. Vickery, R. Fidler, I. Jones, J. Boer, A. Hazell, J. Paramore.
Reps.: A. Gomarsall, S. Mannix, C. Yates, J. Djoudi, A. Deacon, M. Cornwell, E. Pearce.

WASPS: P. Sampson; S. Roiser, M. Denney, R. Henderson, K. Logan; K. King; M. Wood; D. Molloy, D. Macer, W. Green, J. Beardshaw, S. Shaw, J. Worsley, P. Volley, L. Dallaglio (capt.).
Reps.: H. Buon, J. Lewsey, F. Waters, J. Barratt, R. Birkett, P. Scrivener, A. Le Chevalier.

REFEREE: R. Goodlife (RFU)

STAR MAN: Rob Fidler

JC